

# Philippians 1:27-30

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[ 0 : 00 ]     Guten Morgen. Let's pray. Let's pray. Lord, be with us.

Give us that stuff that makes preaching easy, that makes doing what your word says reasonable.

In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. Well, I have the tremendous pleasure of ending off chapter one of Paul's letter to the church in Philippi.

It's been an awesome journey for me. If you know anything about me, one, you know that I am a huge comic book fan.

I can talk for days, DC, Marvel. I'm particularly partial towards Batman, which is the best of all time. But one of my favorite Marvel characters is a man by the name of Frank Castle.

[ 1 : 11 ]     Frank is an FBI agent in the comic world. He is an expert in espionage. He is a tactical genius.

He's the guy that will go head first into the battle. Frank Castle is the type of guy that does not fear death. If you know any characters that don't fear death, that makes them dangerous to their enemies.

Somebody that doesn't fear death is, you know, you've got to do something different. So in the comic world, his enemies got together and said, how can we strike at the heart of Frank Castle?

Well, take away that which he loves the most. His family, his wife, and his kids. So one day in New York, it's just a comic, by the way.

One day in New York, they kill his wife and his child, and it sends him on a downward spiral into a life of murder and kidnapping. He decides to exact revenge on his enemies.

[ 2 : 20 ]     He goes to the point of even wearing a big skull in his chest, and he goes by the name of the Punisher, because he doesn't, he used to be Catholic, but he doesn't seek God as his avenger.

He has to take it into his own hands. Frank Castle is somebody, I would say, failed in the test of trials.

He's somebody that saw God as not for him. Frank Castle, by all explanation, he's a resemblance of the heart of everybody in this room, and mankind altogether, because you take away the thing I love the most, there might not be a place you can hide.

That's just how it is. But if you look at Christian history, though, you might find some men and women that didn't crumble under the pressure, didn't seek out their own revenge, didn't take the easy way out.

All throughout history, you can pinpoint anybody, and if they are led by the Holy Spirit, you'll see a testimony worth living. 170 AD, a man named Polycarp is in hiding.

[ 3 : 37 ]     He's betrayed by his friend. They come in, drag him out. They try to burn him. It doesn't work. They stab him with the blade. Legend has it that they heard a voice come out of heaven saying, Be strong, Polycarp, play the man.

And he dies. It sparks the movement of Christendom throughout the region. 1660, a man named John Bunyan, in prison for open-air preaching, which wasn't allowed.

Only his parish was allowed, right, to dissect the text. And he's in prison and he writes Pilgrim's Progress. 1850s, a man by the name of John Dury, Edinburgh, in prison.

For again, preaching the gospel. Said something offensive against the Dutch of that time. 1940s, Dietrich Bonhoeffer. 1960s, Martin Luther King.

1999, Rachel Joy Scott, Columbine High School. Last week, Anastasia Boylan, a man busts into an Oregon classroom and says, Are you a Christian?

[ 4 : 42 ] Specifically, her. Are you a Christian? She says, Yes. He says, Turn around. You're going to meet Jesus right now. And shoots her, boom, in the head.

Twice. Is that the cost? Paul's words for us this morning is concerning how we react to events like that as a church.

How a Christian should live in light of circumstance. It says much about the gospel we believe. When we look at verse 27, he starts out and he says, Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

And I almost have to stop there at that word only because it's so emphatic that Paul says he's basically summing up his previous message, switching the scope of his autobiography of what God has done for him, the dilemma he had whether he should stay or he should go.

But it's two good desires, mind you. And he says, You know what? It's my eager expectation. I hope that I will not be ashamed for me to live as Christ, to die.

[ 6 : 05 ] It's a game. I didn't say it because it rhymed, but that's kind of how it rolled off the tongue. So he's summing that up, but he starts verse 27 saying only. Basically, the word is this one thing.

If I'm summing up what I'm trying to say about myself to you right now today, oh Philippian church, this one thing. The bottom line is this. Whatever happens, whether I come or if I don't, shouldn't matter to you.

You should behave. That's the easiest way I can say it. I mean, we all remember when the teacher would leave the class. Glorious times. You know.

My teacher, Miss Manyweather, would leave the class, fourth grade. I'm as stunning as I was today, back then. You know, I'm sitting in the class and it'll be, she would leave the class on purpose to go to the office to listen to us talk on the intercom.

I thought that was entrapment. I would tell her that. But, she would leave and then a second later a spitball would go flying by. A love note would go either direction to somebody.

[ 7 : 16 ] I had to sharpen my pencil despite the fact that she said, stay in your seats. Paul is saying, if I leave or if I come, it shouldn't matter. You should behave.

Whatever happens, conduct yourself in a manner that preaches the gospel. Whether you are facing good times or bad times, behave yourself as if the gospel is being preached through your bonus or through your loss of job or whatever the circumstances may be.

So, in this four verses, we have reached basically the linchpin of the entire book, the basic theme of Philippians. He's already kind of spoken about it, but the bottom line, live in a manner worthy of the gospel.

And it's funny because the phrase here is live as citizens of heaven. That's what that word conduct or manner means. To live as citizens of heaven.

Live in a manner worthy of the gospel. A worthy citizen of heaven. Where do I get that from? Just do me a favor. Peek over to chapter 3, verse 20.

[ 8 : 26 ] And he says, but our, there it is, citizenship is in heaven and from it, we await a savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

Same Greek word. Your behavior should resemble where you're from. For the time of Paul, citizenship was a big deal.

We're dealing with Philippi. It's a Roman colony established by Rome or taken over by Rome, but it's Rome nonetheless. So the people there have a, have a sort of, hey, I'm a Roman if I live here.

Citizenship is important. Joe Hellerman, an expert in Philippians, he said it like this, compared to other cities in the Greek world, Philippi had a preoccupation with honorific titles, offices, which characterized the social priorities of both elite and non-elite persons in the colony.

Titles mattered for these guys. This is a colony of retired soldiers even. Imagine serving 20, 30, 40 years in the Roman army and you want to go retire somewhere.

[ 9 : 48 ] It's kind of like working at Sox Stadium as a retired cop for security, right? This is where we're looking at and they say, look, to be a citizen of Rome was to have a higher social standing than a non-citizen.

So that retired soldier would tell his wife and his kids, hey, no, no, we're going to go live in Philippi and the wife will go, what is Philippi? Well, we'll be good. We're Roman citizens.

Oh, okay. All right. Today is funny because we don't, we're not that far removed from the idea of citizenship, right? I mean, the whole presidential debate, the biggest thing is citizenship, one of the biggest things, right?

Whether you're Latino or white or black or Dutch or whatever it is, citizenship brings about rights and responsibility. In politics, they call it rally around the flag.

Something that makes you feel, hey, you have an identity as an American. I mean, the whole Black Lives Matter or the social justice movement is about the fact that I want to be seen the same way the other person is seen and the same opportunities as another person.

[ 11 : 01 ] That's the bottom line. But Paul's version of citizenship doesn't have the Roman flag at its helm. It's almost anti-Casarian if we were being honest.

His words promote a land higher, better, more secure, kept by God. Paul says, conduct yourselves not as what you would see yourself in Philippi, not as what you would see yourself on your job, in your home, in your community.

Conduct yourselves as citizens of heaven. So, he shoots the flare up of the banner of citizenship. And then, in the following parts of verses, he gives three ideas.

Everybody say three. There you go. Three ideas of what a citizen looks like. This is what we look like. This is the manner of a citizen, the posture of a citizen.

The first idea is in verse 27. Again, he says, only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Jesus Christ. So whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear that you are one, standing firm in one spirit with one mind.

[ 12 : 19 ] Everybody say standing. The first idea, the first manner, the first characteristic of a citizen is that they are standing firm with one mind.

I want to hear, brothers, that whether I'm in jail or if I get out, I hope I get out, but whether I am in jail or I get out, I want to hear that you're standing firm with one mind. The imagery here is the military idea.

Standing your post with the same playbook, even, with the same game plan. I'm a musical theater major. You ever did a line with anybody?

Imagine being in a play with somebody who didn't practice their lines that well. And they're always going, line? Come on now, we got to go, you know? Paul says, no, if we're in the trenches, make sure we have the same playbook, the same orders.

The first mode of operating as citizens lets us know that our citizenship is a corporate reality. one cannot expect to be a citizen of heaven living in opposition to his brother, in conflict with his brother, as my dear friend Marcus Mitchell says, what'd that do?

[ 13 : 31 ] Like, how does that work? That's not cool. Paul is saying that you can, you not only cannot live the gospel in opposition and conflict with your brother, but you can't even properly communicate the gospel unless you stand with your fellow brothers.

Look at, look real quick, look at chapter 2, verse 1 and 2, just right below it. It says, so if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any partation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord, and what does it say, and of one mind.

In a very real sense, you are incomplete without each other. You need someone to challenge you. You need someone to get on your nerves.

You need someone to love you when you get on their nerves. You need someone to sharpen you. You need the body. That's what we have the body for.

Whatever it takes, the body should be of one mind and one spirit. We need to be willing to stand with one mind and one spirit.

[ 14 : 46 ] That word spirit is more of a morale because of the glory of God. The glory of God is at stake. How we act directly reveals who we are connected to.

Does that make sense? I mean, if we're connected to the triune God, they're in communion with each other, right? I can only imagine, again, without sounding like a heretic, the God the Father talking to God the Son saying, go down and die for them.

Actually, I'm cool. They don't, they're not gonna, it's cool. What? And then God the Son saying to the Holy Spirit, seal them with the promise, you know, comfort them, guide them.

You know, they're not gonna listen to me. I'd rather just, I'm cool and, you know, we're all cool, right? That's not what happens. If we're reflecting and connected to the triune God, they work in unison with each other.

But let me get off that before I, you know, you know how that goes with the Trinity. I mean, you could think about marriage. Think about how can we in marriage move forward in opposition to each other.

[ 15 : 59 ] My wife and I have a saying in my house, first one to the cross wins. It's hard to stay mad at somebody who ain't doing, you know, what you would hope they would do to be mad at them when they're talking to God about themselves and you when my wife's on her knees because, you know, I'm tripping.

It's hard. Well, the body reflects its head. The head is Jesus Christ. H.B. Charles says it like this, body without a head is dead but a body with two heads is a monster.

There's only one head of the body. It's Jesus Christ. I can't be the head and him the head, right? But number two, everybody say number two. So, standing and then we're, everybody say striving.

We're standing and now we're striving. What does he say? In my absence, I may hear that you are standing firm in one spirit with one mind and he says what? Striving side by side for the faith of the gospel.

This one right here is more of an athletic term. Striving, contending. It's more of an Olympic, an Olympic imagery here. It's, you get the idea of people standing like this or if you ever see the Marines when they're, or the Navy SEAL when they're practicing or training and they're all standing like this as the waves come on them.

[ 17 : 29 ] They have to stay side by side. But what for? What does it say? For the faith of the gospel. To live as worthy citizens, one needs to know that in his standing with one mind, side by side, striving needs to occur.

You are not supposed to be static. It's not standing and we're not going anywhere. It's standing and we're pressing on, moving forward. A contending, struggling. I mean, these are synonyms that describes what Paul's saying here.

Struggling together to bring about the obedience of faith as he mentioned in Romans. Before you are Roman citizens, before you are American citizens, you are citizens of heaven.

When you wake up in the morning, you are citizens of heaven first. The reason you are what you are today, given what you are given today, is to, along with many others in this world, point out the faith of the gospel in which you believe.

The faith that you have on display. Along with that is the understanding that you're striving to believe in the gospel. There is a level of which you need to strive to even believe what you believe.

[ 18 : 49 ] Tadashi says it like this, make war because sin never sleeps. I mean, if there is one incentive, your sin is always awake until that day.

We have to strive to fight the idea that salvation comes from us or any other source or from any of your doing. And it takes striving with fellow believers to even resist the devil.

people, you can't do it on your own to resist false teaching, to resist worldliness. It's a warning to the church to keep fighting lest the gospel be lost.

We are in a conflict to protect the truth of the gospel because against that truth some will try to destroy it. It's funny because Paul mentioned some going against them in verse 15 and 17 where we are told to contend.

We are fighting on one hand to stay true to the gospel, to stand on it and not be ashamed as Paul has mentioned, to be worthy citizens. On the other hand, we are fighting to preach the word to a dying world to promote righteousness in a godless generation.

[ 20 : 05 ] I mean, it's not the latter and then the first. You have to believe and be convicted by what you believe before you preach it first. Let me just say it has to be that order.

Paul even says it like that. He says, my greatest fear is that in preaching I myself might be disqualified. You have to be convicted by this gospel, this scandalous truth.

We are to fight against the world, the flesh, and the devil because there is a truth of a spiritual warfare at hand. That's impacted in this word striving. Paul says elsewhere, to be ready to fight.

And how are you ready to fight? You put on the whole armor. Ephesians 6. And then in the end you can say in 2 Timothy 4, 7, I have fought the good fight. I have finished the course.

I have kept the faith. Well, lastly, everybody say number three. He says, suffering without fear.

[ 21 : 06 ] Standing firm in one spirit, verse 27 again, with one mind, striving side by side for the faith of the gospel in verse 28, and not frightened in anything by your opponents.

This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation and that from God. So the third way in which Paul wants the Philippian church to walk worthy is in suffering without fear.

Standing, striving, suffering. Whether it be from satanic attack, because Satan roars around like a lion seeking who he may devour. Whether it be from the world, 1 John 5 says God has overcome the world, and we have overcome the world through Jesus Christ.

Whether it be from liars and false teachers, for we know all liars will have their place in the lake of fire, that all men is, every man is a liar and God is the truth. Whether it be from violent persecutors, since we know that they can only kill the body, but God, God has the power.

So we're not frightened. That word frightened, it's meaning not to be alarmed. It's like an animal standing there and is distracted by something that whisks by.

[ 22 : 15 ] Don't be surprised that you're suffering. Don't be surprised when you lose the things that you love. Don't be surprised when you go through good and bad, but bad times.

this gospel doesn't promise that you're always going to be happy in that sense of stuff you have or things you acquire. Paul wants to hear that the church in his absence is standing together on one accord without alarm because the theology of the judgment of God is a testament of the wickedness around them, but it's a token of the salvation that's within them.

it's an undaunting courageousness that Paul is calling for here. A courage that only God can give. You don't muster it up yourself.

So relying on God and you're not surprised because if God before us, what? But he says it's a clear sign to them of their destruction.

I love the way the KJV says it's a token of their perdition. Nobody uses that word anymore, right? It's a token of their perdition. I mean, it literally is, it's the proof, the tangible evidence, it's the confidence of their destruction.

[ 23 : 47 ] He's pointing at hell that God will get the final say. So Frank Castle, you don't have to be a punisher. brother and sister, you don't have to take revenge.

Again, this is not to say that you don't go through HR about certain things, but at the end result, if it doesn't pan out, God is for you.

He fights your battles. I don't mean to sound trite, but it's the truth. It's funny because you can see that word again in chapter 3, verse 19. He says, their end is destruction, their God is their belly, and they glory in their shame with minds set on earthly things.

It's funny because we're called to be heavenly citizens. So the question I juggled with for the last few weeks was how in the world is not being alarmed or frightened a sign of their destruction?

Like what? I don't, like what is that? I think I got part of the answer, and I don't claim to be professional of this, but check this out. Part of the answer is that man has a conscience.

[ 25 : 04 ] You standing firm as a citizen, striving as a citizen, not being alarmed or frightened as a citizen, does something to the consciousness of man. Man is a creature made with a moral conscience, if you did not know.

So even for those who have never heard the Bible or seen a page of this glorious book, Romans has something to say about that. For those who never read the law, they show the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts also accuse them or even excuse them.

God has done something in the DNA of all of creation that sets us apart from any other creation. He's put in us a conscience. I love the way some people say he puts a hole in the hearts of man that only he can fill.

Since man has a conscience, though, let's just say that's true, right, for Bible sake. If man has a conscience, man has a sense of accountability to God and awareness of deserved judgment.

I mean, we might fight against it, but it's there. Where do I get that from? Back to Romans 13:2. Though they know God's righteous decree, that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them, but give hearty approval to those who practice them.

[ 26 : 38 ] Some of the most scariest words in the Bible. So where did they learn that the practice of evil is deserving of death? God has stamped it on their hearts.

But jumping back to the Philippians, what does this have to do with the Philippians, or even you? If you live among the world, there will come times where you will have to set yourself apart from the world.

You might have to lose your business. You might have to be lied on. You will have the pressure applied, but amidst our humility, the Philippian humility, their gentleness, their love, men will see a fighter, a humble fighter, but a fighter nonetheless.

Somebody who's striving, a fire in the hearts of God's children, a strain of iron amongst God's children, as the old preacher said. So in verse 27, he says, not only is it a sign of their judgment, but it's a sign that you are saved.

if you suffer, there it is, he says, but of your salvation. So when suffering as a Christian, when you're a Christian on display suffering, it's not only a sign of the fact that they are, that we are, that the Philippian church is conscience of God, that we're aware of his scriptures, but it's the proof that we have also joy as the Christian in the life of God.

[ 28 : 03 ] So when the adversary sees us, when they see such a creature, he sees in that creature the depths of what he ought to be, because he has a conscience.

He sees in his actions what he ought to do, because he has a conscience. When a man meets a suffering Christian, standing resolute in their convictions, the conscience of the wicked is heightened.

The voice speaks a little louder. This is why they get angrier. This is why they kill him. They meet a person who is not afraid of death. Now, again, we don't go around saying we want to die.

That's not, you know, I got family. I got, you know, there's things to do. People on the block to preach to. But if it's death or disobedience to the God that made us, we should stand and say, give us death.

Paul could be drawing it's funny, I'm thinking of, we're preaching Paul. This is the dude that persecuted the church. I'm thinking about Acts 7 when Stephen is being beaten and stoned and verse, and chapter 6 says, and Saul was consenting of his death.

[ 29 : 26 ] I'm wondering if Paul, while writing this, has that day he was the enemy standing lodged in his head. Now, he knows he's redeemed. He knows he's saved.

But I wonder if that's the mindset he has right here. I was the one that killed that guy. I can imagine Paul writing this in tears.

I can imagine Paul thinking of Acts 26, 14 when Jesus comes and says, why do you persecute me? If Stephen didn't give him tears, I know that part had to have.

You have to understand brothers, you're not citizens of this earth. You are citizens of heaven. And then he says in such Pauline fashion, in passing, he says, it's a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation.

And then he says, and that from God, and that from God, that their suffering is not in vain. It's from God because he goes on and he hooks it into verse 29.

[ 30 : 36 ] He says, for it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ, you should not only believe in him, but also suffer for his sake. It's from God because God graced you the opportunity to suffer for his sake.

It's funny because the emphasis of citizen living, striving, standing, but the emphasis, the aim of the charge is built in to this suffering piece.

The evidence of the token of salvation is that God has bestowed upon them the grace of suffering for Christ. We are not suffering for no reason.

There is an aim to our suffering. suffering. It is God and for God and through God that they can endure the suffering. Well, as we ended off here, look at verse 30 and he says, suffering for his sake in verse 29, engage in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

When looking at our current situation, our present suffering, Paul lets the saints in Philippi know that their suffering echoes, that's what the word engage means, echoes the experiences that he's been through, that the saints have been through, that people in biblical history have been through.

[ 32 : 06 ] Living as worthy citizens, standing as citizens, striving as citizens, suffering together as citizens means that we have the opportunity to echo, to grip, to experience, to grasp what the saints before us have the pleasure of knowing that living as worthy citizens is an ongoing lifestyle.

Sure, you might not be going through pain every day, but it's an ongoing lifestyle that that's why he throws that striving and standing in there.

because if you're not experiencing suffering in the saints right now, trust me, it's coming. So the charge for us today, simple, complex, but it's simple.

I try to put in some ease so it can be easy for you. Here it is, you ready? Expect suffering. He says, don't be alarmed, expect it. Expect to suffer.

Friend of mine, Kareem Manuel, says most of us won't even socially die, let alone die for the gospel. We can't even give up our friends. We should expect to suffer.

[ 33 : 25 ] Maybe not everybody on the same level. Paul Walsher says some of us will go down into the well, some of us will be holding the rope for those that do. Expect suffering. Another E, embrace suffering.

I grew up rebuking suffering. Some of that's okay, but I understand the fact that if God has allowed it in my life, it must be for a reason. It must be some sin he wants to draw out.

It must be some glory he wants to wring out of me. Embrace suffering. God loves you more than you love yourself. Embrace the suffering. Here's the other one.

Ready? Reach it out. Encourage those who are suffering. Man, I loved hearing what the Scalettas did for that young man who got shot in their family. I love hearing what people are doing in their communities.

It irks me when we're so easily cavalier about what God has already put around us. Like, well, I don't want to do that because, you know, encourage those who are suffering.

[ 34 : 28 ] There's plenty of people around you. So, encourage. You ready for the last one? Expect, embrace, encourage, and the last one, endure in suffering.

There's a prize. You're not doing it for no reason. He's got a goal. He's got a way for you to escape. Now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face.

Expect suffering, embrace suffering, encourage those who suffer, endure in suffering. Last thing I'll say is, if it's God at work, our greatest example is the fact that Jesus did all those.

He came into this world expecting suffering, embraced it, encouraged those who were suffering, and endured it for your behalf. Get to know them.

Let's pray. Lord, as your word says, you have been our dwelling place.



[ 35 : 40 ] Even before the mountains were formed, you have been God. Help us, help us to endure, help us to stand, help us to strive, help us in our suffering.

In Jesus' name. Amen.