

Philippians 1:27–30

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[0 : 0 0] Philippians chapter 1 verses 27 through 30 please stand for the reading of God's word only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ so that whether I come and see you or am absent I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel and not frightened in anything by your opponents for this is a clear sign to them of their destruction but of your salvation and that from God for it has been granted to you that from for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now here that I still have this is the word of the Lord thanks be to God you may be seated our Heavenly Father fix our minds on the truths of this text for the witness of the cause of Christ in our midst in Jesus name amen when someone in the neighborhood has something to say about Christ Church what is it that you hope people here it's a question worth considering it's it's easier to answer if you're a young parent wondering what people might say about your children you know what you want to hear well mannered obedient wonderfully excelling in all things it's certainly simple to answer in regard to your respect as a person well respected hard-working an individual a man or woman of integrity but the question I'm asking is not related to children or to an individual but to us as

Christ Church when someone in the neighborhood says something about Christ Church what do we hope will be heard I'd be happy with the following line that their conduct is worthy of their citizenship I I want to argue that this morning that this is the preeminent word we hope to hear on the street concerning our church family that their conduct is worthy of their citizenship Paul when he thought about what he wanted to hear concerning the church at Philippi elongated my line in verse 27 only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ so that whether I come and see you or am absent I may hear of you our text opens with a command that's connected to his desire of what he hears in Paul's language that your manner of life is worthy of the gospel of Christ in in this sermon that our conduct would be worthy of our citizens citizenship the word citizenship I'm choosing intentionally take a look at verse 27 only let your manner of life be worthy hidden behind that phrase manner of life is a wooden and literal expression about your citizenship that that your citizenship that you would be living as citizens that conduct themselves in a worthy manner it's the apt and perfect image for the church at Philippi I don't know if you know anything about the church at Philippi in this season of her history but some decades before they had been granted by Rome citizenship as an entire colony if if you were born in Philippi if you were living in Philippi you had all the privileges all the protections of the entire empire of Rome and not everyone shared the that citizenship so Paul picks up on the one analogy that they would most deeply resonate with and says let your life oh church when I hear of you may it all be worthy of your citizenship in heaven that's what I want to hear on the street when someone says something about Christ Church Chicago their citizenship is consistent with a conduct that exemplifies the gospel of Christ believe me things are already being said it won't be long just a few months before we exchange this rain shelter for the one we're renovating at 62nd and Woodlawn and already things are said concerning Christ Church and our lives ought to be seeking hard that that which is said is their conduct is worthy of their Christian citizenship.

You know, when you think of citizenship, you think of rights and responsibilities, right? Well, if you're an American, you think of rights. I think Paul here is really thinking more of their responsibilities.

There are privileges to citizenship, but there are, in a sense, things that are personally required of you as a citizen. Normally, as Americans, we look to the president to make an obligation to protect things.

In other words, he has responsibilities. He or she, in that office, he says, I promise to preserve, protect, and defend the Constitution of the United States. When you and I talk about citizenship, we talk about the rights that are ours as citizens.

[6 : 41] But Paul has in mind here the obligations that are incumbent upon a citizen. You know, if you were to become a citizen of the United States, you would pledge an oath, and in some sense, you would say, verbally, that you renounce all allegiances to any foreign potentate of which I had been subject.

Think of it in spiritual terms. A renunciation. That is my obligation, is renunciation of all foreign potentates that once ruled my life.

I now am under the banner of Christ. In fact, you would have to take this oath up freely without any mental reservation or purpose of evasion. Again, this is something that we ought to talk about this morning.

What then would be the characteristics of our citizenship? What are the evidences that Christ's church exemplifies a conduct that's worthy of the gospel?

I want to look at two things today in the text. These evidences that would emerge that would, in a sense, validate the street credibility of our church.

[7 : 57] One, that we would be unified in effort. Two, that we would be undeterred amid opposition.

Let's take a look at it. I'm going to grab these from verse 27, unified in effort. And then verse 28 and 29, undeterred by opposition.

These are the evidences of conduct that is worthy of Christian citizenship. Unified effort. Look at verse 27 again, the way it moves.

That I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit with one mind, striving side by side for the faith of the gospel.

Notice first the word one. One spirit, one mind. Unified. Notice what we're not unified in.

[8 : 59] He doesn't say one race and one ethnicity. He says one mind, one spirit.

He doesn't say one political party. He says one mind, one spirit.

He doesn't say of uniform cultural expressiveness or socioeconomic distinction.

He says one mind, one spirit. In other words, when he hears of the church at Philippi or when people hear of Christ Church Chicago, they would not be hearing white church or black church, Asian or Hispanic church, but one mind, one spirit.

They would not be hearing red church or blue church. They would be hearing one church under Christ. They would not be thinking about ex-suburbans or ongoing urbanites.

[10 : 12] They would be thinking about one mind, one spirit. They wouldn't be thinking rich church or poor church, but one church with one mind, one spirit.

And yet, given the present day in which we live, any church in our country, the first things that are said about it are all of these other distinctions.

It's sad. I'm not mad today. I'm sad today. I'm sad today when I think of this unified effort that ought to be evidence of our citizenship in heaven.

I was born Anglo before I was born again. And I am still white after becoming a Christian.

But having come to Christ, I am in Christ before I am Caucasian. My identity is that of Christ.

[11 : 32] And just as I have that identity, you have your own. But even within the church, in the saddest of ways, the inversion has taken place.

I remember a little over a year ago when I said to a dear friend on the south side of Chicago, a pastor, I said, Ramel, the world has gone mad.

And I had no idea at the moment that the world which had gone mad would produce a church in madness. You've got black pastors mad with white pastors.

You've got white pastors mad with black pastors. Worse than that, you've got black pastors mad with some black pastors, and white pastors mad with other white pastors.

And I could go on and on and on. All these things are exemplifying this disunity is the sure sign of our immaturity.

[12 : 41] Disunity is the sign of immaturity. Unity is the chief characteristic of our heaven-bound citizenry.

Think of it. Christ Church Chicago. One mind, one spirit in all that we do. Oh, may unity be the chief characteristic of our heaven-bound citizenry.

The streets of Chicago, the far corners of our country, to the far reaches of the ends of the earth.

When someone says, have you heard about Christ Church Chicago? What do you hear about Christ Church Chicago? Their conduct is worthy of their citizenship.

They are of one mind and one spirit. But what's the object of that unity? See, this is tricky because many people are seeking unity in something as the end.

[13 : 57] But the text is clear. Take a look at it. Their unity, there it is at the end, is for the faith of the gospel. 27 closes out. Unity is grounded in the faith of the gospel.

In other words, you are to, there's the verse, stand firm in that. That's what they ought to hear. Christ Church Chicago is standing firm in unity that is grounded in their understanding of the faith of the gospel.

Now, what is the gospel? What is the gospel? What is the faith? What does he have in mind? What are we all drawn to? The velcro that will hold our fellowship is our understanding of the faith.

The death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. The forgiveness of sins for all people that is preached in his name. The proclamation of a message that is meant for every man, woman, and child on the globe.

We stand firm in that. It doesn't mean that we stand firm in all other matters of life.

[15 : 23] But in this, we are fundamentally united. In fact, it is why we are able to stay united.

What a testimony that would be to our city. Christ Church Chicago, conduct that is worthy of your citizenship, it will be found when your identity is rooted in Christ on an understanding of the gospel through the preaching of the death and resurrection of Christ in accordance with the scriptures through which forgiveness can be had and is to be proclaimed by all people.

Let us hear that. Not only that unified effort, but look at the way it also speaks of it.

Not merely your firmness on the faith, but striving side by side for the faith. These two things, your firmness and your fight.

Your stance and your striving. And notice, it's side by side. It actually uses the language here of an athlete, which is easy for me because I grew up in a locker room, my father being a coach, that there's a team effort that's unified toward an end or goal, which is the faith of the gospel.

[16 : 58] There's an exertion that's underneath this phrase. There's a sweat, a holy sweat, and that it's arm in arm.

In their day, in Philippi's day, not so much the arena of the locker room, which some of you know well, but it would have been the arena of the Colosseum in which you were either athletically engaged for the wreath or you were united with others in a fight for your life.

And they were standing arm in arm locked. In other words, when someone says something about Christ Church Chicago, I hope they say what's strange about them is that all of those distinctions within who they are are coming out of the same locker room.

What a beautiful thing that would be.

Let us hear that. Unified in effort. exemplified by our firm stance on the gospel and our exertion for that same faith.

[18 : 22] If we can do that, if we can do that over the next 18 months, we will have put a visible or tangible form to an idea.

And if Paul's idea is citizenship of heaven, the visible or tangible forms which embody the idea is a unity of mind and soul that stands firm on the faith and strives together from all of the rich diversity that we have in our midst.

Not only that, though. Unified in effort. But notice verse 28 and 29. Undeterred by opposition. Let me read that. Not frightened.

Not frightened in anything by your opponents. Not frightened. Without fear. Now there's a common word that phobos, you can almost hear fear in it, that Paul does not employ in this instance.

This word without fear, I wouldn't have known this, but you can supposedly learn a lot of things by Googling. And it has like this centuries-old word that's fallen out of play, this idea of blenching.

[19 : 54] Not blanching at something, but blenching, where we would get blinking, where the use in the ancient literature of this day would have talked about a horse who was startled by the guns of the opposition.

And what he's saying is, I want you to be undeterred by your opposition. I want you to be unblenching, unblinking, unflinching, calm, clear, that when the best shot comes, they look at Christ's church and go, well, they haven't moved.

They're confident, at home in their own skin, comfortable, in the midst of opposition.

Now, I fully expect the mortar shells of opposition to fall all around us, some of them on us. And our conduct ought to be worthy of our citizenship, which is in heaven.

Fearless! The unflinching nature of our church in the midst of an ongoing opposition will be an evidence that we are fulfilling Paul's imperative or exhortation.

[21 : 33] Let's sit on that for a moment. What kind of opposition did the church at Philippi face and what kind of opposition might we face? I don't want to dig too far into the letter, but there is evidence in the letter that would let us know the kinds of opposition Paul had in mind.

Without stealing the thunder of moving later in the letter, there would have been opposition to the message itself. Chapter 3, verses 2 and following.

No, no, no. This faith in the gospel, death and resurrection of Christ, grace, forgiveness in Him alone rather than what you do, people would have fought that. There would have been opposition to the message, but there also would have been opposition to the manner of life that that message required.

Chapter 2, verse 15. Chapter 3, verse 18. There would have been, there would be opposition to the manner of life. Let me put it to you the way Paul puts it to Titus, that you have a gospel that you hold, but there is a life, a conduct that is in accord with godliness.

That those who come to Christ don't stay as they were before Christ. That there is a transformative movement in our very soul that we are now submitted.

[22 : 57] We have renounced all foreign potentates that ran my life, and I am conformed or being conformed into the likeness of my Lord.

These are the same things that will come to us. You can expect it. I fully expect it. That people will oppose our message, and they will oppose the manner of life that we say is in accord with that message.

And when it comes, whether it be on the front steps of the building, or in a newspaper, or something as simple as your conversation with your neighbor, you will be unblinking.

you will be unflinching. There will be no blenching. You will be fearless before them.

If that happens, then let me tell you the effects. There are a couple of effects when that happens on the battlefield. You get a team, or you get a group that is unified in effort and unflinching in opposition, they have a high likelihood of success.

[24 : 17] I mean, look at the way Paul puts it here as the phrase goes on. Not frightened anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation and that from God.

Because you don't be unflinching on your own. When the mortar shells fall, the person who is calm and clear has been given divine assistance.

But notice, it's a clear sign to them of their destruction and your salvation. Let me just simplify it. This unflinching nature that we must exhibit as conduct worthy of our citizenship, which comes from God, is a sign of our victory.

I've been in athletics all my whole life and when you get on the contest, the floor of battle, and you actually see the eye of the opponent who has given you everything they can give and they see you fixed, standing, ready, their mind knows they've lost.

They've lost. Which is why athletic contests often come down to the very end. Because when it's all been played out, someone is still erect.

[25 : 42] Someone has the longevity and the perseverance needed to cross the finish line. Somebody is not blinking. And therefore, they're winning.

This is the effect. This is the effect of our life together as we walk in the future. It will be, this unflinching, undeterred nature of opposition is going to be a sure sign of our victory.

And, not only that, it is the stamp of authenticity. Suffering, having opposition, sharing and suffering is not just a sure sign of victory, it's a stamp of authenticity.

That's the way the text goes. Notice verse 29, for it has been granted to you for the sake of Christ that you should not only believe in him, but also suffer for his sake.

See, when you're undeterred in suffering, you need to remember, not only am I going to be victorious in Christ, but this is a sure sign that I am authentically united to Christ.

[26 : 49] how can you be sure of your authentic place in Christendom, in Christ, in his kingdom? It is a sharing in the sufferings of Christ.

Not merely believing, but sharing in the sufferings. Think of it this way, your passport originally allowed you, if you had one, to travel from one port to another in kind of an intercontinental way.

But in Christianity, your passport in Christ is really now a firm sense of who you are and where you're from. And suffering is the stamp on your life that provides authenticity to your Lord.

So this is a great encouragement to the church in Philippi and it ought to be a source of great encouragement to you and to me. We don't want to be suffering for the wrong things.

The church today is suffering largely a suffering of its own making which is a consequence of its own immaturity.

[28 : 06] Notice here, it says here twice, it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should suffer. And then he repeats it, for his sake. Let all your sufferings be for his sake, not, here it is, the way I feel about the contemporary culture in which our churches are living, for his sake, not your stupidity.

For his sake, not your immaturity. For his identity, not your identity. For the cause that he champions. Not the things that you're trying to acquire.

Well, what a text. This, this church that's standing tall and is tough as nails.

That'd be another way to put it. What do you hope to hear when someone speaks about Christ's church? Those brothers and sisters, they stand tall and they're tough as nails.

What do you hope to hear when someone says something about Christ's church? That church family, their conduct conduct is mirroring of their citizenship?

[29 : 31] What, what do you hope to hear when the word on the street goes out about your affiliation with this body? They are unified in effort where I see disunity all around and, and they are undeterred by opposition.

All of these things are for us today and it is Paul's priority in writing. Look at the way this shuts down. Let me just, let me just shut it down by looking at verse 30 because there's some beautiful, beautiful final lines in Paul's sermon for us today.

Verse 30 reads, engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have. Did you catch it? Did you catch the beauty of that final line?

The, the unbelievable apostolic irony? Look at it again. Verse 27, there is something he wants to hear about them.

Verse 30, by the way, those are the things that you hear I still have.

[30 : 56] I mean, this is, this is Paul at his preaching best. This is his drop the mic moment. He exits the lectern basically by saying, in the most understated of English ways, well, I'm glad you've come this morning.

And I hope you're now very well acquainted with all that I want to hear when someone says something about you. By the way, nothing other than what you already hear about me.

And he walks off. this conclusion by way of imitation has a rhetorical effect on the congregation.

We are called to a conduct that is worthy of our citizenship. may they hear of us what we have always heard about Paul.

Our Heavenly Father, we praise you for this little letter and today for its priority that our manner of life is to be worthy of the gospel of Christ.

[32 : 28] this command that our conduct is to match our citizenship. Lord, raise us up as a church family out of an immature age to reflect the maturity of our convictions as evidenced by the union in our effort and the unflinching nature of our life amid opposition.

May that be heard in our homes, in our condos, on our streets, on the city's south side, all for the great and glorious cause of Christ.

from him and to him and through him are all things. Amen.

Amen. Well, to to to to to to!