

A Gospel-Worthy Life (2)

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[0 : 00] The following sermon is made available by Lakeside Bible Church in Cornelius, North Carolina.

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Philippians chapter 1 verse 27, Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ, that whether I come and see you or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel, and in nothing terrified by your adversaries, which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God.

For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, or for the sake of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake, having the same conflict which you saw in me, and now here to be in me.

[1 : 22] The suffering with which Paul is talking here in this passage is not the suffering that comes as a result of living in a fallen state.

This is not the kind of suffering that applies to every person's life that has ever lived. There's a few things in terms of hardship that we all face. Because of our sinful nature, because of the curse of sin on this earth, through Adam and Eve and so on passed down to all of us, there are certain hardships that we face.

Death is one of those things primarily. Paul's discussion here of suffering is not really in the realm of that type of suffering. It's not hardship for hardship's sake. It's not just about going through difficult times.

The suffering that he's referencing here in this passage is a suffering and a persecution that comes specifically as a result of our commitment to the gospel.

It's not just a suffering with sickness because we have sin-cursed bodies that are in the process of decay. It's not that type of suffering. It's the suffering that we may deal with persecution and ridicule and even face a possible death for our stand on the gospel.

[2 : 34] It's preaching the truth and dealing with the opposition. That's the suffering that he is referring to here. Kent Hughes, in his commentary on the book of Philippians, tells the story of a man named Mehdi Dibaj.

Mehdi was arrested by the government in Iran in 1984 after he converted from Islam to Christianity and became a pastor in a Christian church there in a Christian community.

He spent 10 years in prison until he was sentenced to be executed for his faith in 1994. This is just a few years ago. The Iranians released him under pressure from the United States government, but he was found dead just a few days later in a park.

He was the third Christian murdered in Iran after being released from prison during that specific time frame. Kent Hughes includes some of Mehdi Dibaj's last statement of defense when he had gone to trial in Iran.

Here's the last sentences that he wrote and that he exclaimed in this trial. He said, It's very much reminiscent of verse 21 in Philippians.

[4 : 06] Philippians 1, isn't it? For to me to live is Christ, to die is gain. And then he said, Therefore, I am not only satisfied to be in prison for the honor of his holy name, but am ready to give my life for the sake of Jesus my Lord.

Standing before this council and this defense, knowing that what awaited him, if he stood firm on sound doctrine, if he continued to preach the gospel, was certain execution, and those were the words that he expressed to this council.

I stand firmly committed that Jesus Christ is our Savior, and he is the Son of God. Of course, God has an amazing purpose, gospel purpose, for this kind of suffering.

We've talked about that in our study already of chapter 1 in Philippians, but a recent article by the Gospel Coalition stated that right now, in 2019 or 2020 now, the fastest growing segment of the global church is in Iran.

It's amazing because of the persecution of believers. The church is growing incredibly in places like the Middle East and in China and in communist environments.

[5 : 18] The church is growing because of the persecution of believers. People who are willing to stay committed to their faith, even when being opposed by the people around them. God has a gospel purpose in that, and he uses it in a fantastic way.

It's something that we are not so familiar with because of the blessings that we experience and the freedoms that we have here. But all across the world, there are still people that are up against severe persecution, even martyrdom, all because they're Christians.

Of course, persecution is not exclusive to Christianity. There's lots of people groups. There are lots of religions that are persecuted. But it is to be expected for Christians according to the scriptures.

Last week, we talked about this demonstration of the gospel-worthy life. We'll cover these last two points this morning, which the first being the sign of a gospel-worthy life. The sign of a gospel-worthy life.

Look with me again at verse 28. Paul says, and nothing terrified by your opponents or your adversaries, which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God.

[6 : 34] In verse 28, we see the words evident token, which just means a sign. Refers to proving or giving evidence of something that's true. A sign gives direction.

And it's like coming to a fork in the road. One sign points toward the path of opposition to the gospel and leads to the city of destruction. The other sign points toward faith in the gospel and leads to the city of salvation.

Allowing believers to go through seasons of persecution is used by God as a means of making a clear separation of the saved and the unsaved.

Paul says that the willingness of a believer to faithfully endure suffering gives evidence of the fact that unbelievers will perish and believers will be saved.

That's exactly what he's saying in verse 28. Unbelief demonstrated by those who oppose the gospel is the sign of coming judgment. Endurance demonstrated by those who believe the gospel then is the sign of a coming salvation.

[7 : 49] Three quick notes underneath this point if you're keeping track of them maybe in your scripture journals. The first thing is this. Our endurance is a sign of judgment to those who oppose the gospel.

Our endurance in the faith and through persecution is a sign of judgment to those who oppose the gospel. Paul says it to the unbeliever, to the adversary, to the opponent.

It is an evident token of perdition or destruction and judgment. It doesn't mean that they acknowledge the sign but the sign is still yet evident.

The believer's willingness to endure suffering for the sake of the gospel signals to their adversaries that they will one day be judged by God for their unbelief and for the persecution that they have brought on God's people.

But this sign has a purpose and this is the point that I want us to understand here. This sign of destruction, this sign, evident token of perdition, it has the purpose.

[8 : 51] It's not only meant to condemn the unbeliever but I believe it's actually meant to draw them to salvation. There's two ways that I think it does this. First, it does it, it's produced through our message.

This sign is produced in our message. Look with me again at verse 27. Paul urges these believers to let their manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ.

And here's how it would be worthy. That I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, that's a commitment to biblical doctrine, with one mind striving together for the faith, that's the

offensive posture of sharing the gospel with the people around you and in nothing terrified by your opponents.

It comes by standing firm, faithfully declaring the gospel. Our endurance then is clearly lived out, practically, in action.

And that action is founded on the declaration of a particular message. What is this endurance? It's the message that we give.

[10:01] What is that message? That all who reject Christ will die in their sins and their soul will live eternally, separated from God in a place called hell.

How is our suffering, how is our endurance a sign of judgment to our opponents? Because in that sign is the reality of our message, that as they oppose us, what they're opposing is what we are preaching and what we are believing.

And if we're doing it the right way, what we're focused on in our preaching and in our teaching and in our sharing with our friends is not all of the preferential things of church, not all of the various things that we would dig through the scriptures and try to argue with someone about.

What we are faithfully preaching is the gospel, that Jesus is God, that he came to save sinners, and all who reject him as God that do not believe are destined for destruction and hell.

But our message is also a sign of hope. Because those same opponents that reject the gospel, if they will at some point repent in their heart and repent of their unbelief and turn to Jesus Christ, God will forgive their sins and grant them eternal life.

[11:23] It's a wonderful sign of hope. It's not just a sign of destruction. Our mission is to proclaim the gospel to sinners just like us.

And it may be that God allows us to suffer for that proclamation so that he might use our enduring witness to save the very person that afflicts us.

It may be that God allows you to suffer for your faith in your family or in your place of work or among your friends or even a stranger, specifically so that your enduring witness would be used by God to draw that opponent to salvation.

Remember, faith cometh by hearing and hearing comes by the word of God. We're to keep defending and preaching Jesus so that even the most vehement deniers of truth might hear the message and be saved.

So this is a sign of judgment and it's a sign of hope. So the sign is produced in our message. The sign is also produced in our suffering. It's also produced in our suffering.

[12:38] God often uses our willingness to remain faithful as a means of drawing our opponents to salvation. Think about the scene of the cross as Jesus was crucified for the sins of mankind, for us.

Think about all of the opponents involved in that story. The first one that comes to mind for me is the thief. In fact, you could probably go to Luke chapter 23 and Luke chapter 24 and see all of these examples in one setting.

Remember the thief on the cross? There was two of them. Jesus split the two. There was one on his right and one on his left. I think it's the gospel of John tells us that when they first were being crucified, both of these thieves were ridiculing and mocking Jesus.

They were asking if he really was who he said he was. Why didn't he save himself and then save them along with him? Both of them were involved in this. But at some point in the six hours of suffering on the cross, seeing the suffering of Christ, one of them was impacted in a specific way, not necessarily because of the words of Christ, but because of the way that he suffered.

So that some point during that crucifixion story, one of the thieves looks at the other thief and says, you gotta stop this. This isn't right. And he looks at Jesus and he says, remember me, please.

[13:58] And what does Jesus say? It's amazing, his love. Even in the midst of that, after hours, this man has been ridiculing and mocking him. He's in the same condition as him. He's in no reason to mock anybody, no condition to mock anybody.

And he's relentless with Jesus. And then finally something clicks in his mind as he witnesses the suffering of Jesus. And Jesus looks at him and says, today you will be with me in paradise. Just like that, he's willing to forgive him and demonstrate his love.

We see because of the suffering of Christ, the thief on the cross comes to Christ. Remember the centurion. That was one of the men that literally crucified Jesus. Once Jesus takes his final breath, he says, truly, this was the son of God.

One of the men that was splitting his garments and casting lots, making a mockery of him, literally nailed him to the cross. And he sees the way Christ suffered.

And God uses that to draw him to salvation. Do you remember Joseph of Arimathea? Luke tells us that Joseph was actually a part of the council, that kangaroo trial that night, that condemned Jesus to be crucified.

[15:10] He was on that council. Now there's a good opportunity or a good chance that he didn't agree with the council, but he was complicit in what they were doing. Yet it was Joseph of Arimathea, after seeing the way Christ suffered, goes to Pilate and begs the body of Jesus and takes his body off.

And as soon as they could, before the Passover Sabbath had begun, takes him and puts him in that borrowed tomb, understanding that Jesus wasn't gonna stay there. And then the crowd that gathered around, that gnashed on him with his teeth, that the Bible says wagged their heads and ridiculed him as they saw the sign above his head that said, said King of the Jews.

That in this three hours of darkness, as we see the darkness rest between noon and three o'clock, as Jesus is being crucified, we see him absorbing the wrath of God. In the midst of all of that, this crowd is convicted so that they end up going home.

And it says they're beating their breast as a sign of guilt and as a sign of repentance for what they had just done. Why? Because they had witnessed how Jesus had suffered. So God uses that.

He uses our endurance. He uses our willingness to suffer to bring others to Christ. Of course, it's not just what Jesus is suffering. Just in Philippi, they understood this.

[16:27] Remember the Philippian jailer. Why was it that he ran into Paul and Silas' jail cell? And at the end of that night or at midnight and said, what must I do to be saved? It was because of the way they suffered and endured that persecution that he inflicted.

Perhaps even witnessing and approving of the murder of Stephen was used of God to begin softening the heart of the apostle Paul, who at that point was known as Saul of Tarsus.

Listen, when we suffer well, we give evidence of the truth of the gospel. Why would anyone face death for something they didn't genuinely believe in?

When we're willing to endure opposition because God will use our testimony to bring others to faith, and thereby our suffering is a sign of their judgment.

So our endurance is a sign of judgment to those who oppose the gospel. It's also a sign of our salvation. It's also a sign of our salvation. Look with me again at verse 28.

[17:34] To them, it's an evident token of perdition, but to you, that is the Philippian believers, it's a sign of salvation. Listen, this part's important.

Endurance is not the cause of your salvation. It is only the sign of genuine salvation. You are not saved because you endure.

You endure because you are truly saved. Suffering is the proving ground for authentic faith. Those who have truly trusted in Christ will stand firm on the gospel because they're fully convinced of its truth.

Those who cower and reject the gospel because of impending opposition prove that their profession of faith was not genuine saving faith.

And so in this sign of salvation, not only does God separate with this sign the opposition that is destined for judgment and the ones who endure in their faith that are destined for salvation, not only does he make that separation, but as he gets into this group of professing believers, our endurance and suffering then becomes another form of separating the sheep from the goats, so to speak, where those who do endure see the sign of their salvation, those who do not endure did not have genuine faith.

[19:10] Of course, the scriptures testify to this over and over. Hebrews chapter three and verse 14, the writer says, we are made partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.

And then we're reminded by John in his first epistle. They went out from us, but they were not of us. For if they had been of us, they would have continued with us.

But they went out that it might become plain that they all are not of us. So this idea of suffering for the gospel is not only a sign of the opposition's destruction and the endurer of salvation.

But as you get into this realm of professing believers, God begins to weed out those who only profess the faith but have never actually believed it. It's a pruning process.

God often does with his church. This is not to insinuate that it's possible for a person once saved to lose their salvation. The Bible clearly teaches that that's not the case.

[20 : 15] It's not to be representative of a believer that falls in a moment of weakness and fear. That's not it either. This is representative of a professing believer that when facing persecution for their professed belief reveals that they never did actually truly believe so that the result of their rejection isn't mourning or grief over their sinful denial.

Rather, they end up joining the ranks of the opposition. There's a difference in how they continue. And it's at this point, before we move on, that I want to encourage those of us that have fallen in a moment of weakness in this way.

Just because you've had a moment where you didn't stand as firm on the gospel as you should have or could have doesn't mean automatically that you were never truly saved.

Your salvation was not earned by works and it won't be kept by your works either. It's the power of God that saved you and it's the power of God that secures that salvation.

Persecution serves as God's means of exposing those in the church that have not actually believed. And there's a difference between a person that apostatizes the faith because they never truly believed and a person that has genuinely been saved but in some way faltered out of fear.

[21 : 43] And I want to give you an illustration of the two differences. Turn with me to Luke chapter 22. Would you do that? Luke chapter 22. Just a few pages to the left in your Bibles. I want you to see it because I want you to believe me.

I don't want you to take my word for it. I want you to take God's word for it. Luke chapter 22. I want you to see this. I think it'd be helpful to us. There's a lot happening in this passage leading up to the crucifixion of Jesus but there's two different narratives that involve rejecting Christ.

One is the narrative that surrounds Judas Iscariot and his betrayal of Christ. The other is the narrative of Simon Peter's denial of Christ.

Judas and Simon were not, or Peter, were not the same in this. Peter showed an evidence of weakness as a believer but he was a believer. Jesus had actually already confirmed that.

Judas' story is different. Let's look at his first. Look at Luke chapter 22 verses three through six first. Then entered Satan into Judas, surnamed Iscariot, being of the number of the 12.

[22 : 53] And he went his way and communed with the chief priest and captains how he might betray him unto them. And they were glad and covenanted to give him money.

And he promised and saw opportunity to betray Jesus unto them in the absence of the multitude. There's a very vindictive, very adversarial, very much opposition to Jesus.

That's what's happening there in Judas' narrative. Now look with me at verse 21. Verse 21 to 23. Jesus says, But behold, the hand of him that betrayeth me is with me on the table.

And truly the Son of Man goeth as it was determined, but woe unto the man by whom he is betrayed. And they began to inquire among themselves which of them it was that should do this thing.

And it's at that point in the narrative that we understand Judas left the room, knowing where Jesus would end up going after the supper was over. He betrayed Jesus and turned him into the chief priest and to the soldiers there.

[24 : 01] Judas' betrayal of Jesus was rooted in his lack of faith. He didn't truly trust Christ, but for three years, he took part in the ministry of Christ.

There's a warning in this for us, just in the story of Judas, that you may sit with someone in church for years and years and years, but really when the opposition really starts to show his face, you might find out that this person that is even partnered in ministry to an extent was not actually a genuine believer and will just as fast turn on the faith as they professed that same faith.

Judas was an unbeliever who was exposed for his unbelief after three years of trying to hide it and put on this charade. Peter was different. Let's look at his narrative in Luke chapter 22.

Look with me at verse 31 to 34 first. And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you.

Now in Judas, in verse three, Satan entered him. That's not the case with Peter because Peter was a true believer. Satan wanted to destroy him, but he couldn't enter into him.

[25 : 09] He says he wants to sift you as wheat. But I've prayed for you, Peter, that your faith fail not. And when you are converted or when you are restored or renewed, strengthen thy brethren.

That statement in and of itself is evidence that Jesus understood Peter's genuine conversion. He was a genuine believer. He knew he was gonna deny him, but he also knew that he was a genuine believer and there was gonna come a time after that denial that he repented of that denial and that he strengthened the other apostles and would once again lead them.

Verse 33, and he said unto him, Lord, I'm ready to go with thee, both into prison and to death. And he said, I tell thee, Peter, the cock shall not crow this day before thou shalt thrice, three times deny that thou knowest me.

Let's skip down to verse 54. This is amazing. Verse 54. Then took they him, that's Jesus. He's in the process of trial.

And they brought him into the high priest house and Peter followed afar off. And when they had kindled a fire in the midst of the hall and were set down together, Peter sat down among them to witness what was going on with Jesus.

[26 : 25] But a certain maid beheld him as he sat by the fire and earnestly looked upon him and said, this man was also with him. And he denied him, saying, woman, I know him not.

After a little while, another saw him and said, thou art also of them. And Peter said, man, I am not. And about the space of one hour after another, confidently affirmed, saying, of a truth, this fellow also was with him, for he is a Galilean.

And Peter said the third time, man, I know not what thou sayest. And immediately, while he yet spake, the cock crew, and then this is the amazing part. And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter.

They saw each other. They locked eyes. Now watch what Peter does. Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how just a few hours before, he had said unto him, before the cock crew, thou shalt deny me three times.

And Peter went out and wept bitterly. There's clearly a difference between Judas's betrayal of Jesus and Peter's denial of Jesus.

[27 : 31] So there may be a time in your life where maybe you're in the midst of a struggle right now, or maybe there will come one ahead of you where you will face persecution and ridicule and suffer in some way for your faith.

And in that moment, you may be tempted to deny that faith or to pass it off or to not stand firm on sound doctrine, to not pursue offensively proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ.

That time may come, and it may have already come for you, that in a moment of weakness, your faith wavers and you don't do what God has told us to do in proclaiming the faith and trusting him through it.

But that doesn't mean that you're not a believer. What it means is that you're in a moment of weakness. And it could be that you just need to get on your face before God like Peter did and weep bitterly and repent of this denial.

There's a difference between a person that can't suffer and denies the faith and leaves it and a person who is wearied in suffering and falls in a moment of weakness but continues in that faith.

[28 : 34] So don't be discouraged if you've blown it up to this point. Forgiveness is offered to you by Jesus like it's offered to anybody else. Here's the awesome thing about Peter's narrative. Jesus dies that next day.

He raises three days later and then he spends 40 days and he appears to various people in those 40 days. Acts chapter 1 picks back up with the ascension of Jesus Christ after Luke and then 10 days after Jesus ascends Peter in Acts is preaching on the day of Pentecost.

He's the one leading the charge at that point. He faithfully preaches the gospel. 3,000 people get saved. The Holy Spirit has this amazing demonstration of his power among all of these people and even in the face of that opposition which he did get arrested and beaten for.

Even in the face of that he didn't care. He pursued it. 53 days after he had denied Christ. It's only 53 days later.

So he has this moment of weakness and just a few days later God uses him in a fantastic way. Where was Judas? He hung himself. His life was done.

[29 : 46] God still had a purpose for Peter. God still has a purpose for you. So stand firm now. Strive together now. I gotta hurry.

The next thing that we see here is that our endurance produces a particular confidence. Look at the last phrase of verse 28 in Philippians 1. He says and all of this comes from God.

The sign produces a particular confidence and joy in the heart of a believer that endures suffering for the gospel. Our fear is turned to faith and our weakness is turned to strength when we realize that God is in control and he always has the last word.

Paul reminds these believers of the fact that both judgment and salvation come from the hand of God. The salvation of those who believe and the judgment of those who oppose Christ are both secured in his sovereign purposes.

I imagine that in the midst of the persecution of believers in Philippi that these Philippians were tempted to view that persecution as a sign of the superiority of their opponents.

[31 : 03] Think about that. The intimidation that they experienced was driven as they experienced this persecution from a group of people that greatly outnumbered them that were in control of every aspect of their life.

The leadership of Philippi wasn't on their team. I can imagine that they felt a lot like Asaph in Psalm 73 that Jack read for us just a little bit ago and it would have been easy for them to be overcome with discouragement, question the faith that they had professed and even be in danger of denying that gospel altogether.

What did Asaph say in Psalm 73? He said, my feet had well nigh slipped when I saw the prosperity of the wicked. All of these people that hate you, God, everything good happens to them. They're in control over me.

They are ruling my life and I'm ready to just give up on all of that. And he says, until I went into the sanctuary of God, then understood I therein. As he endured, he was given the sign as Paul is talking about in Philippians chapter 1, he was reminded of their coming destruction.

And so when we look like Asaph did and like these Philippians did at the opponents of the gospel, we don't look at them with intimidation, we look at them with pity. They may have the rule now, but God ultimately rules it all.

[32 : 27] Their judgment and our salvation rests in God's hand, not in our opponents' hands. They may get victory over us now, but we understand their end. Their end, if they continue in unbelief, is one that we are to pity.

He holds both our salvation and their destruction securely in his hands so that we can view our suffering with confidence that salvation belongs to them that love Jesus and believe his gospel. And that reminds me of that famous hymn that Martin Luther wrote, A Mighty Fortress Is Our God. You know that hymn? The fourth verse of it, it says this, let goods and kindred go.

Let the things that you own, materialism and the relationships that you have, be willing to let those things go. This mortal life also. The body they may kill, God's truth abideth still.

His kingdom is forever. So there may come times in your life as a believer that you're up against opposition and suffering for the sake of the gospel, but it doesn't matter.

[33 : 34] Let goods and kindred go. Let this mortal life go also. The body they may kill. They may kill this body that's gonna die anyways, but God's kingdom, it endures forever.

His word will never end. His promises will never go away. And so we can look at our suffering despite the trial and the hardship of it. We can look at it with confidence because we understand that judgment and salvation comes from God.

He gets the last word. And so long as we are secured in his hand, we receive the salvation. And the sign of that salvation is our willingness to endure. So we see the sign of suffering or the sign of the gospel-worthy life.

Real quickly, let's look at the final thought. The call of a gospel-worthy life. The call of a gospel-worthy life. Look at verse 29 and 30. The call to salvation is a call to suffering.

Paul brings these two elements together in verse 29. He says that the Christ that has given you salvation has also given you the privilege to suffer for his sake.

[35 : 00] There are those who purport gospel of wealth and prosperity. They claim that the truly Christian person will be evidenced in blessing and wealth.

But the true gospel says that the genuinely Christian person will be evidenced in endurance through suffering. Jesus called for this mindset often.

Mark chapter 8, he said, if anyone would come after me, let him deny himself. Not seek prosperity, but deny himself. And take up his cross and follow me. For whosoever would save his life will lose it.

But whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospels will save it, Jesus says. Taking up your cross there is not the presence of hardship.

Bearing your cross is an identification with Christ. Identifying with him even to the point of death is what it means. Two things. There's the guarantee of suffering.

[36 : 02] The guarantee of suffering. Paul didn't tell the Philippians that they might suffer for the gospel. He said that it has been granted to them. It's been given to them to suffer for the gospel.

It's a guarantee for every believer in some form or fashion. The degree of suffering will be varied based on God's purposes for each individual. But we will all suffer in some way.

Paul says in verse 30 that they would have the same conflict which they saw in him and now here to be in him. Well, we understand what that is. What they saw in him was that he was stripped naked in the middle of town.

He was beaten nearly to death and thrown into prison. And now they know that what they have heard of him is that he spent the last four years in prison and that what awaits him is a verdict that could end up in him being beheaded for his faith.

What Paul is saying to these Philippian believers, he's not saying that you will experience suffering in the same way that I am. He's not saying that they're probably going to take you before the town and they're going to beat you to death and throw you into prison.

[37 : 06] He's not saying that you're going to probably spend four years in prison and ultimately be executed. That was possible for them but that's not what he meant. What he meant is that whatever form of persecution you face, whatever degree of suffering that you experience will be because you have fought the same fight as me.

Having the same conflict as me, it means fight. That as you pursue the gospel the way that I am, you're probably going to suffer in some way. It may not look like my suffering looks but as long as you're preaching the gospel, there will be those that oppose you.

There's a guarantee of it. He wrote that to Timothy. He said, indeed, all who desire to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. You might have a family member that doesn't want to have much to do with you anymore because of your stand on the gospel.

That happens to a lot of Christians today and that's painful. You may get passed over for a promotion that you deserve over everybody else not because somebody thinks you're unworthy but they just can't stand the fact that you're a Christian and you talk about it and they've already got a bias about you and they're never going to hand you something unless they're forced to.

You understand that to be the case. You may have a spouse that leaves you. Paul talked about that to the Corinthian church. He referenced the reality that some spouses leave specifically because of this.

[38 : 26] We know people like that. I've pastored people like that. We all will suffer in a different way but the reality is that we will suffer in some way.

There's the guarantee of suffering. There's also the grace of it. What's translated as given or granted in verse 29 can literally be rendered graced because it means to give freely or graciously as a favor.

The idea here is that not only is suffering for the gospel guarantee it's a privilege. It's not pleasant but it is a privilege to suffer for Christ.

And we see this often in the Bible. Peter and John after being beaten in Acts chapter 5 threatened by the Sanhedrin for preaching the gospel verse 41 says they rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name.

Paul will say later in chapter 3 of Philippians that his desire was to share in Christ's suffering. Peter instructed in his first epistle in chapter 4 he said beloved do not be surprised at the fiery trial which it comes upon you to test you as though something strange were happening to you but rejoice in so far as you share Christ's sufferings that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed when his glory is demonstrated in you in your endurance.

[40 : 02] If you are insulted for the name of Christ you are blessed because the spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. We're not to seek suffering like some kind of psychopath but whenever it comes time we are to view it as a privilege to do so for Christ.

That's really the heart of the gospel worthy life. As Paul turns his attention now to his instruction to these people as a pastor he's concerned that they don't get discouraged in their persecution but that they live their life worthy of Christ that they stand firm that they proclaim the gospel that they

don't fear and that they would count it as a privilege when that suffering and that persecution does actually come.

And that's my hope for each of us that we'd be willing to do the same so that as we desire to become an instrument in God's hand for bringing people to Christ here in Cornelius and Davidson and Huntersville that's why we've started our church we want to worship the Lord and we have a mission we want to see people saved.

That means we're going to have to tell them the gospel and that means not everybody's going to be excited about that. but let's pursue it anyways and if we face suffering for that let's rejoice in the fact that God has counted us worthy to suffer for his sake.

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[41 : 51] Don't forget to visit us online at lakesidebible.church or find us on Facebook and Instagram by searching for Lakeside Bible NC. If you live in the Charlotte or Lake Norman area we'd love for you to attend one of our worship services.

We meet every Sunday morning at 10 a.m. in the gym at Cornelius Elementary School. We'd love to meet you.