

A Gospel-Worthy Life (1)

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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 is where we are as we continue through our series in the book of Philippians. And we're going to read verses 27 to 30, but we're going to divide this passage into two parts. We'll cover the first half of it today, and we will cover the second half of it next Sunday. But let's begin reading, please, at Philippians chapter 1, verse 27. The Bible says, It says, Up to this point in Paul's letter to the Philippian church, he's been focusing on updating the people about his physical well-being.

[1 : 58] He has been updating them on the ministry of the gospel, the status of it. Is it continuing? Has it been prevented? And of course, all of this is set within the context of his imprisonment in Rome.

So in verse 27, Paul transitions away from his own circumstances, and he begins his pastoral instruction in this letter to the Philippian church.

Making this transition, you'll notice in verse 27, he uses the word *only* to open the sentence. It's the first word in the English. It's also the first word in the Greek that Paul wrote it in. He used it at the beginning of the sentence to signify that his singular concern was that they live a life that was worthy of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

That's what he cared about. So he says, I'm not sure what my future holds. I may die. I think God's going to let me live. And if he lets me live, this is why. For your progress in the faith and for your joy in the faith.

But whether I come to you or I don't come to you. That's what he means in verse 27. Whether I survive and I come and get to visit you again in God's grace and God's provision. Or whether or not I'm executed and I never see you again.

[3 : 10] My concern for you Philippians is that you live a life that's worthy of the gospel. That your conversation, your manner of life, your behavior, your conduct as a believer would be fitting for the gospel that has actually come to you and saved you through the power of God.

It doesn't mean that we gain the gospel, that we gain salvation by being worthy. But that we should live a life that the gospel we have already been given, that the gospel we have already been accepted is fitting of and is deserving of.

In other words, now that you're a believer, act like one, Paul says. Whether he was present or absent, he cared deeply that these believers would live out a practical profession of their faith.

He cared that they be unwavering in their faith. And that they would passionately pursue a life that stood firm on the gospel. Paul didn't believe that verse 21, the conviction of that, for to me to live is Christ and to die is gain.

He didn't believe that that should be exclusive to a small group of believers. But that it should be at the heart of every person that has experienced salvation.

[4 : 26] His transition from testimony to instruction communicates that a life that is consumed with Christ is not something to be admired in spiritual leaders. But it's something to be experienced by every believer.

His example was to become their reality. And it was time for the Philippian church to personalize this particular commitment to Christ.

There are times where we view commitment in the Christian life. Where we view faithfulness in the Christian life. To the extent that Paul talks about it here. Well, it makes sense.

Paul was an apostle. That's what he did. He was a church planner. He was a preacher. Of course his whole life is supposed to be consumed with Christ. I'm just a normal guy. I'm just a normal person.

That's not what I do for a living. What do you mean my life has to be consumed with Christ? When Paul addresses this instruction, he's saying this life is not about what you do. This life is about who you are.

[5 : 26] And this is not to be admired. To live as Christ is not just to be admired in spiritual leadership. It's supposed to be experienced by any believer. This is to be your life as well.

And of course this instruction is echoed throughout the New Testament. Paul on different occasions and in different churches wrote the same thing. In Ephesians he wrote, To the Thessalonians he wrote, To the Thessalonians he wrote, That you might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God.

To the Thessalonians he wrote, As you know how we exhorted and comforted and charged every one of you, as a father does his children, that you would walk worthy of God, who has called you into his kingdom and to his glory.

Paul was stressing the point that this attitude that I have is not just exclusive to leadership. This is for every single believer. And it's for you and me too. That our lives are to be worthy of the gospel so that we could in truth stand and say, For to me to live is Christ, and to die is all the gain in the world.

The word conversation here in verse 27, This word is from the Greek word polis, which is used to refer to a city or a city state. Essentially Paul's referring to a particular citizenship as he introduces this instruction to the Philippians.

[7 : 03] Philippi was a very proud Roman province. They had absorbed the Roman life in every way possible. And if you study their history, you'll understand why.

There was a patriotism in Philippi that was unique. So when Paul wrote using this word, they would have understood exactly what he meant. In fact, they had gone so far in their love for Rome and in their citizenship in Rome that they had literally changed everything about their culture.

They changed the way they dressed. They changed their names to Roman names in Philippi. They adopted Latin as their primary language as opposed to Greek, which is what it had been before.

They loved being Roman.

And they cared deeply about living their lives as worthy citizens of Rome. It wasn't from a sense of submission to a tyrannical rule of government.

That's not what it was. They actually viewed their life and their abilities and their purpose in light of their contribution to society. It's quite different than how we view life today.

[8 : 06] Today we think about ourselves. We always look out for ourselves first. We look out for those that we love first. In their life, everything about them was pushed toward contributing to their culture, contributing to their city, contributing to Rome.

They were obsessed with being Roman. There was an incredible patriotism there. So when Paul writes this and he appeals to this mindset in the Philippian church and in the city of Philippi, he's appealing to them to not focus on being citizens of Rome, but focus now on being worthy citizens of heaven.

In fact, in writing about this, John MacArthur said, if the citizens of Philippi were so devoted to the honor of their human kingdom, how much more should believers be devoted to the kingdom of Christ?

And we could fill in the blank with whatever it is that we obsess our lives about. It could be our citizenship. It could be our hobbies. It could be our careers. It could be whatever it is that you have obsessed your life, that you have assumed in your identity as a person.

But if that thing is not the gospel of Jesus Christ, if it's not what Christ has done for you, then you won't live a life that is worthy of the gospel. You may live one that's worthy of an American, but then we're reminded of what Marty read just a moment ago, or that he's saying, kings and kingdoms will all pass away, the word tells us.

[9 : 30] But there's something about that name. There will come a day where the existence that we know it as America will not be like it is now. And so obsess your life about America, and it's not going to mean much.

Obsess your life about your hobbies. There may come a day where you can't achieve your hobbies the way that you want to achieve them. There may come a day when you can't experience the family and the friendships that you have now.

So obsess your life then about the gospel and about heaven. His point was that their conversion to Christ had translated them into the kingdom of God, and it was necessary for them to live as worthy citizens of that kingdom.

He wasn't condemning their desire to be good citizens of Rome, but he was stating that their first concern should be living as good citizens of heaven. Paul was concerned that when their commitment to the gospel was opposed by the Roman culture, that they would stand firm on their faith and live worthy of the gospel that had saved them.

The temptation for the Philippians and the temptation that we will face as well would be to soften our stand on the gospel in order to accommodate or capitulate to the philosophies of the culture around us.

[10:53] It was okay for them to want to be Roman, but there was going to come a point in their life where their Roman-ness was not going to match up very well with the gospel.

And when they were confronted by that culture, the culture that opposed the gospel, the culture that opposed what Christ was, the culture that opposed what they stood for, the culture that opposed the righteousness that they were trying to live out, what would they do?

Would they find a way to accommodate the culture or would they stand firm on the gospel? Would they find a way to capitulate to the ever-changing whims of society or would they stand firm on the gospel?

And it's the same struggle that we're going to have too. When you stand for the gospel, eventually you're going to face opposition and that was the point. He's encouraging them to move forward, to strive together, to focus in on the gospel, but it's underneath the reality that when you do that, your un-Roman-ness is going to face opposition.

People are going to hate you for it. They're going to hate what you stand for. They're going to try to intimidate you. And when that happens, are you going to stand firm?

[12:12] Is your life truly in that moment going to be about Christ and wrapped up in the gospel? Or will you soften and cower? And so that becomes the point of his instruction.

Of course, the nature of the gospel should tell us what this, how this life should be lived out. The truth is, the gospel-worthy life that Paul expresses in these verses seems to be largely absent in the church today.

People whose perspective of life is completely wrapped up in being a citizen of the kingdom of God are rare. And the very nature of what the gospel has done for us communicates what we should be, but it also shows us and reveals how we fall short so often.

Think about what the gospel is. The gospel we believe is a gospel of forgiveness. The only thing that we bring to salvation is brokenness.

The only thing we bring to salvation is sin. The only thing we bring to salvation is rebellion. Yet when we trust Christ, he provides forgiveness that supersedes any sin you've ever committed. It doesn't matter how bad it is.

[13:27] It doesn't matter how much you've done it. It doesn't matter even how much you've rejected him in the past. When you come to Christ and you cast yourself on him alone, and you make him your Lord, he forgives every sin you've committed.

He forgives every rejection that you have perpetuated in your life. He conquers all unbelief in your heart. It's a gospel of forgiveness. But if the gospel is a gospel of forgiveness, why do so many Christians refuse to forgive?

Why don't our lives match up with what the gospel has actually done for us? The gospel we believe is a gospel of repentance. Naturally, if sin is what separates us from God and it's Christ that had to come and pay the penalty for that sin in order for us to be reconciled back to God, obviously that means in order to trust Christ in faith, we gotta turn away from everything else.

That if sin is what separates us, sin must be repented of in our lives. If gospel is a gospel of repentance, yet so many Christians continue to live in willful sin, or at least to affirm that it's okay for others to live in sin.

When we take a stand on righteous living and the culture opposes that, what will you do?

[14:55] Will you find a loophole somewhere in your understanding that would allow you to live the way that you wanna live? Or maybe you don't jump that far into it yourself, but are you willing to

accommodate and affirm sinful behavior in somebody else's life?

Because just some of those things in the Bible, I'm not necessarily comfortable with them, but some of those things in the Bible, maybe they're a little irrelevant to us today. It was a different time now. It was 2,000 years ago. But God's word is unchanging.

The gospel is a gospel of repentance, and we must stand firm on that. It's a gospel of love. So many Christians involve themselves in needless division, hatefulness.

It's a gospel of life. So many churches feel like death. We're supposed to be preaching that what Christ does for us is provide joy in the midst of heartache and suffering and difficulty.

Yet we may ask a friend to come to our service and we can't sing. We don't want a fellowship.

We're quiet. We preach a gospel of life, yet what we portray is deathly.

[16:11] It's a gospel of faith, yet we often live in a state of doubt. It's a gospel of freedom, yet we often try to bind others afterwards by law, sort of a bait and switch.

Come to Christ. You don't have to do anything for it. He'll provide salvation for free. They believe that God will provide salvation for free, and then you insinuate on the back end, now you got to do all of these things.

If you don't do all these things, maybe you didn't really get it to begin with. So this gospel of freedom no longer is a gospel of freedom once you're inside the church. Then it's a gospel of law. It's a gospel of community, yet so many Christians neglect the fellowship of the church.

The point is this. The call of salvation is a call to a radically different life that's focused on Christ and his truth. We're to live a life that's worthy of that gospel, even when it inevitably leads to suffering, as was Paul's point here.

In fact, the whole theme of these verses is on how we should willingly and joyfully endure suffering for our faith. And what we'll study this morning is three quick points that will be much shorter than that introduction.

[17:23] Three demonstrations that Paul gives for the gospel-worthy life. He says, whether I come to you or else I am absent, I may hear of you, and this is what I wanna hear.

If you're gonna live the gospel-worthy life, this is what will be evident for you, especially as you face persecution. The first thing he says is that there would be a commitment to sound doctrine, a commitment to sound doctrine.

Look with me again at verse 27. Only let your manner of life be worthy of 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's spirit.

You stand fast in one's spirit. Standing fast or standing firm was a term used to picture a soldier holding his position at all costs, even to the point of death. Obviously, that context and that illustration, that word picture would be that the soldier would be under assault for some reason. And in that assault, he wouldn't retreat, he wouldn't cower, he would stand firm. He would be on the defensive, but he would stand firm on that defensive. And Paul writes and he says, the gospel-worthy life, when faced with opposition, when faced with an assault from the enemy, when faced with an assault from the culture, the gospel-worthy life stands firm.

[18:39] It stands firm on the defensive. And what it's standing firm on is sound doctrine. And this statement is the reality that what we believe will be opposed, and it must be defended.

It must stand firm. The culture in which we live claims that there is no such thing as truth. At the very least, it claims that truth is a personal relative matter, and that any insinuation of absolute truth is foolish and outdated and even hateful, we're told now.

Believers recognize, though, that the scriptures are the ultimate source of truth, and that the gospel of Jesus Christ is the only means by which a person can know God and be given eternal life.

At some point, no matter how much you love the culture around you, at some point, there's gonna be a conflict between the way that the culture says life is supposed to be and the way that the scripture says life is supposed to be.

When a believer in the gospel is confronted by a culture that vehemently denies the gospel, it's absolutely necessary that Christians stand firm on sound doctrine. That's what Paul's getting across.

[19:54] This gospel-worthy life stands firm on the scriptures. Not only do we stand firm in light of the culture that's around us, but there is a danger today of Christians that aren't even standing firm on sound doctrine within the church.

We must remain constant on the fact that there is only one interpretation of scripture, and that scripture, that interpretation, must not be manipulated to suit the ever-changing whims of our culture.

It's one thing to stand firm against the vehement deniers of the gospel. It's another thing that within the church and within Christianity that you stand firm on the truth of the Bible in general.

That we don't look at the culture and look at all the secondary doctrines maybe in the Bible and change our mindset of what the Bible means and how God intended it based on how our preferences and our culture has changed.

But even within the church, we stand firm on the truth of the Bible. St. Augustine said, if you believe what you like in the gospel and reject what you don't like, it's not the gospel that you believe, but yourself.

[21 : 05] And that's very true. Not only does he say we're to be committed to sound doctrine, he also says we are to experience unity in proclaiming the gospel. Unity in proclaiming the gospel.

Look again at 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.

Standing firm pictures a defensive posture. It's we're facing assault from the enemy, we're facing assault from sin, we're facing assault from unsound doctrine, and we stand firm on that.

Striving together, this unity in proclaiming the gospel is the posture of offensive, of an offensive nature. So as we confront this culture around us, it's not just that we defend our doctrine, but we go on the offensive in proclaiming the gospel, the only thing that can actually benefit the world around us.

We live a gospel-worthy life when in solidarity, we contend side by side with other believers for the faith of the gospel. Unity then becomes one of the dominant themes of this particular book.

[22 : 20] He's already mentioned unity, he's mentioned partnership in the gospel in the first chapter. He's gonna go on in the next passage and in chapter two to talk about the necessity for unity and for humility as they look to one another to engage in gospel work.

He's gonna call out a specific group of ladies in chapter four that for some reason had some contention. He's gonna call them out specifically in verse two of chapter four that they'd be of the same mind in the Lord.

Unity in the gospel is absolutely necessary for us to go on the offensive in this gospel-forsaken world. And that's where we get our mission. It's not just to defend, it's to push forward.

The term comes from an athletic term that pictures a team of people standing shoulder to shoulder, leaning into the opposition, leaning in. It's not just defending against, it's leaning in. I think most of us would say, and I'm gonna put myself in this boat, most of us would stand firm.

If somebody were to confront us with some type of unsound doctrine, we would stand firm on what our belief is. But how many of us without even being confronted are actually pushing forward in an offensive with the gospel to actually tell people that their sin will damn them to hell and that their only hope that they have is that if they trust the gospel of Jesus Christ, that if they make Christ their Lord and turn away from their sinfulness, that's the only means by which they can truly know God and have eternal life.

[23 : 43] It's one thing to defend. It's another thing to go on the offensive. The church is weakened when believers lose focus of their singular purpose as the church, which is the faithful proclamation of the gospel.

That's our mission. That's what we do. That's what we're supposed to do, not just by the preacher on a Sunday morning, but every day. Proclaim the gospel. The good news is what the word means. We do that with joy, but we do it together as well. We splinter often. Not us, but the church in general. Splinters often because we lose focus of that purpose.

The truth is we have no other strings to our bow. We're often tempted to take a stand on anything and everything except the gospel. We litter our social media feeds with every possible opinion about politics and sports and entertainment.

Yet how often do we go on the offensive and proclaim the gospel? We sit at work day by day and we'll have a hundred conversations with the person that sits in the cubicle next to us.

[25 : 06] We'll have a hundred conversations about anything and everything we can think of. But how many of us have locked arms with the church and gone on the offensive to proclaim the gospel to those people?

The gospel is the only thing that can help them. And we've been commanded to share it. So not only does the gospel-worthy life stand firm on truth, but it unites with the mission of the church and goes on the offensive to share the gospel.

Then finally, we see faithfulness in the face of opposition. Faithfulness in the face of opposition. Look at the beginning of verse 28 and this is where we'll stop.

And in nothing terrified by your adversaries. This really is the end of this particular series that Paul's writing.

The punctuation that's given to us in the church Bibles is a little bit confusing. If you've got a scripture journal, it actually ends there with a period. It's the end of the sentence and then the next part of that phrase picks up as a new sentence which begins, this is to them an evident sign of destruction and of salvation for you and that from God.

[26 : 21] So when we look at the construction of this the way that I believe Paul intended it to be written, we see that this third thing in verse 28 is actually the end of a series. That in this demonstration of the gospel, this demonstration of the gospel-worthy life, we stand firm, we unite in proclaiming the gospel, striving together for the faith of the gospel.

And then he tacks on here, not being fearful of any of your opponents in anything. What's translated here as terrified is an equestrian term.

Speaks of a startled horse suddenly bolts and bucks his rider. It gives the idea of being skittish or constantly on edge. And Paul wasn't downplaying the reality of fear when coming up against physical harm.

He wasn't denying that or downplaying that. This was an instruction not to panic or live in paranoia to the point that it would actually prevent you from standing firm in proclaiming the gospel.

It was meant to be a reminder to them that as citizens of the kingdom of God, their king was in control. That as they have believed the gospel, as they have been translated into this kingdom of God, their primary citizenship is now heaven and their king rules it all.

[27 : 46] And they can trust his purpose and they can trust his plan. Now that plan is probably going to include some persecution in some form or another. For them, it was going to actually include martyrdom.

That may not be the case for us, especially to that extent, but there's going to be opposition.

There's going to be difficulty and we all know that. We're not foolish to it. Can I be honest and tell you that this is where I am the weakest personally.

It's one thing for me to stand firm on the gospel. I can do that. I enjoy theology. I enjoy studying the Bible. I enjoy having conversations about that. I'm full of opinions. Just ask Julie.

It's one thing for me to proclaim the gospel. It's kind of my job. I get to do that every Sunday. I get to stand up here and preach the word. Where I personally struggle is living in a constant state of fear for actually doing those things.

I can build up a confidence to come into a church worship service because everybody expects if they're going to come to church, they expect to be preached to. There's nothing really to be scared of with that. It's another thing for me to walk over to my next door neighbor, Karina, and actually tell her, you know what?

[29 : 00] I'm actually a pastor and I'd love to tell you about the Bible. I'd love to tell you about the gospel. I live in this state. This skittishness that just we're creeping along in this Christian life as far as the culture around us.

We're so afraid of the persecution that inevitably will come. We're so nervous about what people are going to think and what people are going to say because our pride rules everything in our hearts.

We're so nervous about that that we never actually end up proclaiming the gospel because we're jumpy at every little thing. I don't know what that person is going to think and maybe they'll think I'm coming on too strong or maybe it'll affect my ability to move up in my job.

Maybe my wife who's not a believer maybe my wife not Julie but maybe your wife that's not a believer maybe your wife that's not a believer maybe this is going to affect my if I really get serious about serving the Lord and if I really try to share the gospel with her she might think that I'm just some kind of fanatic she may leave me and I love my wife and I want my wife to leave me.

If I really try to push my kids if I really try to teach them the gospel I really try to get them to come to church maybe they're going to resent me in some way maybe it's going to affect my boldness or my ability to get a promotion maybe it's going to affect my friendships yes yes it will affect all of those

things in one way or another but the gospel worthy life lives in the reality that their king controls it all and if Christ is our Lord he's the one we serve not our boss not our spouse not our friendships all of those things are important so long as our life is first primarily consumed with Christ a believer that's consumed by fear will never stand firm nor will it strive for the gospel this isn't the type of boldness that comes when we take a deep breath either and just kind of look inside and muster up any kind of courage it's not the type of boldness that Paul's referencing here this is a boldness

[31 : 09] I think that comes through the power of God through the spirit of God as we draw close to him as we daily preach the gospel even to ourselves remind ourselves of what God has actually done for us God through his power builds this confidence it's given as we truly trust God that's the point everything we do is built on faith which is why this is such a struggle it's a struggle for me because in reality my faith is often very weak those of you from Laurel know exactly how weak it is took me a year and a half to actually move forward with this church plant I was scared of it it's tough to trust the Lord in that but how foolish is that as we look at the gospel we trust God with our eternity but we don't trust him for anything else sometimes so much of our perspective as believers is directly related to the extent to which we trust

God trusting the truth of God will move us to stand firm on sound doctrine we'll stand firm on it when we truly trust God that he's right and we'll defend it trusting the work of God will move us to partner with the church in proclaiming the gospel trusting his word will cause us to stand firm trusting the fact that he actually does work through us will cause us to press forward in striving together for the gospel trusting the goodness of God the rightness of God will move us to be faithful in the face of opposition you see all of this eventually just comes down to faith without faith it's impossible to please him the writer of Hebrews tells us some of you may say you know when I when I trusted Christ when I when I when I ventured into this

Christian life I came for the forgiveness and for the love and for heaven and for God I didn't come for suffering and difficulty I didn't come to have to live in light of the threat that people are going to oppose everything that I believe and oppose everything that I am and if my life actually gets wrapped up in this that means I'm going to face even more opposition but all of those things end up coming down to the extent with which we actually trust the Lord this week Julie and I had a conversation preparing for this particular message a truth that Julie had to remind me of this week that even in preaching a sermon or studying a passage or leading a church or whatever this is when I can let go of the fact that I can't do it and actually trust the Lord to do it even if I look like a fool even if I don't do it the right way or if I'm weak in some form or fashion I have to trust the Lord and as soon as I can trust the

Lord his work can begin through me in whatever way he desires that work to be done if you're going to be bold at work or in your family or wherever else you're going to avoid the skittishness in the Christian life you're going to have to trust God that even in persecution he loves you and he has a purpose for that Marty's testimony he didn't mention as much about today earlier this year about going through that difficulty he was airlifted to the hospital and almost died had brain surgery a couple brain surgeries actually earlier this year a man with a weak faith would look at that and wonder maybe is God truly got my back in this is this really what this life is supposed to be like and you get through those moments with joy when you truly trust God you cast yourself on him you stand firm when you really truly believe that what he has given us in his word is actually his word and so just like we mentioned earlier in the service like that man in the new testament when we come daily to our time of study our personal devotion we come with that prayer

Lord I believe your truth help my unbelief help me believe it so that I can stand firm on it help me to trust that you're going to work when I have this conversation later today with my wife help me to trust that you're going to work when I actually share the gospel on social media this week and I just kind of put this out there help me trust that you're going to work help me trust Lord that you are actually in control and if I deal with suffering it's all because you want me to deal with that living the gospel worthy life to truly say for to live is Christ and to die is gain starts with this kind of demonstration that we pattern our lives after the gospel itself and then we live it out in faith so that these things become a reality for us as well express written consent from

[36 : 36] Lakeside Bible Church don't forget to visit us online at lakeside Bible 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 meetNINGNING