

Message #9

Philippians 1:27-30

J. Dwight Pentecost told an interesting story that happened to him when he was a pastor in Pennsylvania. He was selected to represent the churches in the area at a convention in New Jersey. At the end of the convention he received a check to cover travel expenses. So he took his check to the bank to cash it. It was a check for \$70. He gave his check to the teller and the teller counted out 10 ten dollar bills. He counted it three times. When he handed it to Dr. Pentecost, Dr. Pentecost said, “Sir, I think there has been a mistake.” The teller said, “You saw me count this three times, there has been no mistake.” Dr. Pentecost said, “Would you care to count it one more time?” He handed the man the cash and the man started counting again and when he got to seven, his face got red. He didn’t know what to say but he looked at Dr. Pentecost and said, “Sir, you must be a Christian.” It wasn’t what Dr. Pentecost said that caused the man to realize he was a Christian; it was what he did (*The Joy of Living*, pp. 46-47).

Now the Apostle Paul had just completed telling the believers that he knew God was going to allow things to work out well for him. He said he was ready to go to heaven, but he believed that God would perhaps permit him to remain on the earth (1:25). But regardless of that, he wanted the Philippians to always conduct themselves in a way that reflected their “Christian Citizenship.”

Carefully observe that **verse 27** begins with an adverb “only.” That adverb means if you do nothing else do this. If you don’t do anything else do this one thing—conduct yourself in a way worthy of the gospel (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 371).

In fact, the word “conduct” (πολιτευω) is one that means to be a citizen or live in such a way that we show we are citizens who have been touched by the gospel (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 371). We are to conduct ourselves in a way that reflects the fact that we are part of the “colony of heaven.”

He actually wanted to hear about that. He wanted to hear about how committed to the Gospel these believers were. He wanted to hear about their reputation as being dedicated to the Gospel and to Jesus Christ.

Now the plural pronoun “you” and the middle voice verb “yourselves” means this is not just an individual mandate, this is a church mandate. In other words, the believers at church have a responsibility, in and of themselves, to conduct themselves in a manner that reflects the gospel. Dr. H. A. Ironside said, “It is not merely our individual responsibility to walk worthy of the gospel that the apostle here presses. He has rather before him assembly responsibility” (*Philippians*, p. 33).

REGARDLESS OF CIRCUMSTANCES, GOD WANTS HIS PEOPLE INDIVIDUALLY AND CORPORATELY TO LIVE THEIR LIVES WITH A CONDUCT THAT IS WORTHY OF THE GOSPEL.

The Gospel is to be believed and it is also to be lived. That word “gospel” shows up six times in chapter 1 (v. 5, 7, 12, 16, 27(twice). The Gospel is a grace/faith message that is about Jesus Christ. This Gospel message is to be preached (v. 17); it is to be proclaimed (v. 18) and it is to be lived (**v. 27**).

We are to conduct ourselves in a manner that reflects this grace Gospel we proclaim. Now that is a big assignment. It is a daunting challenge for us to show our Christian Citizenship regardless of what is happening in our world.

As near as I can determine, there are four ways we do that:

WAY #1 – Believers reflect a heavenly citizenship worthy of the Gospel by consistency. **1:27a**

The verb conduct oneself is present tense, which means this is to be a continual action. Furthermore, we read that Paul expected them to do this whether or not he was present. So regardless of what the situation was, regardless of whether or not Paul was present, God wanted the Philippians to have a consistency to their character and conduct. He wanted them reflecting their Christian citizenship all the time.

Since this is given to the church, certainly one of the ways people reflect their citizenship is when they consistently gather together at church. That certainly shows the Gospel has in fact changed their lives.

WAY #2 – Believers reflect a heavenly citizenship worthy of the Gospel by a unity of stand. **1:27b**

The church is supposed to stand for something and there should be a unity in the stand. There should be a unity in doctrine and in spirit. Now this was at a time in which if you stood for the truth of the Gospel and the grace of God you could suffer persecution. Paul wanted the church to have a unity in their stand.

Some churches don't dare stand for anything. They are so wishy-washy you don't know where they stand. People have various opinions and it is like some major ecclesiastical smorgasbord of doctrinal opinions. That is not what God wants in a church.

When people come to a church where there is a bunch of strife and division in doctrine and spirit and a lot of verbal backbiting and bickering, that is not worthy of the Gospel and frankly the power of God will not be there. It won't be in the individual and it won't be in the church.

Paul wanted to hear that the church was standing firm in one spirit. That word “stand firm” means to stand firm in the sense of holding your ground in a fixed position. This particular word was used of a determined soldier who would not budge from his post even in the face of opposition (*Ibid.*, p. 418). This soldier had an “unflinching courage.”

What Paul is saying is that a church that will reflect a citizenship worthy of the gospel is one that stands firm in their unity and in their focus on God and His Word no matter what the circumstance. An individual or church that truly reflects God's Gospel will be unified in their commitment to the Gospel of God's grace and to the Word of God.

Now it is interesting that Paul says stand firm in "one spirit." The verb "you stand firm" is plural and "one spirit" is singular. What I understand this to mean is that the church is to have Spirit-produced tenacity together in their commitment to the Gospel and to the Word of God.

The word "spirit" is one that emphasizes there should be a vital principle and frame of mind in regard to the people of God (*Ibid.*, p. 367). There should be a unified pulse that runs throughout the family of God. When God's people have a united pulse that they are dedicated to the Gospel and to the Word of God, they are displaying their heavenly citizenship.

WAY #3 – Believers reflect a heavenly citizenship worthy of the Gospel by a unity in striving.
1:27c-28

The participle "striving together" is one that means to strive together or contend together in a contest (*Ibid.*, p. 424). Dr. Marvin Vincent, the Presbyterian grammatical scholar of the mid 1800's to early 1900's, said that this word was used to mean "to contend in the games." Contests such as running, boxing, and wrestling were well-known to this first century world and this word was used in that context.

Now the striving is to be done with "one mind." Paul uses a different word that is the word "spirit." The word he uses here is one that refers to the actual breath and life of a person (*Ibid.*, p. 488). The particular flare of this word means this contention is to be at the very heart and breath of the individual and the church.

Now what there is to be a united contention for is "the faith of the gospel." So what Paul is saying is that one way we reflect a conduct that is worthy of the Gospel is by a contending for the grace faith Gospel. We should be people who do not flinch when it comes to the fact that only faith in Jesus Christ will save from sin. We should contend and fight for that message.

The grace gospel is the very life of every believer and the very life of the church and there should be a unified striving to defend that. If someone creeps into the church promoting anything other than the grace faith Gospel, he should discover that he is at war with everyone in the church. If someone tries to put works or law into grace, that person will find he has just run into a theological buzz saw. That is what reflects God's grace.

Paul says in **verse 28** that when believers unite in their stand for the Gospel, it will not always be easy. In fact, believers who stand for God and His Word will have their share of opponents. When you present the grace faith Gospel to a world of religious words and proud human works, there will be opposition.

Dr. Ironside said the thought among many believers is to fight a defensive warfare with the hope of eventual victory. Paul is not presenting this idea. He is presenting the idea of fighting an offensive warfare, in which we take a united stand for the truth (*Ibid.*, p. 35).

Paul says in **verse 28** don't be alarmed by opposition. There will be those who will stand against you and your message. Don't be shocked that people oppose you and your beliefs. Don't be shocked that people resist what you have to say. That word "alarmed" speaks of being started and frightened (*Ibid.*, p. 392).

Now Paul says don't be shocked that you face opposition because such opposition because of your stand for the grace faith system proves two realities:

Reality #1 - Opposition proves the opposer is doomed. **1:28b**

When we stand for the faith grace gospel and we see one who resists, what we are seeing is one who is on his or her way to destruction. Literally we are seeing one who is on his or her way to perdition or hell.

Any person who opposes the Word of God and the truth of God and those who are actually standing for the truth of God are heading to a very disastrous destiny.

Reality #2 - Opposition proves the believer is saved. **1:28c**

When we face opposition because we are standing for truth, it is proof that we are saved.

Both of these things are from God. God shows who is right with Him and who isn't by one's commitment to the truth. When we know we are standing for the Word and truth of God, opposition actually proves we are right with God. It shows we are right with God and it shows the opposer that he is not right with God.

WAY #4 – Believers reflect a heavenly citizenship worthy of the Gospel by Christ-like suffering. **1:29-30**

Many people believe a commitment to Jesus Christ will produce a Shangri-La utopia of prosperity and pleasure. The message many proclaim is believe in the Lord and you'll have no problems or pain; just health and wealth.

What most neglect to realize is that the Christian life is not a playground; it is a battleground. We are in war here and sometimes when you are in war you suffer.

One expositor said if you visit the front lines of a war zone, you expect to see tired, worn down soldiers who are wearing dirty and grimy uniforms and they are carrying weapons. You don't expect to see them lounging by a pool, wearing shorts and tee shirts playing volleyball.

Many believers think the Christian life is just a fun time in which you lounge your way through life. Paul says no way. Sometimes Christians suffer.

Now what we see in **verse 29** is that God is the one who granted us the gift of believing on Him. That verb “grant” means that this was a Divinely given gift. The passive tense of the verb indicates that the faith was not self-accomplished, but was Divinely given. This verb proves the doctrine of election. God granted us our faith.

So the believer was actually given an amazing grace gift of faith. But also along with it God has granted us the privilege of suffering for Him. **So not only did God grant us faith in Christ, He has also granted us the privilege of suffering for Christ.**

Paul was locked up in jail writing this very letter because of his presentation of the grace Gospel. His life was a life of trouble and suffering and he viewed it as a grant from God. Paul reminded the Philippians that his life had been a “conflict.” He faced one conflict after another.

So as we stand for the truth, we will face opponents and when we do that, we are experiencing what God considers to be the same type of suffering of His Son.

There are times when it will not appear as though we are winning. In fact, there are times when we will appear to be losing and suffering. We won’t get the promotion. We won’t get the job. We won’t win the award. We won’t get the praise. We won’t be popular. Sometimes we will be mistreated, misunderstood, misrepresented simply because we are a believer. Sometimes the reason is simply because we are connected to Jesus Christ.

Now in **verse 30**, Paul qualifies it as meaning the same kind of thing he experienced. Paul was presently in prison because of his faithful testimony for Jesus Christ.

Suffering for a faithful believer will bring them closer to God.

So after analyzing these verses there is one question to ask ourselves: “Are we striving after a life that is worthy of the Gospel?” May God help each of us to truly answer “Yes.”