

## Worthy of the Gospel – Philippians 1: 27-30

### Introduction & outline

- Scripture Reading: Philippians 1: 12-30
- When persecution comes, how would you respond? If your boss asks you to abandon church life, or the government outlaws worship gathering as an illegal practice, what would you do? The Philippian church was facing persecution, and Paul had some important teaching and encouragement for them.
- Outline

Title: Worth of the Gospel

1. The Only Principle for Living - Worthy of the Gospel (v27a)
2. How Does It Look to Be Worthy of the Gospel – Standing Firm in One Spirit for the Gospel (v27b)
3. How to Stand Firm in One Spirit - Striving Together, Not Alarmed by the Opponents (v27c-v28a)
4. Why Not to Be Alarmed by the Opponents - Sign of Eternal Destiny (v28b)
5. How to Get to Eternal Destiny - the Grace of Suffering (vv 29 -30)

### The Only Principle for Living - Worthy of the Gospel (v27a)

- “Only”: Singularly, as if nothing else matters (including Paul’s imprisonment and the persecution the Philippian church is facing). The only thing that matters is to conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ
- “Conduct”: The original text means “to be a citizen”, and this is significant since the Philippians are prided to be Roman citizens with unique honor and privileges. Paul is reminding them that their real “citizenship is in heaven” (3: 20)
- “Worthy”: The basic concept is to be of equal weight. Paul is asking you to put the cross on one side of the balance and your life conduct on the other side, and it should be balanced. Does your life have such a weight? How much is this asking of us?

Psalms 62: 9 “Men of low degree are only vanity and men of rank are a lie; In the balances they go up; They are together lighter than breath.”

However, the gospel of Christ’s salvation changes the weight of our life! By the indwelling Christ, we can live out lives that are worthy of the gospel, so the scale with the cross on one side will be balanced! How much does the cross weigh in your heart? If you want to conduct

yourself in a manner worthy of the Gospel, you need to constantly remind yourself of the weight of the Gospel. The other side of the scale can also be the grace of calling (Ephesians 4: 1), the Lord (Colossians 1: 10), or even God Himself (1 Thessalonians 2: 12)!

### **How Does It Look to Be Worthy of the Gospel – Standing Firm in One Spirit for the Gospel (v27b)**

- “stand firm”: This is not about personal salvation. Personal salvation has God as the foundation, so a true believer will never be shaken (cf. Psalm 62: 6, Romans 14: 4). This verb is a military term describing soldiers standing against enemies, not leaving their post even if they’re killed. Here it is plural, describing believers unified in the church fighting together. That’s why they must stand firm “in one spirit”.
- “in one spirit”: This leads to an important theme of Philippians —— church unity. Unity is given by the Spirit, and our duty is to preserve it. (Ephesians 4: 3) An important condition for unity is that we are in one spirit, striving toward one goal, that is, “for the faith of the gospel”. If everyone has a different spirit and pursues his/her own goal, the church will not be in unity.

### **How to Stand Firm in One Spirit - Striving Together, Not Alarmed by the Opponents (v27c-v28a)**

- “with one mind striving together”: Participle describing “standing firm”. To stand firm in spiritual battles, we must strive together in unity. “Striving” is an athletic term emphasizing the concept of teamwork. In sport games, a team does not need superstar players who only want to show off their own skills. It needs team-players. The verb already has this idea, but Paul adds “with one mind” to further strengthen his point. The concept of unity is emphasized three times in this verse: in one spirit, with one mind, striving together.

How important is unity? Think about the Corinthian church. Many problems in Corinthian church: Condoning fornication, suing each other, being unloving, abusing gifts, etc. With all these serious problems, which one does Paul deal with first of all? Unity!(1 Corinthians 1: 10)

- “for the faith of the gospel”: Unity is not the goal in itself. The goal is the work of the gospel. The work includes sharing the gospel with nonbelievers (1: 5) and continuous progress and joy in the faith for believers (1: 25), which is also the key element of church unity (cf. Ephesians 4: 13). It also includes resisting false teachers and teaching that distorts and undermines the gospel (3: 2).
- “Not alarmed by your opponents”: Another participle for “standing firm”. In order to stand firm in spiritual battles, we must not fear the enemies. The original verb describes horses, when frightened, throwing their front legs up in the sky, leaving the rider on the ground. Some

horses are very timid and get frightened too easily. They often throw up their hooves. One cannot stand firm if he is easily alarmed by the enemy's persecution.

### **Why Not to Be Alarmed by the Opponents - Sign of Eternal Destiny (v28b)**

- “which is a sign of”: The fact that we are not “alarmed by your opponents” is a proof, proving the eternal destiny of two kinds of people. It is a proof of salvation when you obey God's command under persecution. If you compromise out of fear, you will lose this proof of salvation.
- “Destruction”: Eternal destruction. Nonbelievers will eventually be separated from all God's blessings without any hope.
- “Salvation”: Eternal salvation, where Christians will enjoy the presence of God forever.
- “From God”: This is one of the boldest declarations of God's sovereignty in the Bible! The Greek shows that the entire thing in the previous text is God's will, including the enemy's persecution, the Christians' fearlessness as they unite together and stand firm for the battle, and even their final destination, all of which are God's work. Not only the result is from God, but every step of the way is all by God's will. Everything is under God's sovereign control by His great power! Christians must hold fast to God's absolute sovereignty in all things in order to stand firm in faith.

**Theological supplement:** This by no means implies that God can do evil. Sinners do evil from evil motives, but God ordains all things from His good will. The general principle is as in Genesis 50: 20 “As for you, you meant evil against me, *but* God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.” (cf. Acts 2: 23)

**2 Timothy 3: 12** “all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.”

If you never experienced any form of persecution, consider: Is your commitment to Christ firm enough? Persecution is easy to avoid. All you need to do is compromise. Tell a little lie. Make a false report. When your boss asks you to do something that is obviously against God's will, if you just do it, you can easily escape a potential persecution.

### **How to Get to Eternal Destiny - the Grace of Suffering (vv 29 -30)**

- “For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake”: “Granted” is from the same Greek word as “grace”. It means given by grace. All things from God are grace to you. Paul especially mentions two kinds of grace here: Believing in Christ and suffering for His sake.

- “Believe in Him”: Grace clearly precedes believing (cf. Ephesians 2: 8). But here, it is only a backdrop to highlight the second type of grace——Grace to suffer for His sake.
- “Suffer for His sake”: The reasons to view suffering as grace: 1) For Christ’s sake (cf. John 7: 7; Colossians 1: 24); 2) Suffering is part of the process where all things work together to sanctify believers to be more like Christ (Romans 8: 28-29); 3) Suffering increases assurance of salvation(v28); 4) The testimony in suffering is especially powerful (Acts 16, Salvation of the Philippian jailer and his whole household); 5) All these bring glory to God.

## **Summary**

A life worthy of the gospel of Christ cannot be lived out by a loner. In order to live out this kind of life, Christians must stand firm in unity and fight together. You must be committed to the body life of the church. Your life must be connected to one another. Otherwise, you cannot stand against the enemy’s attack. The lion always attacks the sheep separated from the flock.

The challenge from an underground pastor in Afghanistan where there’s fierce persecution: “We will never let our hope be silenced. We will make sure the world hears the gospel through every breath we take. And we know you will help us by living the gospel, using your freedom and sharing Jesus with those who have come to your neighborhoods. Please continue to stand with us.”  
Will you stand with him?