



## **A Citizen's Life**

*Series: Philipians – To Live Is Christ*

Philippians 1:27-30

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**Intro:** Paul's letter to the Philipians has given us some amazing examples and teaching thus far. Think about Paul's example to us that we have seen the last few weeks. Paul thanked God always for the Philipian brothers and sisters for their partnership in the gospel with him. And Paul's love and thankfulness for that church resulted in deep love and affection between them. And as we know because we pledged to pray for one another like this, Paul prayed that their love would abound more and more, with knowledge and discernment so that they could approve what is excellent and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Christ. And I want to encourage you to come on Wednesday nights because we corporately have done this on the last two Wednesdays with the exception of VBS week and it has been so sweet. We have really opened up and really prayed and God has blessed that time.

-Paul has given us an example of how to respond in suffering. He rejoiced in that what has happened to him, including his imprisonment, has served by the sovereignty of God to advance the gospel. This has given other brothers confidence to speak boldly of Christ. Some are preaching Christ out of good will and a love for Christ and for Paul but some are preaching the truth out of rivalry just to afflict Paul. And Paul's response is still to rejoice. Paul is facing a life and death situation. He will come to trial and either be vindicated and released or found guilty and put to death and he is not sure which. But his response is to continue to rejoice.

-How can he do that? We have seen that the reason that Paul can continue to rejoice is because of Paul's union with Christ. Paul's supreme goal in life is to magnify and glorify His Savior which leads Paul to proclaim that he "will not be at all ashamed but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body whether by life

or by death. For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain." This is the summation of Paul's life. Why? This is true because Paul's life is Christ. This is what a life that has been transformed by Christ should look like.

-The testimony of Scripture is that true saving faith will always evidence or prove itself in a life of obedience to Christ and a love for Him is the root of that life. And so Paul is now going to call the church to that kind of life. He is going to call the church to live the life of a citizen of heaven.

### **1 – A Citizen of Heaven (27a)**

**- "*Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ,*" (Philippians 1:27a, ESV)**

-Ok, I know what you are thinking. How in the world do you get citizen of heaven out of this? Let me show you. When you look at the Greek for the phrase "let your manner of life be" it is only one compound word. This word shares as its root two nouns which mean city and citizenship. So what Paul is telling us here is to live as citizens. And he is emphatic about it because he uses the word only which means that this is the only way to live. For you as the church, to live as a citizen worthy of the gospel of Christ is the only way to live. It is the only option for you because Paul tells the church in 3:20 that their citizenship is in heaven. So what does this mean? What did it mean to this church? What does it mean for us? The key to understanding Paul's use of this word lies in the background of this city and what thoughts that word would have meant for the believers in the church at Philippi.

-Philippi was a Roman colony. What that means is that the citizens of Philippi because it was a Roman colony had the Roman citizenship conferred upon them. And that was a big deal because Roman citizenship was a big deal. Not everybody got to be a Roman citizen. Just because you were born in the Roman territories did not mean that you were automatically a Roman citizen. It was a privilege usually conferred upon the leading families and for the military for their service. For many in the boundaries of the Rome's dominion, citizenship was out of reach. And Roman citizenship carried responsibilities. A Roman citizen's allegiance was expected to be to Rome and the emperor and to the point of reverence. As a citizen you were to worship the gods of Rome and their emperors. With citizenship in Rome came the expectation that you

would carry a sense of pride for Rome and its ways no matter how far you actually lived from Rome. Why? It was this way because no matter how far you actually were from Rome if you were a citizen of Rome you got the benefits and privileges that citizenship provided. Citizenship in Rome gave citizens privileges like exemption from some forms of taxation and gave them the right to due process with the Roman legal system. And in return, a citizen was to maintain a standard of conduct that brought honor to Rome and enhanced its reputation and a citizen was to uphold the dignity of the empire in the way one lived and related to others. A responsible citizen was to do nothing that would bring dishonor and reproach on his city.

-When Paul uses this word that means to live as a citizen everyone understood what that meant. They got it. But Paul is not speaking of their citizenship in Rome but their ultimate citizenship in heaven. Roman citizenship paled in comparison to the citizenship that Paul has in mind here---one that is worthy of Christ. And this church understood. They understood and could now marvel that because of Christ they were now citizens of an infinitely more majestic city than Rome where their Lord and Savior reigned.

-And Paul is telling them that because this is true and they are citizens of heaven that their actions and conduct should reflect that. Paul is telling them to live in the Roman colony of Philippi as the citizen of heaven that they are. Paul is telling the Philippians to live out what they were in Christ because of His gospel. Paul is telling them to live in such a worthy way that the gospel of Christ is adored in their lifestyle and in their daily actions and conduct.

-And because they are citizens of heaven their allegiance is to Christ and not the emperor because Christ is the king of kings. And because they were citizens of heaven their conduct should bring honor and glory to their king and uphold the majesty of heaven here on earth. They were to live in that Roman colony in such a way as to reflect the worthiness of their citizenship in a heavenly homeland even though they were far away from it. They were to realize that their ultimate citizenship was in an infinitely more glorious city than Rome where the Ruler of the universe sat enthroned and their behavior had better show it. Their conduct was to be worthy of Christ and their lives were to correspond to the truths of Him that they professed to believe.

-This was true for the church at Philippi but it is just as true for the church in West Salem. One of the greatest testimonies of the church is to live with spiritual integrity and have our lives match our words. When Christians that profess Christ live consistently below the standards of biblical morality and truth and reverence for Christ, they compromise the truth of Christ and their witness for Him and discredit the gospel and lessen their impact for the kingdom of God in this world. Think about it. Why would we expect the world to embrace a faith whose people fail to live in the holiness that they profess is powerful enough to transform. What they actually do is by not living as a worthy citizen of heaven in this world is destroy the witness of the transforming power of Christ to those that they witness too. When the unsaved look at the church and do not see holiness or any difference from themselves why would there be a reason for them to believe the gospel of Christ?

-Paul is calling, just as he did the church at Philippi, to live worthy lives as the citizens of heaven that we are. Paul is calling us to adorn the gospel of Christ in our conduct in this world that does not know Him. Paul is calling us to allegiance to Christ and to honor and glorify Him not just in word but in living! May we hear that call today!

-So what does the life of a worthy citizen of heaven look like? Paul gives us some instruction.

## **2 – Heaven’s Citizens are Unified (27b)**

**- “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,” (Philippians 1:27, ESV)**

-Paul tells the church to live as a citizen of heaven so that whether I come and see you or am absent. Remember here that Paul doesn’t know what the verdict of his trial is going to be. He really doesn’t know if he will live or die. But Paul wants this church to know that their living as a citizen of heaven is not based on what happens to him. Whether here is there or not really doesn’t matter---they are still to live worthy lives based on Christ’s presence with them not his.

-And Paul tells them that as a citizen of heaven they should be standing firm in one spirit and with one mind. What Paul is telling them is that one quality of the life of a citizen of heaven is unity with other citizens.

-One spirit and one mind---some commentators take this to mean the Holy Spirit and say that Paul is teaching that we only stand firm and live like this in the power of the Holy Spirit, which is definitely true. But based on the context of the passage and how it is used the Greek word can also mean attitude and that meaning seems to fit the context of this passage better. Paul's point here in this passage is that the citizens of heaven would stand firm on the gospel with the same attitude and the same mind (which translates soul) being united together in unity, harmony, and dependence upon one another. Being of one spirit and mind means that the church would be focused together on the main thing that matters which is the gospel of Christ and making Him known by their words and their lives. Just as Paul knew that they, like him, were united with Christ and one with Him he wanted them to be united together and one with each other. Unity in the church was needed for the glory of God but unity is also needed for the church to accomplish the mission that God has for it and that is the advance of the gospel of Christ. And Paul knew how much work and effort that takes and he knew that they needed to be unified to do it.

-And advancing the gospel does takes effort and work. The word for striving is derived from a root word that refers to athletic competition except in this case Paul wants them to strive together and not compete against one another. Paul has given us an example of putting our best interest aside and doing what is best for the church and the church needs to do that here. This unity and striving that Paul is speaking of requires that the church put aside personal agendas and stay united in the mission of the church---the gospel. And let's be honest again, putting other people's needs and interests before our own does not come naturally to us. Paul knows that because he will give further instruction on this in chapter 2. But Paul knows that the success of this church in the mission of the gospel depends on their unity and work together with each other and not against one another especially in a hostile environment which exists in a pagan world. Such love for one another is only found in the bond of the gospel through which we have become heaven's citizens. The bond that holds the church together is the blood of Christ and when the church realizes that humility and love will be found there and

their mission will be to make their Savior known. Paul would spend and be spent for this mission and he calls the church to do the same.

-But this love and humility and unity does not mean that the church cowers in spineless and quivering fear. Not at all but exactly the opposite.

### **3 – Heaven’s Citizens are not Fearful (28)**

**- “*and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God.*” (Philippians 1:28, ESV)**

-Paul tells the church to strive side by side together for the gospel and to **not be frightened by their opponents**. That word for frightened is not the normal word for fear but a word that was used to describe the panic of startled horses. So Paul is telling the Philippian believers not to give in to the intimidation of their opponents and not to panic or be scared into silence. What opponents? Think about it. The Philippian believer’s allegiance is to Christ and not the emperor. They worship Him and not the pagan gods of Rome that other Roman citizens worship. They don’t participate in pagan rituals that their other friends and family members participate in. Why not? Because they have been transformed by Christ and are now citizens of heaven. Their purpose in life is to bring glory to Christ whether by life or death and they are gospel centered. And in the midst of a pagan culture that will be noticed and that will be persecuted. Paul told Timothy that a life of godliness would be persecuted and that is what Paul has called the church too---a life of godliness. Certainly this was something to fear right? How could they not be afraid? Paul wants them to know that they don’t have to panic because they are a citizen of heaven and God is the one true King and He is in control. Don’t be intimidated because even though it may seem that your opponents have the upper hand God is victorious and you will share in that victory.

-And Paul tells them that their response of no fear and no panic even when persecuted will actually be a sign to their opponents of their destruction. The very fact that their opponents were attacking the body of Christ was a sign that they were headed for the judgment of God. Their persecution of the church, which was a persecution of Christ

himself was a sign of their judgment to come---their destruction. The rage of their opponents marks them as the gospel's enemy and proves that they are headed for eternal destruction. That sober reality should move our hearts not to thoughts of revenge but to patience and pity. To know this should make us calm but never arrogant but wish to overcome evil with good. The only reason we are not in the same boat is because of the grace of Christ that has saved us and made us a citizen of heaven.

-That's why Paul says that not being frightened is also a sign of our salvation. The very fact that the church is being persecuted is a sign that they belong to Christ and gives assurance of their salvation which should bring great joy not sadness. **D.A. Carson said this about the twofold sign.**

**"Your change in character, your united stand in defense of the gospel, your ability to withstand with meekness and without fear the opposition that you must endure, constitutes a sign. That sign speaks volumes, both to the outside world and the Christian community. It is a sign of judgment against the world that is mounting the opposition; it is a sign of assurance that these believers really are the people of God and will be saved on the last day."**

-So church, Paul's words are very appropriate for us today as we live as the church in a lost world. Persecution is coming our way and probably soon. We must be unified together and striving side by side for the faith of the gospel and trusting in Christ. If we are doing that then we have no reason to fear or panic. Our persecution shows that our opponents are headed for destruction which should cause pity in our hearts and it also shows that we belong to Christ and will be raised on the last day and that should be great assurance to us of our salvation that should stir in our hearts great encouragement and gratefulness and praise to our Savior. This is a gift of God's grace and His grace only. That's why Paul reminds the church that when he tells them that their salvation is from God. We didn't earn it and we definitely didn't deserve it. Our being saved---our faith was not mustered up by us but it is a gift from God. And that thought leads to our last point.

#### **4 – Heaven’s Citizens receive Gifts (29-30)**

**- “For it has been granted to you that 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 hear that I still have.” (Philippians 1:29–30, ESV)**

-Paul uses the word that it has been granted to them. The word that he uses for granted carries the meaning of to give, render or grant graciously. These things that have been granted to them has been given to them by the grace of God. These things are gracious gifts of God to the church. Well, what are these gifts? They are twofold.

**A – Faith to believe**---Paul tells the church that their faith to believe has been graciously granted to them by God in Christ and for His sake. What a magnificent blessing. We mentioned this earlier but we didn’t muster up our own faith and believe and apply the atonement to ourselves. That didn’t happen. We don’t see Scripture teach that. Why? Scripture says that we were DEAD in our sins and dead people don’t do anything---nothing. God’s word teaches that our faith was a gift of His grace and we never deserved it.

**-“And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind. But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved— and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.” (Ephesians 2:1–10, ESV)**



-Faith to believe in Jesus that God graciously grants to us by regenerating our dead hearts gives us the desire and capacity to repent of our sins and to trust and surrender to Jesus instead of ourselves. What a gracious gift! I want you to think about the benefits of this gift in your own life personally right now. As we think about what Christ has done for us and how God has saved us there will be no room for pride in our hearts. And to discover that my faith comes all from God's grace should encourage my assurance and stoke my love for Christ and should cause my heart to overflow with thanks, praise and worship. My prayer is that we are being moved to worship and praise right now. And through this gift of belief we have been become citizens of heaven because we have become children of God.

**- *"But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God, who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God."* (John 1:12–13, ESV)**

-And as children of God we have become heirs of God---fellow heirs with Christ provided we suffer with Him. And that leads us to the second gift of God's grace that Paul mentions.

**B – *Sufferings***---really, my sufferings are a gift? Yes, in God's sovereign grace, He not only gave us the gift of faith but He also gave us the gift of suffering for His sake so that our faith would grow and be strengthened and that we would be made into the image of His Son!

**-Romans 5:1-5--- *"Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us."* (Romans 5:1–5, ESV)**

**-1 Peter 1:3-9--- "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! According to his great mercy, he has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, to an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you, who by God's power are being guarded through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ. Though you have not seen him, you love him. Though you do not now see him, you believe in him and rejoice with joy that is inexpressible and filled with glory, obtaining the outcome of your faith, the salvation of your souls." (1 Peter 1:3–9, ESV)**

-Because of these truths we can count our sufferings and trials joy.

**-James 1:2-4--- "Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing." (James 1:2–4, ESV)**

-The suffering that comes to believers as believers is not a sign of God's neglect or lack of love or care for us but rather is a proof of His love and that His grace is at work in our lives as He is making us more like Christ.

-Think about this, through our sufferings we are being permitted, by God's grace, to walk the way of Christ with Christ Himself to a closer fellowship with Him. That's why Paul writes later in this book in 3:10 that "I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and may share His sufferings becoming like Him in His death." Suffering for Christ is not a burden but rather a high honor that God bestows on faithful saints that belong to Him.

-And Paul tells the Philippians that they are partnered with him not only in the gospel but also in this suffering. He tells them and encourages them that they are engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have. They saw how Paul was treated in Philippi for the sake of the gospel and they know he is in prison now in Rome for the sake of the gospel and they know that Paul knows how they are suffering for the sake of Christ in Philippi and Paul tells them that this is a gift of God's grace. And Paul wants them to respond the same way that he is responding. And how is Paul responding? He is rejoicing! Paul's point is that he and the church were all recipients of grace and the gifts of this grace is faith and suffering and they are cause for rejoicing.

## Application

-We can and must stand strong in unity, not because we have something to prove about ourselves, but because we have a King who is worthy of our wholehearted allegiance. When you find your Christian brother or sister frustrating or their opinions differ from yours or there is a thoughtless comment or you fill in the blank, there will be a temptation for you to look upon them as your enemy or your competition and you will want to withdraw from them. This is when you need to remember two truths. First, your real enemy named Satan is intent on causing division in the church and between you and your brothers and sisters in Christ. Don't allow him to do it but strive for unity in the bond of peace by the Spirit's power. And second, remember that you both stand together for the gospel and you both are in need of God's redemptive grace and you both are recipients of that grace only through Christ and be humbled by that. And in humility repent, reconcile and speak the truth in love for the glory of Jesus in your life.

-The understanding that salvation AND suffering are both gifts of grace is essential to our discipleship and perseverance. As we begin to realize how God used Jesus's suffering to bring us everlasting joy in knowing Him, we will begin to have surprising reactions to our own suffering and we will be able to, like Paul, rejoice in them. We will see our sufferings as a means to bring even more glory to Jesus and we will be like the apostles in Acts who when persecuted rejoiced that they were counted worthy of it. May that be our hearts today.

-Standing together, striving side by side, without fear and as full recipients of two of God's gracious gifts to us in believing and suffering---this is a life worthy of the gospel--  
-this beloved is full citizenship. Embrace it and let your lives show it!!!

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