



Series: Philippians: Growing in Christ

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Speaker: Spence Shelton, Lead Pastor

Text: Philippians 1:12-30

Title: The Life Worthy of the Gospel

Introduction

Today we are in Philippians 1.12-29. And I gotta tell you this passage of scripture has a very timely & important message in it. Our author, the apostle Paul, is going to give a clarion call to the Philippian church and I am completely certain it is God's message for Mercy church right now. He's going to look at a church that is in a religiously pluralistic society and say you have one job. And listen, the reason I think this is timely is because we too live in a pluralistic society. Meaning there are multiple views about truth and reality. We call these worldviews. Because they are like lenses that influence how you see the world around you. And we Christians have to get familiar with living in a post-Christian America. We have to get more comfortable being uncomfortable. We have to adapt our methods of evangelism & discipleship to ensure we are

speaking the truth of Christ into the moment we are in. The Philippians were in a pre-Christian context doing the same thing. And here is what Paul said to them:

27 Just one thing: As citizens of heaven, live your life worthy of the gospel of Christ.

This is Paul's ONE THING. I believe this is the purpose of the entire letter of Philippians. Even though this is his favorite church, He's seeing division crop up and they are getting distracted from their one thing. Their main purpose. So, he says here in chapter 1 this is what they gotta be about. Living a life worthy of the gospel of Jesus.

The gospel is so valuable.

It is both the cornerstone of our faith and the crown jewel and the heartbeat. The gospel is an announcement. Directed to sinners. People who have tried to live life apart from God. Who have chosen their own way over God's way. And as a result, have forfeited their standing with God. Traded it in for the fleeting pleasures of this world. The announcement of the gospel to sinners is THERE IS HOPE! This incredible God has not abandoned you even though you have abandoned him. He still loves you. And he has made a way! Our sin owed a debt of death, eternal separation from God. But God sent his son Jesus to pay our debt. So, we sinners rejoice at this incredible news. because our debt has been paid! Not only that - when they buried him, 3 days later he got out of the grave! That is



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our hope! It's valuable. So, we who believe it...are called to live WORTHY of it. We want to live worthy of it. Because of how worthy Jesus is.

Listen the reason I am so passionate about this is because passive fear riddled Christians need to be woken up & called up to the life worthy of Christ. Our present context that God has placed us in is so concerned with not offending anyone that we Christians can adopt a posture that is more concerned with living a socially acceptable life than living a WORTHY life. And Paul is going to show and tell what a worthy life is. But today will fall on deaf ears if you do not believe he is worthy.

So, some of you need go no further than that. You need to return to the treasure in a field. One sentence parable. Matthew 13:44 - "The kingdom of heaven is like treasure, buried in a field, that a man found and reburied. Then in his joy he goes and sells everything he has and buys that field. -- Matthew 13:44

So, if as I'm going through what a worthy life looks like...you find yourself not desiring it...go back to the field. Go back to Jesus and consider him again. But for us who desire it, let me tell you what it looks like. And remember - the spirit of God carries us through it.

I'm going to walk through verses 12-30 and show you 6 things Paul says make a life worthy of the gospel of Christ.

12 Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually advanced the gospel, 13 so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard, and to everyone else, that my imprisonment is because I am in Christ.

Paul is talking about his imprisonment. Remember our context of this letter. He's writing from a prison cell in Rome. And what does he want them to know only a few sentences into his letter? He wants to update them on how the gospel is advancing. And he says you may be surprised but this imprisonment hasn't stifled the gospel...it has actually advanced the gospel! Because God loves using the plans of humanity that are trying to stop his mission to be the very thing that aids to accomplish his purposes. He just gets more glory that way. Listen this is the first mark of a life lived worthy of the gospel

A life worthy of the gospel is fearlessly focused on the mission

Paul has tunnel vision. You know what that is? - Illustration: Baseball coach when I was pitching.



He is looking for opportunities to share Jesus. He knows that above all else God has called and equipped and strengthened him for one task - advancing the gospel. That is his purpose man. And as a result of his focus on the mission and not on his circumstance look at what is happening - the Roman guard is hearing about Jesus. Because in prison guess what Paul is doing - he's preaching the gospel. But NOT ONLY are the Roman guards hearing about Jesus. His focus on the mission is inspiring other believers too. Watch this:

14 Most of the brothers have gained confidence in the Lord from my imprisonment and dare even more to speak the word[d] fearlessly.

When I see **you** risk it all to live a life worthy of Jesus...I get inspired to live a life worthy of Jesus. I believe we need to recapture the glorious risk-taking DARE TO SPEAK THE WORD FEARLESSLY attitude of the early church. Like I want to revert to my middle school self a little bit here and just say "I dare you." Remember how that used to be related to "I dare you to eat that." "I dare you to try to throw a peanut m&m at that rhinoceros at the zoo." "I dare you to ask her to the dance." It was playful yes but, in those moments, where you were dared - something triggered in you. you didn't want to be called what - "a chicken." Apparently the most cowardly of the animal kingdom. And after all you are not a chicken. SO, you

had the summon the courage and dare. And you made a memory whether you succeeded, or she shot you down.

And as we settle into adulthood many of us become risk averse. We don't dare in most areas and that risk-averseness seeps over into our faith. And so, I believe we need to receive this word from God and this example from the early church and DARE. WE need to DARE not over silly trifles that have no eternal consequence. As persecution looms on the horizon for the American church we need not to cower in fear or be distracted by internal squabbles. We need to DARE to speak the word of eternal LIFE FEARLESSLY. Let's be compassionate yes. FEARLESS and COMPASSIONATE are not at odds. They are complimentary.

I see this in our team of 7 going to Nairobi - I see fearless focus. They've counted the cost of what they are leaving and said the MISSION of God to speak the words of eternal life are WORTHY of MY LIFE. And so, we say a goodbye to them today. But not a sad goodbye. A GOSPEL GOODBYE. And those are different. Because gospel goodbyes have joy-filled anticipation. AND...their fearlessness should motivate US to dare. You have people in your building, or on your street who need the word of eternal life that you have. Will you DARE to give it to them? Will you Dare to pray for them? Or are we, mercy church, to CHICKEN to trust God still has some people to save!! Is our faith so submerged in cowardice we won't



even dare to SPEAK the most important word? Let's dare for the gospel. Dare to befriend people who are far from Christ? Great news is - The Holy Spirit of God is going to do the work when you dare to trust him. So, success is just taking the next step. That's my admonition to you this week.

15 To be sure, some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of good will. **16** These preach out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel; **17** the others proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, thinking that they will cause me trouble in my imprisonment.

Now he brings up some division in the church. He says you know some brothers in the church are actually preaching the true gospel. These aren't false teachers. These are people faithfully preaching the gospel...but with impure motives. These guys have, v 17, a selfish ambition problem. They want Paul's platform. They want Paul's influence. They think things are actually better with Paul in prison and out of the way. There is a whole sermon to preachers right here and to any who are more concerned with people liking and subscribing to themselves than they are to leading people to Jesus. Paul is NOT endorsing their pride or the sinful road it's leading them down. BUT watch what he majors on:

18 What does it matter? Only that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is proclaimed, and in this I rejoice.

His focus on the mission keeps distractions from becoming disasters. See that? I mean this is something he's going to address. Because their pride creates disunity. BUT he's not focusing on their pride. He's focusing on the mission. And that leads him to REJOICE because at the end of the day the gospel is being preached! Now if Paul's life was about Paul, there would be no rejoicing. His rivals are holding him down and back. But Paul's life is focused. Tunnel vision. So, he isn't going to let the squeaky wheel get the grease. The mission is too important.

Yes, and I will continue to rejoice **19** because I know this will lead to my salvation[e] through your prayers and help from the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

He's quoting Job 13.16 right here where Job says even if I die, I'm saved. Because I will appear righteous before God in heaven. And the way God sustains me to that moment is your prayers & help from the Holy Spirit.

20 My eager expectation and hope is that I will not be ashamed about anything, but that now as always, with all courage, Christ will be highly honored in my body, whether by life or by death.



Focus. All the way to the point of talking about whether he lives or dies. A worthy life is eager to honor Christ in life and in death. That's amazing. He's there in prison and you know he's thinking about being executed. And he's thinking - I really just want Christ to be honored in how I die. God give me courage to stay focused even in my last breath. This has been the cry of Christians at the frontier of missions for centuries. Will it be ours as well?

In fact, that leads us right to the next mark of living worthy of the gospel. I'm going to read you vv 21-26.

21 For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. **22** Now if I live on in the flesh, this means fruitful work for me; and I don't know which one I should choose. **23** I am torn between the two. I long to depart and be with Christ—which is far better— **24** but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for your sake. **25** Since I am persuaded of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, **26** so that, because of my coming to you again, your boasting in Christ Jesus may abound.

**A life worthy of the gospel is
motivated by heaven**

To live is Christ - Christ is my identity. Get that? Identity is a powerful word now. How do you identify is now a question in our local mission field that we've never had before about 5

years ago. Talk about that more in a minute. But Paul's identity is Christ. It's what he desires his life to be about. Even in a disgusting prison cell...again...he's living FOR CHRIST. Christ is his LIFE. So much so that he longs for the full reunion with Christ promised to all believers. That to be absent from the body (2 Cor 5.8) is to be present with Christ. And THAT is far better. Now do not think Paul is suicidal here. No, he's in a prison. He's had a hard life as a Christian. Back in verse 20 (show it again) he says "now as always" - Here in prison, as always...He's been there a lot. It would make sense that he's feeling the draining reality of fighting to LIVE. And he's got a looming trial & likely execution. It would be easy to give up the fight and let the body waste away. He is longing for heaven where there is no more pain or tears or prison or injustice. He feels he is needed to be there and encourage them though so he's girding himself up. BUT listen church - do not miss the very important point. HEAVEN is FAR BETTER than your life here. God has placed a longing in our hearts for eternity (Ecc 3.11). And eternity in heaven awaits believers when their life here ends. We need to lift our eyes up a little more. And get our hearts off the STUFF of this world. Because it is SO temporary. So fragile. If your "to live is ____" anything other than Christ, it is too fragile. It can be taken from you.

A mentor of mine is constantly challenging me to solve for the "what if spence gets hit by a bus tomorrow" problem. Because it could happen. TO LIVE IS CHRIST, TO DIE IS GAIN. When my



heart is set on heaven, I'm a lot more open handed with my life here. To live is Christ - so Jesus, what would you have me do until I come see you face to face? That's a powerful prayer. Dangerous because of what God's response may mean for you.

Next two markings of a worthy life are in our anchor verse for today.

27 Just one thing: As citizens of heaven, live your life worthy of the gospel of Christ.

I'll be brief on this one, but it is VERY VERY critical to the worthy life. You have to know God's word if you are going to live worthy of the gospel. I'm showing you a few things here today FROM where...God's word. God has revealed the worthy life...the good life...in his word. Here's what happens - the Bible becomes the wisdom that the Holy Spirit brings to bear on your life. And you start to grow more into the image of Christ because you are being formed by this living and active word. You are a citizen of heaven. That's a huge deal. Get to know your new country. Get familiar with all that it means to walk through this world as a citizen of another world. Short way to say it

A life worthy of the gospel is informed by God's word

How do I live worthy of the gospel in my school when barely anyone ascribes to the same belief system I do? What does God say about race? About sex? About women? About money? About the poor? A worthy life is only worthy if it is built on and informed by God's word! Otherwise, you might live a passionate life. But not a worthy life. And I see plenty of Christians passionate but uninformed. And that is not worthy. It is immature. Which means filled with good intention but off in actual application. So, you might find yourself passionately singing along in church but unintentionally living in a way that defames Christ in your life. Because you didn't know. So, engage God's word. Now here is some help from you on this. It's the next one.

Then, whether I come and see you or am absent, I will hear about you that you are standing firm in one spirit, in one accord, [f] contending together for the faith of the gospel,

A life worthy of the gospel is actively united with the local church

There's a battle metaphor at work here. Standing firm & contending. In one spirit & together. The Roman's had a battle formation called a phalanx that both Paul and his readers would be familiar with. A group of soldiers moved together in a way that gave them more protection than if they each walked individually. My shield would be out front defending you and I. Your shield would be over us defending you and



me. And a third guy would have his spear coming out between our shields and he is trusting our shields to defend him.

Paul is calling for this kind of ACTIVE unity in the body. Contending...making a case for...the faith. And we must do that together. We must contend for the faith as a local body of believers. We must do a better job equipping you to contend for the faith in the pluralistic world. I know there are other ideas contending for your mind and heart. Contending for the throne of the public square. In fact, today is the first Sunday in something known as Pride month. A month where a counter biblical worldview is **CONTENDING** for the throne of truth in our age. This worldview underneath this agenda contends Self, not God, is on the throne of truth. Therefore, truth is relative to the individual. So, the individual decides on gender and sexuality, not God. And the unforgivable sin in this worldview is to claim there is absolute truth. Because it is tantamount to insurrection. You are threatening their throne.

So, we need one another here in the local church. We need to be encouraged, prayed for. Some of you are getting pressure at work to conform to this agenda. Middle and High School students you will be increasingly bullied and ostracized for holding to a biblical sexual ethic and not conforming to this agenda. I promise you. Brothers and sisters in our church who experience same sex attraction - I know this is a difficult time. The worldview out there says “why would you deny WHO YOU

ARE?” And God says you are not your desires. In Christ you are son or daughter of God. And you are brother and sister. And Jesus is worthy of your singleness as you look to live a life pleasing to him, not conforming to the age. And I **KNOW** you need your church right now. And you are wondering as you crucify your desires with Christ...is the church going to crucify you? And the answer is a resounding no! We are going to **CONTEND WITH YOU!**

WE NEED EACH OTHER more than ever. Because **contending** requires effort. Sometimes we get wounded & we need to heal. Sometimes we feel alone and a text or call or meal with a friend in Christ goes a LONG WAY to restore our souls. Paul then tells us the next mark of a life worthy of the gospel because it talks about our approach as we contend:

28 not being frightened in any way by your opponents. This is a sign of destruction for them, but of your salvation—and this is from God.

**A life worthy of the gospel
walks by courageous faith, not fear**

Now let me tell you what this means. This does not mean we shout and decry and get angry at our opponents. Those contending for a different truth. That is what FEAR does. Counselors will tell you anger is a secondary emotion. People are scared...and they express it as anger. But because we are in Christ...and we are secure in that. We are secure in what we



are contending for. We don't fear our opponents. What do we do? We love them. We pray for them. We walk across the room and introduce ourselves and build a friendship. We show hospitality. Basically, we try to do what Jesus would do. And listen the cultural worldview upon us says that to love me you have to accept everything I think and believe as good. This is a lie designed to silence any claims to absolute truth. But in response we say no, you can both love and disagree with someone. Even when the disagreement is as deep as worldview.

So, we don't hide or compromise our convictions. We walk by faith. We ask God each morning - show me when to speak and when not. God, I need you today to help me do what Jesus said: love those who persecute you. You know one of my prayers for Mercy Church this month? That it would be a stereotype shattering church to the PRIDE community. That you will find we hold an orthodox sexual ethic that the church has held for 2k years. But you are 1000% welcome here and we will lovingly help you take your next step with Jesus. Because being a disciple isn't about conforming to us. It's about submitting to Jesus and doing what he says. No one here is afraid of you or your past. We are all sinners with stories. God graciously tore down our old worldviews and showed us his better more loving way. May you find Jesus here. And we'll walk with you as he does his work. Leads me to the last point.

29 For it has been granted to you on Christ's behalf not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him, **30** since you are engaged in the same struggle that you saw I had and now hear that I have

**A life worthy of the gospel
embraces suffering for the gospel**

Let's be clear this is a specific kind of suffering. All of us suffer. And in ANY suffering, we should lean into Christ because we are suffering as he suffered. He will help us in our time of need. But look closely at verse 29. Paul here says 2 things have been granted to you. Granted means gift. From God. On Christ's behalf. Because Christ wants this for you. First, to believe in him. Your belief in Jesus is a gift from Jesus. If you believe the gospel, then right now in your heart you should THANK HIM for that. Because your belief is a gift. Which is just like what he told them that we saw last week - HE began that good work in you. This is why we Christians are marked by love. By thankfulness. Because we have NO CLAIM on our standing with God. HE saved ME.

And not only did he give me the gift of belief. He gave men the gift of suffering for him. This specific kind of suffering is a suffering that is brought on because you choose to publicly identify with Christ in a world that is hostile to Christ. You will suffer for saying Christ is the only way. When you live as a citizen of heaven...worthy of the gospel...the world will



despise and reject you. These aren't my words. Jesus said it to his disciples in Matthew 24. You will be despised and rejected for my namesake.

And what I'm saying is that when you are mistreated. Whether it is physically beaten, publicly shamed, professionally black balled, disavowed by your family - when this happens because you've chosen the way of Jesus...there is a humble rejoicing you can do. Because you are being allowed to participate in the very sufferings of Jesus. This is the true way of Christ.

Adoniram Judson letter to the father of the woman he wanted to marry

"I have now to ask, whether you can consent to part with your daughter early next spring, to see her no more in this world; whether you can consent to her departure, and her subjection to the hardships and sufferings of a missionary life; whether you can consent to her exposure to the dangers of the ocean; to the fatal influence of the southern climate of India; to every kind of want and distress; to degradation, insult, persecution, and perhaps a violent death. Can you consent to all this, for the sake of him who left his heavenly home, and died for her and for you; for the sake of perishing,

immortal souls; for the sake of Zion, and the glory of God? Can you consent to all this, in hope of soon meeting your daughter in the world of glory, with the crown of righteousness, brightened with the acclamations of praise which shall redound to her Saviour from heathens saved, through her means, from eternal woe and despair. ¹

Will you embrace suffering for the gospel as a gift from God?

Closing - Gospel Balm

¹ (Quoted in Courtney Anderson, *To The Golden Shore: The Life of Adoniram Judson* [Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1987], 83.)