

Please turn in your Bibles to Philippians chapter 1. We are concluding this chapter this morning, and Paul concludes it by making a switch from his personal example to teaching more on principle. Our passage this morning is a continuation of what came before it, and it can be summarized as further teaching on what the phrase “to live is Christ, and to die is gain” means. It is further teaching by the Apostle on what it means to magnify Christ no matter the circumstance. This shift from example to principle continues on throughout the rest of this letter. This passage lays the foundation for the teaching that lies ahead. With that in mind, lend your ear to the reading of God’s holy and infallible Word from Philippians chapter 1 beginning at verse 27.

Read Philippians 27-30

Pray

We all understand what it means to be a citizen of a country. There are rights and privileges and duties that come with that citizenship. When someone is born in this country they are expected to live as an American. When someone comes to this country and becomes a naturalized citizen the same is true. Someone who lived under Sharia law in Iran cannot become an American citizen and continue living under and imposing upon others that law system. When someone comes from Britain and becomes an American citizen they do not continue to use the British pound as currency, they do not continue to pay British taxes, they do not continue to live according to the dictates of the British monarchy or the parliament. No, when someone is a citizen of a country they are expected to live as becomes a citizen of that country. The same is true of one who becomes a citizen of the Kingdom of heaven. Just as there are civic duties expected of us as citizens here in America — we are required to pay our taxes, obey the laws of the land, be good neighbors, vote for those who will rule according to the precepts of the Lord — so also we have duties as citizens of the heavenly kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ, made visible in the church. This is what Paul is speaking of in verse 27 when he says, “Only let your conversation be

as it becometh the gospel of Christ.” You may be thinking to yourself that this verse says nothing of citizenship. But the word that is here translated ‘conversation’ is the Greek word πολιτεύεσθε which carries with it the connotation of civic responsibility. You may be able to tell that in the way the word sounds; in fact, we get our English word politics from this term. This could just as well be translated, “Only let your citizenship be as it becometh the gospel of Christ.” Paul is encouraging these Philippian believers to live according to their citizenship in the Kingdom of God. Friends, if you have been brought from death unto life by the redemptive work of Christ Jesus, you have denounced your citizenship of the kingdom of darkness and have been made citizens of the heavenly kingdom. You must now live according to that citizenship. So the exhortation to you this morning is live a life worthy of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. We will consider this exhortation in three ways: first, seek unity for the sake of Christ; next, display courage for the sake of Christ; and lastly, endure suffering for the sake of Christ.

Let us consider the first way in which we are to live a life worthy of the Gospel of Jesus Christ: seek unity for the sake of Christ. Look with me once again to 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 ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.” Paul encourages the saints at Philippi to ‘stand fast in one spirit.’ There’s a little bit of disagreement over what this phrase means. Some commentators take it to mean something akin to esprit de corps. We use the phrase ‘kindred spirits.’ However, this doesn’t seem to fit what Paul is saying, nor does it coincide with how he uses the term ‘spirit’ elsewhere. If he were talking of a spirit of unity, a spirit of likemindedness, a spirit of harmony then he would have used a qualifying word. Whenever we see Paul use the word ‘spirit’ without qualifier it is in reference to the Holy Spirit. It is as if Paul is saying, ‘Because you all have been united together in the Holy Spirit, you are to stand fast.’ It is that vital union that Paul speaks of so frequently in his writings that is in view here. Paul is

calling upon the spiritual unity of believer being united together in the Spirit of Christ as the grounds upon which unity in the Church is built.

But this is not to say that believers are only to rely upon the unity found in the Spirit of Christ, but that spiritual unity ought to spur you on to a greater unity in likemindedness. It is ‘with one mind’ that you ought to strive together. Christians should regard the smallest symptom of disunion, as we would the beginning of a fire within our own houses. It must be put out quickly, else it will destroy the entire place. Charles Simeon writes, “This is essentially necessary to the welfare of any Church: if there be dissensions and divisions among them there will soon be confusion and every evil work. And where shall we look for union, if not among the household of God? Have they not all one faith, one hope, one baptism, one God and Father? Are they not all members of one body, all animated by the same Spirit, all heirs of the same glory?” And since we are partaking of communion next week, allow me to make a point of application in regards to preparing to come to the Table. Isn’t this unity what we declare visibly as we sit together at the Lord’s Table and partake of the sacramental meal of bread and wine? We affirm anew that we are family, bound together in union with the Savior. As we partake of the signs of Christ’s self-giving love for us, we are also pledging our resolve to follow Christ’s example in self-giving love for one another. How utterly unsuitable would it be, then, for us to sit at this table, using the emblems of Christian love, while allowing lovelessness toward our brothers or sisters to fester in our hearts! This week, as you prepare to come to the Lord’s Table, examine your hearts to see if there is a spark of disunity which must be extinguished.

Friends, we are at war with the evil one and his minions. We are at war against the principalities and powers of this world. Paul highlights this in his plea for unity. This phrase ‘striving together’ is a military term. We are all fellow-soldiers, who, having a common enemy and a common warfare, who ought to have our minds united

together in a holy agreement. When I was in the Army we spoke a great deal about unit cohesion. It is the lifeblood of the Army. Why is that? Because if there was disunity among the unit who was to go to war then there was a great risk of failure on the battlefield. Not only would there be disunity in the approach to destroy the enemy, but there would be the increased risk of what's known as fragging, where one soldier deliberately kills another. Friends, you must be unified in your striving together for the faith of the Gospel. Otherwise, the strife and divisions and contentions will kill you from the inside quicker than the enemy himself can. So strive together for the faith of the Gospel. Put aside any differences or divisions and be united under the religious which you profess. It ought to be your most valued possession. If religion is worth any thing, it is worth everything. Brothers and sisters, you must seek unity for the sake of Christ.

In that unity you will find boldness, boldness to face whatever may come your way. This leads us now to consider the second way in which we are live a life worthy of the Gospel of Jesus Christ: display courage for the sake of Christ. We see this in verse 28, "And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God." The Philippian believers were facing adversaries on multiple fronts, both within and without the Church. Paul, being the great pastor that he is, sees within this congregation the temptation to become afraid because of the work of their adversaries. But Paul, like a great military general seeking to motivate the troops before going out to battle, gives this impassioned exhortation to these saints to rely upon one another and the Spirit of Christ among them in order to cast out any fear of man or even fear of the evil one. Paul is echoing the words of David in Psalm 27, "The Lord is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid? When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell. Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident." There

is nothing on this earth which should strike fear into the heart of the believer, because Jehovah Himself is on your side.

Paul says that for the adversaries this is a ‘token of perdition.’ It is the tell-tale sign that someone is not of Christ. No one who has the Holy Spirit residing within him would dare raise a finger against the children of God; yet, how often do we see those who claim to Christians carry out some of the most vicious attacks against those who are His. We see this all over the place. One of the worst places it is evident is on social media. TikTok is full of people who think they are “real Christians” and yet go about seeking to destroy the bride of Christ by espousing deconstructionism and sowing seeds of doubt within the hearts of believers. It’s evil. It’s wicked. It’s blasphemous. These people will get their reward, perhaps not in this life, but most assuredly in the life to come when they are cast into the lake of fire along with their father the devil. But to you, believer, who do not fear, this is not a token of perdition but of salvation. We are naturally afraid of suffering; and are easily deterred from those things which would subject us to heavy trials. But if we considered the cross as a badge of honor, as a source of good, and as a high favor conferred upon us by God himself, we should feel less anxious to avoid it, and be more emboldened to live a life worthy of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. What better way to seal your faith than by being willing to seal it with you very own blood if need be.

This is your testimony to the world around you. Think of all the Christians throughout history who boldly took a stand for the Gospel even in the midst of their adversaries. Think of John Knox and how his stand for the Gospel in the midst of tumultuous times shook the nation of Scotland and won those people for the cause of Christ. Think of George Wishart who was burned at the stake for the sake of the Gospel and how it was said that the stench of Wishart sparked the Reformation in Scotland. Think of the Covenanter pastors who stood before President Abraham Lincoln and called upon him to abolish that wicked institution of slavery and to recognize the crown rights of King Jesus over this nation. Do not be

as we see so many in this world today being wavering in their profession. Do not be a wishy-washy Christ who goes back and forth in his testimony. Have boldness. Be courageous in the midst of your adversaries. Who is to say that the John Knox of America isn't within our midst today, the one who will shake the nation of America and bring about a covenanted Reformation here in this land? Will you have the boldness and courage to be that man? Take a stand for Christ and do not let any adversary that may come your way intimidate you into backing down. Display courage for the sake of Christ.

One way in which this courage will be most prominently put on display is in your reaction to persecution in this life. This leads us to consider our final way in which we are to live a life worthy of the Gospel of Jesus Christ: endure suffering for the sake of Christ. Look with me at the final two verses of the chapter, "For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me." Notice that Paul is telling these believers that to suffer for Christ's sake is a gift of God. It is not something that is to be feared. It is not something that is to be avoided at all costs. Compromising the Gospel for the sake of comfort in this life is not an option for these saints at Philippi, nor is it an option for us either. Suffering for the sake of Christ in this age ought to be understood as a gift of the Lord which He uses for our sanctification and the furtherance of the Gospel. This must be kept in mind. Suffering, such as cancer or illness or even violent crimes, is not what is in view here. What the Apostle is speaking of is suffering for the sake of Christ, suffering for the Gospel. Matthew Henry says, "It is not simply the suffering, but the cause, and not only the cause, but the spirit, which makes the martyr. A man may suffer in a bad cause, and then he suffers justly; or in a good cause, but with a wrong mind, and then his sufferings lose their value."

There are those among us in the Church today who are on some sort of suicide mission seeking out suffering. They are doing

things with the intention of provoking the world to bring about suffering on the Church. Friends, this mentality must be condemned. We ought not intentionally cause offense in order to become some marginalized persecuted group. To do so is evident of an impure heart, of impure motives. There is a reason we do not go onto private property with a megaphone claim to preach the Gospel just to then act as though we are so oppressed when the cops get called and we're asked to leave. Believe it or not there are people out there who do just that. Then they go and plaster their video recordings of the incident all over social media hoping to garner some kind of Christian street-cred from other believers. It's sickening and it makes a mockery of the blood of the martyrs which was spilled in true defense of the Christian religion. It does nothing but make the Church look bad in the eyes of the world for the wrong reasons. 1 Peter 4:14-16 says, "If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God on this behalf." May we never be so self-conceited that we attempt to instigate persecution in order to make us look like better Christians. Let us not seek out suffering but instead view the suffering that comes our way for the sake of the Gospel as a gift of the Lord.

Friends, you must remember that in believing, you receive from God all the blessings which you stand in need of: but in suffering, you give to God: you give your name, your property, your liberty, your life, to be disposed of in any way which may tend most to His glory. As many in the church defect from the faith once for all delivered to the saints, take your stand upon the obedience and blood of Christ, the God-man, by which full atonement has been made for the sins of His people. Make the bloody cross, the empty tomb, and the occupied throne your cheerful boast and constant theme. Suffering is always a problem to be fixed or avoided or

gotten around in our culture. But sometimes our sufferings are better interpreted as a privilege, especially when we are called upon to suffer for Christ's cause and kingdom. When you are persecuted for the sake of the gospel, the sufferings you endure are evidence that you are a citizen of another world, a member of the kingdom of heaven.

I want to leave you with the noble example of James Renwick, last of the Covenanter martyrs. This young pastor, when he was captured, was pressured by the magistrate to swear to King James VII and II, yet he refused. His response was amazing, "No! I own all authority that has its prescriptions and limitations from the Word of God; but I cannot own this usurper as lawful king, seeing both by the Word of God such a one is incapable to bear rule, and also by the ancient laws of the kingdom which admit none to the Crown of Scotland until he swear to defend the Protestant Religion, which a man of his profession cannot do." With this final stand for the Word of God and the true religion in Scotland, Renwick was condemned to death at the young age of 26. Jock Purves book *Fair Sunshine* records the last moments of this martyrs life as he climbed the scaffold to the gallows to receive his reward for Christ's sake, "Lord, I die in the faith that Thou wilt not leave Scotland, but that Thou wilt make the blood of Thy witnesses the seed of Thy church, and return again and be glorious in our land. And now, Lord, I am ready; the Bride the Lamb's wife, hath made herself ready... Lord, into Thy hands I commend my spirit, for Thou hast redeemed me, Lord God of truth." What a beautiful example that is of a man who boldly, courageously, endured suffering for the sake of Christ. He died, joining, as he said, "my testimony to all that hath been sealed by blood, shed either on scaffolds, fields or seas for the Cause of Christ." Let this example and the countless others encourage you to endure suffering for the sake of Christ.

Brothers and sisters, you have been called unto a kingdom and been made citizens of its realm which is not of this world. You must live as becomes a citizen of the Kingdom of heaven. Do not let

divisions or disunity gain a foothold among the brethren, but extinguish it when it is but a spark so as to not lose the body to its wicked and destructive flames. Seek unity for the sake of Christ. Do not fear those revile you, those who make it their purpose to see to your destruction and the destruction of the Church of Christ, but instead display courage for the sake of Christ. And do not see suffering as a means by which the evil one will bring about the fall of the Church, but instead see it as the gift of God which will bring about a furtherance of the Gospel as the blood of martyrs being the seed of the Church. Endure suffering for the sake of Christ. Dear saints, this world is a difficult place to live in as a Christian because it is not your home. You belong to another King and are citizens of another Kingdom. Live a life worthy of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.