

Study 04
“Gospel Worthy”
Philippians 1:27-30



Dwelling in the Word

1. Prayerfully read through Philippians 1:27-30 and ask: 1) What words, phrases, or images stood out to you? 2) What does this say about what God desires to accomplish in you? 3) How could you respond to what God says in this passage?

Beginning the Conversation

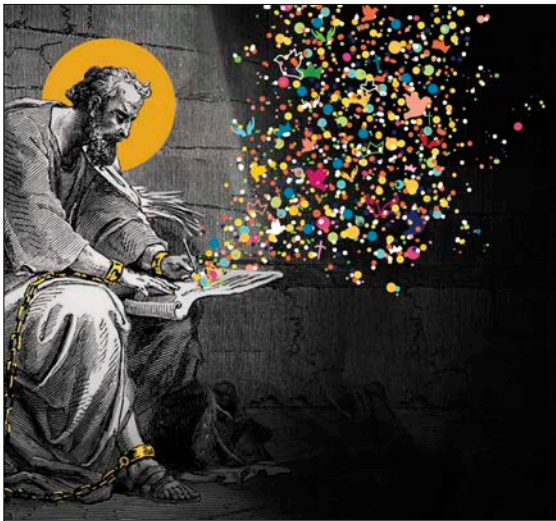
1. How we use our time will show something about our priorities and values. Do an audit of your schedule; based on your use of time, what would someone say your priorities and values were?
2. In this passage (and in next week's), Paul is emphasizing the importance of unity among Christ followers. Can you recall a time when a church you were involved in struggled with unity? What were the underlying reasons for the disunity? How did the church overcome the issues? What are some of the ways we at Greenfield can maintain our unity? What attitudes and actions do you personally need

Digging Deeper

1. From the opening “Above all...” (also could be translated as “make this your focus...” or “this is the most essential thing...”), the Apostle Paul exhorts the Christ followers in Philippi to consider their priorities. For Paul, following Jesus was the most important thing in his life. How do your priorities align with your core values?
2. Paul encourages them to “conduct yourselves as worthy citizens of the gospel of the Messiah” (1:27). He uses the Greek word *politeuomai*, a word with political and civic overtones, which would hit home for the Philippians since they live in a city with pride in their standing as a Roman colony. What do you think it means to be a good citizen of the gospel or God’s kingdom? Would it be different today?
3. Unpack some of the ways being a citizen of the gospel is different than Roman citizenship (or any other modern citizenship)? How do you navigate your allegiance to Jesus as Lord to any of the other obligations you may have as a member (e.g., as a citizen of Canada, resident of Edmonton, member of your family, etc.)?
4. The idea of living as worthy citizens is unpacked in three ways by Paul: standing firm in the one (Holy) Spirit; contending together as one person; and being fearless in the face of any opposition (1:27-28). How do you think these three work together? How do you understand the role of the Holy Spirit in maintaining and fostering unity among Christ followers? Why do you think unity among believers is so important for Paul (and for Jesus)?
5. Paul encourages the Philippian Christians to view their suffering on account of following Jesus (so not all suffering is in view) as something they have been “graciously granted,” like Paul’s own trials (1:29-30). How would this attitude give perspective on suffering? How would it help you endure it?

Living it Out

1. What are some practical ways you can live as a “worthy citizen of the gospel” knowing that your faith has a public aspect to it?
2. As this passage has a clear focus on the unity of the church when living out the gospel as worthy citizens, in what ways can you contribute to or encourage the unity of the Greenfield Community Church in particular?



Gospel Worthy

Philippians 1:27-30

September 29, 2024
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Greenfield Community Church

Gospel Worthy

- A. Appeal to steadfastness and unity: "Conduct yourselves as worthy citizens of the gospel" (1:27-30).
- B. Appeal to unity based on their common life in Christ: "make my joy complete by being like-minded" (2:1-4).
- C. Appeal to the example of Jesus: "have this same mind among you as Christ Jesus" (2:5-11).
- B. Application of appeal based on their common life: "continue to work out your salvation... for God is at work in you" (2:12-13).
- A. Application of appeal based in the case of opposition: "Do everything without grumbling" (2:14-16).

Above all, conduct yourselves as worthy citizens of the gospel of the Messiah.

So that, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you are standing firm in the one Spirit; striving together as one person for the faith of the gospel; and being fearless in the face of any opposition (which is to them an omen of their ruin but your salvation – and both by God).

For it has been graciously granted to you on behalf of the Messiah not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him, since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.

Gospel Worthy

"Above all..." (*monos μωνος* – only, make this your focus, give special attention to this!).

- Paul is indicating what is the most essential thing (cf. 1:10); their singular objective.
- Not "do what you can"; but a life that actively seeks to live one's life for the gospel.

Worthy Citizens

“Conduct yourselves as worthy citizens of the gospel of the Messiah” (1:27).

- A word with political and civic overtones: *politeuomai* (πολιτευομαι) – to live as good citizens of a realm (Acts 23:1; cf. “But we are citizens of heaven” 3:20).
- Being faithful to one’s calling as a member of God’s people is a public act having social consequences.

ROMAN CITIZENSHIP	HEAVENLY CITIZENSHIP
Exclusive - an honour for the privileged few	Inclusive - for all by God’s grace through faith
Loyalty to the Emperor & Empire	Loyalty to Jesus the Messiah
Minimal expectations of conduct	Conduct of integrity in one’s faith
Privileges of status & rights	Privilege to suffer for the Messiah
Unified defence of empire	Unified defence of the gospel
Focused on honour and glory for Rome	Focused on honour and glory to God

Worthy Citizens

“Against the colonial preoccupation with the coveted citizenship of Rome, Paul interposes a counter citizenship whose capital and seat of power are not earthly but heavenly, whose guarantor is not Nero, but Christ. Philippi may be a colony enjoying the imperial power of Lord Caesar, but the church at Philippi is a personal colony of Christ the Lord above all!” (Markus Barth, *Philippians*, 45).

Worthy Citizens

“... the gospel of the Messiah” (1:27).

- The good news of Jesus as a fulfilment of the story of Israel, as a fulfilment of God’s ultimate purposes with creation.
- We are to live out the story of the life of Jesus as if it was our own (see 2:5-11).

Worthy Citizens

Three directions:

1. Standing firm in the one Spirit;
2. Contending together as one person; and
3. Being fearless in the face of opposition.

1. One Spirit

“Standing firm in the one Spirit...” (1:27).

- The Holy Spirit is the source of our unity in the church and, in fact, there is no unity apart from the Spirit (1Cor 12:13; Eph 4:4).
- The sign of the Holy Spirit’s presence is unity expressed in humble love for one another and the Spirit’s fruit in our lives (Gal 5:22-23).

2. One Person

“Striving together as one person for the faith of the gospel.”

- “Striving together” (syn + athelo; συναθλεω) - image drawn from military practice or athletic contests.
- “One person/soul” (μια ψυχη) - metaphor for the person as a whole; unified community with a common mission.
- “The faith of the gospel” - not talking about propositions or beliefs, but about behaviour and orthopraxy.

2. One Person

“Paul does not believe that the Christian is called to stand alone and face the world. Rather the community of faith stands firm together, strengthening one another and reinforcing one another’s resolve. Morality is a community project, a shared effort” (Witherington, 103).

2. One Person

Only by standing firm in the "one Spirit" can they hope to contend as "one person" for the gospel!

3. Fearless

"and being fearless in the face of any opposition..." (1:28).

- Frightened, intimidated (*pturo* πτυρω) - hapax; like a startled horse that bolts.
- Paul is encouraging us to live into the certainty of our victory of the cross.

3. Fearless

"(which is to them an omen of their ruin but your salvation – and both by God)" (1:28).

- "Your courage and unity will show them what they're up against: defeat for them, victory for you—and both because of God" (The Message).
- The gospel forces decision.

Suffering for Christ

"For it has been graciously granted to you on behalf of the Messiah not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him..." (1:29).

- Not talking about suffering in general, but suffering for Christ in a world hostile to God and resistant to God's love in Christ.
- Faith gives our suffering perspective; reframes it in view of Christ's own suffering and our own ultimate end.
- Better together: "you are going through the same struggle..." (1:30; see Rom 12:15).

Conclusions

What does it mean to live our lives together “as worthy citizens of the gospel”?

- We need to discuss and discern together the concrete shape of our common life - whether in good times or bad.

Conclusions

“You can’t follow Jesus alone...

Not ‘shouldn’t’; can’t”

(John Mark Comer, *Practicing the Way*, 108).