

As we take these smaller portions of Scripture, it is important to remember the context, so let's begin with a brief review of the last three weeks. We went over the amazing things that took place to start this first European church from Acts 16. We saw how Paul had a deep appreciation for them because of their financial and prayer support. There was that beautiful promise that God would complete in us what He had begun (1:6) and Paul's prayer for their love to abound in knowledge and discernment (1:9). That is our prayer for this church as well.

In our second week in Philippians we saw that Paul cared only about advancing the Gospel. He saw two positive outcomes of his imprisonment with which he could encourage the Philippians. The Emperor's Guards were hearing the story of why Paul was imprisoned which meant they were hearing the Good News of Jesus (1:13). The brothers in Rome were emboldened to share the Gospel more freely (1:14). Paul didn't even care that some were preaching to get him in deeper trouble, as long as the Gospel was preached. We were challenged by Paul's example to be kingdom minded instead of focused on our own concerns.

Last week, we saw the conflict within Paul as he waited for his trial and sentencing. He had a difficult time deciding whether to live or die. We heard his declaration that we each long to make our own, *"For to me to live is Christ!"* We were challenged to make Christ our all in all, the reason for all we do, our very life. Paul came down on the side of remaining in this life to meet the spiritual needs of the Philippian church, though he personally would prefer to depart and be with Christ (1:23). We ended last week with Paul declaring by faith that he would be released and would come to minister to the Philippians again so that they might have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus. (1:26)

²⁷ 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, Paul had just set the example for what he was asking of them by saying, "that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death." (1:20b)

So just what does it mean to live in a way that is worthy of Christ. We can never really be worthy of all He has done and continues to do for us, that is, unless *He is* our life. Even then, we all too often fall short as that old nature sneaks back in to make its demands. (1John 1:8) To say no one is perfect does not justify our failures.

Citizens of a Roman city were highly conscious of their civic duty, of living worthy to be a citizen of a Roman city. How much more should we be conscious of our heavenly

Commented [Paul1]: Philippians 1:6 (ESV)

⁶ And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.

Commented [Paul2]: Philippians 1:9 (ESV)

⁹ And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment.

Commented [Paul3]: Philippians 1:13 (ESV)

¹³ so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ.

Commented [Paul4]: Philippians 1:14 (ESV)

¹⁴ And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

Commented [Paul5]: Philippians 1:23 (ESV)

²³ I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.

Commented [Paul6]: Philippians 1:26 (ESV)

²⁶ so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again.

Commented [Paul7]: 1 John 1:8 (ESV)

⁸ If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.

duty? (Philippians 3:20) "As Philippi was a colony of Rome in Macedonia, so the church was a 'colony of heaven' in Philippi, whose members were to live as *its* citizens in Philippi."^{ref} We are a colony of heaven in Sedona, blood bought citizens of heaven, so let's live like it! Amen?

Commented [Paul8]: Philippians 3:20 (ESV)

²⁰ But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,

Commented [Paul9]: Gordon D. Fee, *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, p. 162

Paul elaborated on what walking worthy of Christ should look like in his letter to the Ephesians. ¹ *I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called,* ² *with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love,* ³ *eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.* Ephesians 4:1-3 (ESV) Whether the Lord did allow Paul to visit them or not, he wanted to hear that their testimony was one of standing firm in unity. A church body can't do that unless they walk in the fruits of the Spirit mentioned in the Ephesians passage, humility, gentleness, patience, and love.

In the letter to the Colossians, at the beginning of the prayer we've been praying, Paul prays *that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding,* ¹⁰ *so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.* Colossians 1:9-10 (ESV) All three of these letters from Paul emphasized that the believers in these churches live out their Christianity in a way that honors God. That is to express the fruits of the Spirit in what we do and say. It's to walk in unity with one another. That is to stand firm in Christ and not be habitually falling into sin. When people see that gentleness, patience, love, and unity that believers have, they are drawn to Christ. When they see the opposite, which is harshness, impatience, uncaring and division, it repels them from Christianity. The need hasn't changed in 2000 years. People need to see Christ in us, so we need to live in a way that is worthy of Him.

We should be standing firm ^{27b} *with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel,* "Striving side by side" literally means to wrestle together on the same team. Paul will bring up being of one mind again in just a few verses. It doesn't mean that we are all clones with only one opinion, but that we share the same conviction that the main thing is Jesus. We believe the Gospel record. We know salvation is a gift of God through faith in Jesus. That unity enables us to strive side by side for the advancement of the Gospel.

Most of the division we see in the church of America today is not so much doctrinal; that happened years ago as denominations were developing over differences in interpretation and emphasis. Today the division comes simply over having one's way, and it's usually in some matter that is insignificant in the long run. Those petty things hinder the advance of the gospel. We are told to strive side by side for the faith of the

Gospel. (1Corinthians 16:13) We don't have to agree on everything, but we do have to strive side by side for the faith of the gospel.

Commented [Paul10]: 1 Corinthians 16:13 (ESV)

¹³ Be watchful, stand firm in the faith, act like men, be strong.

In that unity we are to ²⁸ *...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.* The word frightened here literally means "at no point swerving", like combatants engaged in a conflict. Who will turn first? When the world sees our lack of fear, our confidence in Christ, it is sign to them that Jesus will prevail. All that opposes Him will one day be defeated. (1John 3:8) It also declares that God has saved us. He is transforming us into His image. (Romans 8:29)

Commented [Paul11]: 1 John 3:8 (ESV)

⁸ Whoever makes a practice of sinning is of the devil, for the devil has been sinning from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.

The testimony of some of the martyrs for Christ so boldly declares that this is true. They often pray that God will forgive those that persecute them. That is power! They often declare that death only ushers them into the presence of their Savior. As Jesus said, ²⁸ *And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.* Matthew 10:28 (ESV) Because we know where we are going when we die, we can be fearless, that is of course if Christ is your life. If you are living for something else that is another matter. Paul had just declared that it is much better to die and be with the Lord. (1:23)

Commented [Paul12]: Romans 8:29 (ESV)

²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

I heard the story of one man that was arrested for evangelizing. I think the country was Iran. After the police had roughed him up they asked if he was going to quit or be beaten. He told them if he was beaten he would have a heavenly reward so go ahead. He was willing to suffer for the cause of his Lord. They then said they could kill him. He responded, "Even better, for then I'll see Jesus face to face." They didn't know what to do with him, so they let him go. How do you scare someone who isn't afraid to suffer or die? It is sign that you are saved! It is a sign that Christ will prevail and evil will be defeated. (Revelation 20:10)

Commented [Paul13]: Romans 8:29 (ESV)

²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

We should be fearless ²⁹ *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,* I'll never forget the first time I preached to slum dwellers in Bombay. The director asked me to preach on suffering. Me, a healthy, wealthy, white, have it all American, preaching on suffering to people who live in squalor. What could I share? The Word of God! This verse was my text, and I was preaching to myself more than them, but that is how all preaching should be. The Word cuts across all classes, conditions and time.

Commented [Paul14]: Revelation 20:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ and the devil who had deceived them was thrown into the lake of fire and sulfur where the beast and the false prophet were, and they will be tormented day and night forever and ever.

Look at what the prisoner Paul was telling the believers at Philippi. You have the gracious gift of salvation. It isn't essentially for you but for Jesus. It is all about His glory. It is an immeasurable blessing for us and we can't begin to grasp the fullness of

it, yet it is *for* Christ. Salvation is a gift to us, but we are a gift from the Father to the Son. (John 17:9, 24) We could not have received a greater gift than salvation. (2Corinthians 9:15) Nothing compares. But that gift comes with another gift, one you may not be as excited to receive. It is a gracious gift of God's favor to suffer for Christ. We are given belief *for* (*huper*) Christ's sake and we also receive the gracious gift of suffering *for* (*huper*) Christ's sake. (3:10)

I don't believe that just because we are Americans we are exempt from receiving this gift. I do sometimes wonder if God looked at my physical and mental makeup and decided I couldn't make it unless I was born at this time in the USA. (Acts 17:26) In other words He saw a wimpy soul and had mercy on me.

Nevertheless, we still suffer. It is not so much physical depravation, though I have had those periods in my life. It is much more emotional. It is the catch 22s where you want to express the love of Christ but whatever choice you make, someone is hurt. You try to help someone sacrificially but are rejected and misunderstood. You submit to those in authority but know that it will hurt others. What do you do when the Scriptures seem to collide? It happens. And that's when we must look to the Lord and follow the leading of His Spirit even when we are misunderstood. God never promised a painless path.

As believers we also suffer with others because we voluntarily enter into their pain to weep with those that weep. (Romans 12:15) Some will do that for close friends or immediate family, but we do it with our entire church family and others as well. That is suffering for Christ too. It is indeed a gift, a very painful gift. When we do it for the body, we do it for Christ! (Matthew 25:40)

The pressure of Roman society upon Christians was enormous. There were civil, labor and home gods to which all were expected to offer sacrifices. To not do so was to stand out as a rebel and nonconformist. Every calamity that came upon a town, whether physical disease or economic hardship, was blamed on Christian refusal to worship the gods. That was a kind of suffering for Christ. That same sentiment is growing in the Western world today. The only difference is that **the gods have been changed from stone to ideologies**. But let us not look on it as a condition which we must endure, but rather, like the evangelist in Iran, a chance to share in Christ's sufferings, laying up treasure in heaven, and glorifying God with our bodies. (Romans 6:13)

It is in the midst of suffering that we shine the brightest. (1Peter 2:12) It's when people expect to see the real us, and do, in our joy and peace through it all. That makes them desire what we have in Jesus. When we suffer in a way that is worthy of the Lord, we are as persuasive as ever that Christ is the answer.

Commented [Paul15]: John 17:9 (ESV)

⁹ I am praying for them. I am not praying for the world but for those whom you have given me, for they are yours.

Commented [Paul16]: John 17:24 (ESV)

²⁴ Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world.

Commented [Paul17]: 2 Corinthians 9:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!

Commented [Paul18]: Philippians 3:10 (ESV)

¹⁰ that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,

Commented [Paul19]: Acts 17:26 (NIV)

²⁶ From one man he made every nation of men, that they should inhabit the whole earth; and he determined the times set for them and the exact places where they should live.

Commented [Paul20]: Romans 12:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.

Commented [Paul21]: Matthew 25:40 (ESV)

⁴⁰ And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.'

Commented [Paul22]: Romans 6:13 (ESV)

¹³ Do not present your members to sin as instruments for unrighteousness, but present yourselves to God as those who have been brought from death to life, and your members to God as instruments for righteousness.

Commented [Paul23]: 1 Peter 2:12 (NIV)

¹² Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.

Paul wrote to the Romans that we will share in the glory of Christ if we share in His sufferings. (Romans 8:17) He went on to say that our present sufferings weren't worth comparing to the glory that will be revealed in us. (Romans 8:18) There is no comparison. It's a copper penny compared to a gold bar, a drop compared to the ocean, and those illustrations don't do it justice.

Commented [Paul24]: Romans 8:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

Commented [Paul25]: Romans 8:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us.

Here is another way to look at it. Jesus suffered so much for me on the cross. How can I repay Him? I can only give Him my life. (Psalm 116:12-13) I owe Him that anyway for He gave it to me. But if I am truly blessed, perhaps I'll have a chance to suffer for His sake.

Commented [Paul26]: Psalm 116:12-13 (ESV)

¹² What shall I render to the LORD for all his benefits to me?

¹³ I will lift up the cup of salvation and call on the name of the LORD.

A few weeks ago we talked about the fact that times of suffering was more productive for our spiritual life than any other time. It is in those times that we really grab hold of Jesus and grow in our spirit. James said we should count it all joy when we face many kinds of trials because it teaches us steadfastness (endurance). (James 1:2-4)

Commented [Paul27]: James 1:2-4 (ESV)

² Count it all joy, my brothers, when you meet trials of various kinds,

³ for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness.

⁴ And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.

We suffer as we are ³⁰ *engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have*. It is a battle that is not against flesh and blood but against spiritual powers in the heavenly realms. (Ephesians 6:12) Remember Paul's early days in Philippi were met with a beating and imprisonment, but his response changed everything. We are in a conflict between our spirit and the world, the flesh and the Devil. If you are in Christ you are in the same conflict Paul had. It's not over till the trumpet sounds and we are called home. So buck up! Don't take things personal. Walk in a way that is worthy of Christ, demonstrating to the world how good He is and what He can do in a life. (Matthew 5:16)

Commented [Paul28]: Ephesians 6:12 (ESV)

¹² For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Stand firm. This short life and God's gift of suffering will soon be over. See each trial from the heavenly perspective and know it is gaining a great reward. Remember that it is a gift for the sake of Christ just like the gift of your salvation. That will completely change your attitude. And as you learn steadfastness through the suffering ... *let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing*. James 1:4 (ESV)

Commented [Paul29]: Matthew 5:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

Let's go over this short passage one more time from the Message translation. ²⁷ *Meanwhile, live in such a way that you are a credit to the Message of Christ. Let nothing in your conduct hang on whether I come or not. Your conduct must be the same whether I show up to see things for myself or hear of it from a distance. Stand united, singular in vision, contending for people's trust in the Message, the good news, ²⁸ not flinching or dodging in the slightest before the opposition. Your courage and unity will show them what they're up against: defeat for them, victory for you—and both*

because of God. ²⁹ There's far more to this life than trusting in Christ. There's also suffering for him. And the suffering is as much a gift as the trusting. ³⁰ You're involved in the same kind of struggle you saw me go through, on which you are now getting an updated report in this letter. Philippians 1:27-30 (MSG)

I want to close by doing something unusual. Let us go the outer aisles and arm in arm declare that we will by the grace of God live out this passage.

By the grace of God, I will live as a citizen of heaven, worthy of Jesus, standing firm in one spirit, of one conviction, striving side by side for the sake of the Gospel, not being frightened, receiving the gracious gifts of believing and suffering, engaged in the conflict. So help me God!

¹⁴ May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. 2 Corinthians 13:14 (NIV)

Questions

- 1 Review the letter to this point.
- 2 How can we live worthy of Christ?
- 3 What is the description in Eph. 4?
- 4 What is the description in Col. 1?
- 5 How is our united effort described?
- 6 What does our lack of fear say?
- 7 What two gifts have we received?
- 8 What is the most common suffering for Christ in the USA?
- 9 When do we shine the brightest?
- 10 What is the connection of suffering and glory?
- 11 How should we look at suffering?