

The Joy of Living the Jesus-Way

Philippians



PART 3: A LIFE WORTHY OF THE GOSPEL

By David Fields
Philippians 1:27-30

I. I Get to...Live Worthy of the Gospel

“Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ...” – Philippians 1:27a

A. The Gospel According to Philippians 2:6-11

Jesus – though he is equal with God – does not use his equality with God, his power and status, for his own benefit, but he “empties himself”, takes on the nature of a servant, and gives himself all the way to death on a cross. He, the innocent one, suffers and dies for us – in our place. And God the Father raised him from the dead, and ‘exalted him’ to the highest place, where Jesus is now recognized and glorified as Lord of all.

Jesus does for us what we could never do for ourselves. He lives a life of perfect obedience to the Father – and he dies a death he did not deserve, in our place, to make a way to end all evil without ending us. He buys us back to himself, and together, he forms us into a people who live under his gracious, kingdom rule. And that’s something we access, not to be cleaning ourselves up, but surrendering ourselves to him; simply receiving this gift of life.

In narrating the story of Jesus, Paul is doing two things.

1. He is preaching the gospel. “Look what Jesus has done for you! Look how He’s Lord over everything!”
2. And he’s saying: “trusting Jesus must change how you live; that Jesus is now our paradigm, our example, of how we are to live in relation to each other – pouring ourselves out in love for the sake of others.”

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The gospel, in Paul and the rest of the New Testament, means my forgiveness, purchased for me by Jesus' gracious work. And that means an utter renewal and transformation of my character.

Paul is saying it's not only *possible* to live in a way that is consistent with the gospel. It's *essential*. And yet, it's all rooted in God's work.

Philippians 2:12-13: "...continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling [or, "work out what your salvation means in your relations with each other"], for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.."

B. Citizens of Heaven

Paul uses this language of living in a worthy manner in other places

Ephesians 4:1 "...I urge you, to live a life [*paripateo*] worthy of the calling you received."

"Live 'lined up,' in sync with your new identity as God's saved people."
(See also Colossians 1:12; 1 Thessalonians 2:12).

Instead of *paripateo* ["walk in a manner"] in Philippians 1:27 Paul uses *politeuesthe*. In Greek, - *poli* - is the root for "city" polis, and it's where we get our word *politics* from.

Politeuesthe, has to do with "citizenship." It means to "live as a citizen."

Why does he choose this uncommon word here?

Philippi was an official Roman city, with full legal status. Roman generals would retire there. The official language was Latin, not Greek, like every other city in that area. And people from Philippi were *proud* of that citizenship. Including the Christians there.

Their identity would be bound up with this citizenship - perhaps not unlike the way even some Christian people today might elevate their nationality, their national identity above their Christian identity.

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Paul is saying: “Look, your identity is in Christ, not Rome.” As he points out in Philippians 3:20: “*But our citizenship is in heaven...*” They are called to a far higher standard of living than “Roman” citizenship demands.

To live by the standards of the Gospel of Jesus, that will put them – and us – in deep contrast with the world around us.

We don’t discern how to live based on the standards of our city, our current cultural moment, but on the standards of our heavenly citizenship.

What does “success” look like in our city vs. our heavenly citizenship?

¹² I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. ¹³ I can do all this through him who gives me strength.”

– Philippians 4:12-13

For Paul and the Christian faith, it’s not what I have, what I own, the list of experiences, but what kind of impact I have on other people. It’s about if I’m living faithful to Jesus and His way. How I’m contributing to people knowing the news of Jesus. A new set of metrics altogether.

II. I Get To...Live in Spirit-Empowered Unity

*“...Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you **stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel** ²⁸ without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God.”*

– Philippians 1:27-28

If they are going to withstand the forces from outside the church, to spread the good news of Jesus in their city without being “frightened in any way,” they need to maintain the strength of their unity on the inside of it.

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Discussion

Open Up

What are some of the “I have to’s” that you face each day? What areas would you like to see these shift into “I get to’s”?

Dig In - Read Philippians 1:27-30

1. What elements of this section are most challenging to you? Encouraging to you? Why?
2. How does knowing that we are called to live as citizens of God’s kingdom, as those worthy of the gospel of Jesus, call you to shift some of your priorities? What could that look like for you – for how you use your money, your time, your energy?
3. What are some of the main barriers to unity for churches in our moment? How can we work for a greater sense of “striving together for the faith of the gospel?”
4. Paul speaks of suffering for the sake of Jesus to be a kind of gift. He’s not saying suffering itself is good, but that part of the Christian calling will include the pressure, tension, heartache from enacting Christian values and virtues in a culture that doesn’t share these. How does this perspective help you reframe some of your fears about sharing the news and ways of Jesus in the world?

Prayer

Give thanks to God that we can know His deep love for us and live out of a sense of security in him. Take time to pray in response to some of the things you discussed. Pray for those believers in our world who do face legitimate persecution for their faith. Pray for God’s strength, mercy, and the good news to advance through that suffering.