

"LIVING THE LIFE"
Philippians 1:27-30

Maybe you've heard the comment about the man who was, "so heavenly minded that he was no earthly good?" You might even know that man. Maybe it's the guy who is always talking about Jesus and even drops his head to pray in the restaurant but when it comes to tipping the waitress, well, he is as cheap as they come. As a matter of fact, the waitresses draw straws whenever he arrives at the restaurant to see who the lucky one is who will wait on "Mr. Cheap" who happens to be God's Man. "So heavenly minded that he was no earthly good," is a statement that could definitely not be leveled against the Apostle Paul who wrote this letter to the church at Philippi that we are reading today. Paul was both heavenly and earthly minded.

If you were with us last Sunday the verse we focused on in chapter one was Philippians 1:21 where Paul says, "For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain."

Paul says in verse 26 that he is planning on coming to see the Philippian Christians again and yet his current circumstances found him locked in prison awaiting trial and he doesn't know if he will be released or killed. Talk about extremes. So whatever comes his way, whatever happens to him and, for that matter, whatever happens to the Philippian Christians, they must, first and foremost, as he says in verse 27, **live [their lives] in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.**

You see Paul wants to come and see them but he isn't sure if it is going to happen. So he addresses them as a professional rather than personal so that he doesn't want to allow those to whom he ministers to become dependent on him. I mean think about it, it is like the father to the child who has been teaching that child how to ride their bike, minus the training wheels who runs behind the bike with his hands on the seat and eventually must let go and hope and pray that the child will "get it" and start peddling on his or her own and begin to become independent from the

guiding, loving father. And Paul is doing this for their own health and maturity. He wants them to stand, not lean. Paul wanted to make it clear to them that the Christian life is not a game where people are playing hide and seek with the minister or the Apostle Paul. And whether he was there with them was not what mattered as they lived out their lives for the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Let's take our verses and see what it is Paul actually wants from these brothers and sisters in the faith to whom he is writing from his prison cell in Rome.

Paul wants them to **live a life that is worthy of a citizen of the Kingdom and of the Gospel of Christ.** This is another translation that I found for our verse 27. The Greek word that Paul uses refers to being a citizen. You see Paul is writing from Rome, the very center of the Roman empire and the Philippian Christians are living in Philippi which was a Roman colony.

So they know and he is reminding them that they must live and act as a Roman would- they must speak like a Roman- Latin, dress like a Roman, address their leaders by their Roman names- they must do what the Romans do. But that there is an even higher citizenship than that- they are citizens of the Kingdom of God, they are citizens of heaven and that brings even higher expectations.

So what exactly does Paul expect from those in the church at Philippi? What would he expect from us, here at FPC? First, he says in verse 27, **stand firm in one spirit**. Another translation puts it, "stand fast." Have you ever been in a situation where you were getting uncomfortable with your surroundings because well, the tenor or the mood of the conversation or the event is almost embarrassing to you and you have the choice to "play along" or maybe, just maybe share your displeasure, even if you might be the only one saying so, or at least walk away. Have you ever played with the fact that you are almost embarrassed that we are a Christian.

I think William Barclay, the famous Scottish theologian put it well when he wrote, "The world is full of Christians on retreat, who, when things grow difficult, play down their Christianity. The true Christian stands fast, unashamed in any company." (*The Letter to the Philippians,...*, William Barclay, p. 30) Now that is not always easy to do but too many times instead of standing up for Christ and what is right it is easier to fall down to the world's standards, the world's morals and values rather than Biblical values and truth.

Second, Paul says to **strive side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel**. Paul expected unity in the church where believers were bound together in one spirit like a band of, well, fraternity brothers or sorority sisters. It's what every professional, college, high school, midget league sports team strives for- to come together as a unit, to work together like a fine, oiled machine that the team almost becomes one, like a singular person- having one spirit and soul.

Friends, there are churches all over the landscape of this country that right now, find themselves in internal strife. I serve on our Eastminster Presbytery's Committee on Ministry and that is the committee that hears of, tries to help with and even intervenes when necessary with churches and pastors that find themselves engaged in church conflict or having problems. Are the churches and its people going to always agree on issues or things within the church? No. What Paul is talking about is spiritual unity. Jesus said in John 13:34-35, "I give you a new commandment, that you love one another. Just as I have loved you, you also should love one another. By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another." But if we are prideful of one another, if we have hatred for one another, if we are divisive towards one another, God is not glorified and we, the church, looks like a bunch of phonies to those inside and outside the church. Paul would say let the world quarrel; Christians must be one. Friends, there is no truer unity than there is around Jesus and His Gospel.

Here are a few questions to consider, Church- Am I involved in a local church that is driven by a passion for the faith of the Gospel which is a compassion for souls so that, "none should perish but all come to new life in Christ?" And if that is not the case in that church, what am I willing to do to help light the fire of passion into, as Paul might call it, citizen-life? And here is another question- when did I last put forth significant energy, when did I last make a sacrifice, when did I last invest my time and talent to strive, side by side with one mind with other brothers and sisters for the faith of the gospel?

Let me sum it up to this point- if we, believers, are going to live our lives in a manner worthy of the Gospel, if we are going to stand firm in one spirit united around the Gospel, and if we are going to strive side by side with one another for the faith of the Gospel then guess what? There will be, there will be opposition.

Third, Paul says, **do not be intimidated by your opponents.** Let me ask you- do you ever have anyone in opposition to you? Call them an opponent or an adversary.

The Apostle Paul was constantly under attack for proclaiming the Good News of Jesus Christ. Have you ever been under attack because you were a Christian or took a particular stand? I have and I've shared the situation with you in previous sermons.

Just the other day I was told that actor Chuck Norris, of "Walker, Texas Ranger" fame, reported in a column he writes that, "recently a California pastor and his wife were required by San Diego County officials to obtain a permit to hold a Bible study in their home. "What?! Is this a joke?" I wondered as I heard the news for the first time. It was no joke. Rather, it's a First Amendment nightmare and possibly a foreshadowing of what's to come. Are you prepared for a future in which you hear, "Got your permit to study the Bible?" On April 10 (Good Friday), a county code enforcement

officer visited the home of David and Mary Jones after receiving a complaint about their Christian gatherings. The Jones' attorney, Dean Broyles, president of The Western Center for Law & Policy, conveyed in disbelief, "The county asked (Mrs. Jones), 'Do you have a regular meeting in your home?' She said, 'Yes.' 'Do you say "amen"?' 'Yes. 'Do you pray?' 'Yes.' 'Do you say "praise the Lord"?' 'Yes.'" The officer then warned the family to "cease and desist" the "religious gathering" or they would face weekly fines. A few days later, the county delivered a citation claiming that the Joneses were guilty of "unlawful use of land" and mandating them to "stop religious assembly or apply for a major use permit." At first, I thought, "They must have a large congregation meeting in their home to warrant this type of citation and prompt this type of commotion, right?" Actually, according to their lawyer, the Joneses have been hosting weekly Bible studies in their home for about five years, with an average attendance of only about 15 people. Broyles appropriately responded, "If the county thinks they can shut down groups of

10 or 15 Christians meeting in a home, what about people who meet regularly at home for poker night? What about people who meet for Tupperware parties? What about people who are meeting to watch baseball games on a regular basis and support the Chargers?" Well, this past weekend, barraged by hundreds of complaints after WorldNet Daily broke the news to the international community, San Diego County officials informed the world that they'd backed down from requiring the Joneses to obtain a permit. Despite their retraction (based solely upon public pressure, I might add), however, I am appalled at how far the county's enforcement and encroachment crossed the constitutional line and became a flagrant disregard for Americans' right to exercise their religious faiths. And I'm concerned that we will see far more of these overreaching governmental actions in years to come." (Townhall.com; Tuesday, June 2, 2009)

Friends, get ready, the winds of this culture are churning and, as there becomes less and less absolutes, and worldly values and morals become

commonplace that are contrary to Biblical morals and values, there is going to be opposition to what the Bible proclaims. And if there is opposition there will come something else.

Fourth and finally, Paul says in verse 29 that as God has granted us the privilege of believing in Christ, **there will be suffering for him as well**. Maybe you haven't been confronted or challenged or ostracized for your faith in Jesus Christ, but it is coming soon, to a theatre in your neighborhood, soon.

Today, we ordained and installed all those wonderful people who said, YES, when asked to be a Deacon or an Elder. They affirmed the vows that have been asked of previous officers. They said YES to being obedient to Jesus Christ and under the authority of Scripture. This is a question that all believers should be able to affirm, for if we are going to live our lives in a manner worthy of the Gospel, as Paul instructs us in the first verse of our

passage, then we all should be living under this (hold up Bible) as our authority and guide, being obedient to Jesus Christ.

Folks, the church, believers, must always be struggling together “for the faith of the gospel” because if we only find ourselves not acting but only reacting, then it is no longer the Gospel that gives the church its identity but rather it is the culture that gives the church its identity.

I leave you with what could be considered the most challenging truth of this passage. **Who we are is determined by whom and what we trust.** Our identity is formed and transformed by our network of trusts. So if we believe in Christ, then we are called to be renewed, we are called to be transformed into the image of Christ. We don't sit around all day as Christians contemplating all that we believe in, and we shouldn't be all puffed up because we got the right doctrine to proclaim the world. But rather we are to be people who trust in Christ as Lord and Savior and who try, as best we can, to live as worthy citizens of His Kingdom by responding

and living the life the Gospel calls us to live. So Elders, Deacons, people
who have gathered, preacher included, Live the Life. Live the Life. Amen.

"LIVING THE LIFE"
Philippians 1:27-30

Introduction: The man who was, "so heavenly minded that he was no earthly good"- not the Apostle Paul

What Paul actually wants from these brothers and sisters in the faith:
**To live a life that is worthy of a _____ of the Kingdom
and of the Gospel of Christ** vs. 27

So what does Paul expect from those in the church at Philippi?
First, **stand _____ in one spirit** (stand fast) vs.27

Second, **strive side by side with _____ mind for the faith of the
Gospel** vs. 27

Churches in internal strife- John 13:34-35

Third, **do not be _____ by your opponents** vs. 28

Ordered to obtain a permit to hold a home Bible study in San
Diego County

Fourth, **there will be _____ for him (Jesus) as well** vs. 29

A truth- **who we are is determined by _____ and what we _____**

Conclusion: Live the Life, Live the Life