

PHILIPPIANS, PART 5: GOSPEL COOPERATION, CONFIDENCE, AND SUFFERING

TYLER VELIN | FEBRUARY 9TH, 2014 | PHILIPPIANS 1:27-30

The other week my wife and I went out on a date, and we went out to dinner, and because someone had given us gift certificates to go to the movies, we wanted to do that, and being the amazingly selfless, and wonderful husband that I am, I let her pick the movie. To my surprise she wanted to go see “Lone Survivor.” For those of you who haven’t seen the movie...it’s called “Lone Survivor.” This lifts the burden of me being called a spoiler for anything I happen to say.

But the movie is based off the true story of four Navy SEALs who go are deployed on assignment in Afghanistan, and they get caught in a huge gun fight, and the movie depicts their struggle to get out, and the struggle of the rest of the military to help them get out. It really is a great movie. It really is an awful date move though. It is so heavy, and intense and really a sad reality of families destroyed and lives lost.

As we were driving out of the theater my wife made the comment that she could never be in the military, and I said just the opposite. It stirred in me this sense of camaraderie, unity, teamwork and sacrifice that is appealing to most men. I talked with a few other guys who had seen the movie and they said the same thing. It stirred in them an affection for sacrifice, cooperation, and duty.

Paul wrote this text we are looking at in Philippians today to elicit the same emotions in us. Because Paul, starting in verse 12, gave us the movie of his life. A life riddled with suffering, imprisonment, and hardship, and yet at the same time a life drenched in joy, contentment and deep satisfaction. And now Paul is telling us how we should respond to Paul’s journey in the gospel.

So I want to pray that the Holy Spirit accomplishes that end in all of us today, then we will look at our text: **Pray.**

Now as I just mentioned, Paul has spent the last 14 verses describing for us the life he has been living. In doing this Paul isn’t beating his chest, he’s not sticking his nose up in the air, he hasn’t submitted a picture of himself to be made into a fathead sticker to be plastered on the walls of all the Christian boys in the area. Paul is sharing his life with us because he wants us to see how precious the gospel is.

He says if it were up to him, he would get out of here, he would just as well die, but because the gospel is so valuable, he will endure all things for the sake of Christ. He will labor for the sake of Christ, he will die for the sake of Christ. Paul’s not that great. But his gospel is.

In light of this, Paul writes this: **Phil 1:27a**

Paul is shifting from his story to our response. Paul says to us, and to the church in Philippi, let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel.

This idea of your life being worth of the gospel is a huge theme for Paul: **Eph 4:1, Col 1:10, 1 Thess 2:11-12, 4:1**

For Paul, it is not enough to simply be a Christian. You must live like a Christian. This is a theme in most superhero stories isn’t it? Why is it that Superman, Batman, Spiderman and all these heroes act? It’s because they have abilities and skills, and they know that they are only worth something if they are used.

If Superman is just going to sit at his desk editing news articles while his city is being destroyed, he is not worthy of the power he has. The same is true for Christians. If we are simply to become a Christian and then sit down and savor our title for the rest of our lives, we are not really living Christianly.

What Paul is communicating to us in this part of the text is that becoming a Christian is not the climax of your life, it's the beginning of it.

Look back at the first part of **1:27a**. What Paul is really arguing for is authentic and real Christian living. Paul says that the gospel of Christ Jesus should be of so much worth to you that whether I come to you, or whether I remain absent, you are standing firm.

He says a similar thing in **2:12**. This is the authenticity of Christian living. The gospel is self-sustainable in its motivation. They don't need Paul to be present, because Paul isn't their source for living: Jesus is.

This passage is even more stirring to the Philippians, because the Greek language of this text carries with it a tone of citizenship. The tone of it is let your manner of living be worthy of the citizenship of the gospel. This idea of citizenship was huge to the Philippians, because Philippi is a Roman colony. Look at this map up here: Rome is over here, and Philippi is off to the east of it. Philippi is not a begrudging colony, Philippi is boastful of its Roman citizenship. Philippi was on a Roman trade route, and had received special tax breaks and land rights from its Roman founders. Archeologists have found a Roman theater, a Roman Forum, a Roman tribunal, and Roman inscriptions all over this town.

Corporately, this town loved to be considered Roman. In fact one commentator I was reading this week said that the nature of Roman citizenship in Philippi was entirely corporate. There were no individual Romans in Philippi, all of Philippi acted Roman. They thought like Romans, they acted like Romans, they ate, laughed, learned and lived like Romans.

This emphasis is not lost on the Christian readers of Paul's letter, and it should not be lost on us. What I want to look at in our remaining time here, is three ways in which Paul corporately calls the church in Philippi to live life worthy of the gospel.

#1: Stand Firm, Together for the Gospel

Phil 1:27

As I guy, I can speak for guys, this text should be extremely compelling for us. If Paul were alive today, he would have been an ESPN watching, Saving Private Ryan loving kind of guy. Paul is always appealing to athletic and military themes in his writing and we see both of those themes here.

When he says stand firm in one faith, it is an allusion to a military battle. It is a band of brothers united by a deep commitment. Where warriors fight for country, and for honor, and for justice, Christians fight together because we have been bound together by the blood of Christ. There is no greater unity between men and women than the unity we have with each other in Christ.

As Paul says our unity is in one spirit. Our unity isn't in social functions, work groups, sports, or ethnicity. Our unity is in Christ and that should compel us to fight for Christ with those who are also Christ's. This is what Paul was speaking of in **Eph 4:4-6**. This is why we are celebrating ONEnight on February 20th. We are standing together as a group defined by Christ, and unified in the Holy Spirit.

Have you ever thought about that? We have already seen Paul use terms like “partners in the gospel” or “co-laborers” for the gospel. Do you view your Christian brother and sisters in this way? Because when you see each other in this way you see people for who they actually are and that allows us to be encouraged by them, and it also helps us to minister to them and encourage them in return.

And we will need that encouragement and unity because look at what we are supposed to do: **27b**. We are to strive side by side for the faith of the gospel. The word used for strive is a word which is innately corporate it means to “wrestle in company with, or to seek jointly.” Church to live in a manner worthy of the gospel is to fight together for the gospel, and wrestle side by side for the purity of the gospel. In defense of the faith of the gospel.

We wrestle over matters of utmost importance. We see this in **Jude 1:3**. You see the unity which we possess is also bound. Unity needs boundaries and our boundary is the gospel. We fight for that gospel. We fight for salvation by grace alone, in Christ alone.

Church we are in this together. The gospel is not for me to hold, or for John to hold. We have a certain responsibility to protect it and preach it, but the church as a whole is called to lay down our lives for it: together. You are not called to believe in a vacuum, you are not called to fight in a vacuum. We are called to join arms, join hearts, and fight for our faith. Are you doing that? Does doctrine matter to you? I’m not saying you need to go to seminary, or become a scholar, but can you articulate and defend the gospel. You may think it’s not that important, but there will be a time when it is needed for you, and it is needed for your brothers and sisters.

Look at what Paul says next: **Phil 1:28**

Why do we need to learn to fight, because we are in a fight.

#2. Stand Firm, In Confidence

Paul opens this appeal by saying that we should fear nothing because of the gospel. This week in your community groups you are going to discuss why that is. Why is it that the gospel makes us fearless? Why is it that those who possess the gospel are able to dispossess fear in their own hearts? I am going to briefly touch on that in a minute, but I want us to look at two quick observations on this point:

1: There will be opposition. You should never think that becoming a Christian is a step towards popularity. And let me correct one thing briefly about how we view opposition.

Very rarely, when we face opposition, does it have to do with you. People are not opposed to Christ because of Christians. People are opposed to Christ because of Christ. Don’t make too much of yourself.

But know the more you join with your brothers and sisters in the faith of laboring for, preaching, worshipping and becoming more like Christ, the more opposition you will encounter on behalf of Christ.

Jesus himself said this: **John 15:18-19**

The world will hate you because the world hates that Christ confronts sin. Living in a manner worthy of the gospel is a call to be hated alongside one another. But the second point Paul makes is to encourage one another with the encouragement Paul gives us: **vs 28**.

To be hated is a sign you’re doing something right. Now there are times where Christians can be annoying, judgmental, and sinful. And for that you may be disliked by those around you. But don’t confuse that opposition to the opposition in Christ. That’s why we live and strive side by side, we make sure we are being hated for the

right reasons, and we rejoice at the sign of our Christ being manifest inside of us. And we do not fear, because we have nothing left to fear.

The final point: **#3. Stand Firm, In Suffering**

Phil 1:29-30

What a stunning verse. Here we see again Paul showing us the weight of Christian living, we are not only to believe, belief is necessary, belief is essential, but we are also to live, and we are to live a life which for many will be acquainted with suffering.

Our culture has an aversion to suffering. Now I don't know many cultures which embrace suffering, but I know that very few medicate it as much as America. But this is not a Biblical view of suffering. And while we should not seek out suffering, Paul just said that it is to be expected to suffer for the sake of Christ. Again we see a distinction, not all suffering is for Christ, but we should expect to suffer for Christ.

Look at these verses: **Matthew 5:10, Luke 6:22, 1 Peter 4:12-14,16**

Suffering is to be expected. Now this is not a woe is me passage. This is not Paul saying, hang your heads and be sober church. Certainly suffering is not pleasant, certainly people who are killed for the faith should cause us to grieve, but when we step back and look at the message of Philippians, Paul is writing this for our joy. What did we just look at last week? **Phil 1:18b-21**. Don't check Paul's joy at the door. Suffering is hard, but is also something which allows us to point our co-laborers and our co-sufferers to the joy of either living in Christ, or dying and seeing Christ.

Paul is saying God has sovereignly planned that some of us will suffer for Christ. Rejoice in that our suffering is not empty. Rejoice in that we have a grounds for celebration. In fact the word translated as "granted" in our text, is actually taken from the Greek root word, "charis" which means gift. It has been gifted to us that we should suffer, why? Look at what Paul says **2 Cor 1:5**.

We are called to suffer because we have nothing to lose. And in suffering we encourage one another, and we also show to our persecutors the worth of Christ. Suffering is innately evangelistic. Now in closing I want to offer one point of application for us here. Most of us in America, will never reach the kid of suffering Paul is talking about. We are not being thrown in prison, we are not being murder, we are not being raped, beaten and tortured for our faith in Christ.

But that is why we are in a unique position to celebrate the first two points of today's sermon. We as the American church have been given a great opportunity to serve the global church.

We can strive for side by side with our persecuted and less fortunate brothers and sisters through prayer, through financial giving, through church planting, and through people sending. We have the places, the time and the resources to train individuals who fight for the faith once delivered offering hope through sound doctrine.

We may face opposition here, we may face certain types of suffering. But we are in a beautiful position in America to prepare for the famine by sharing in the feast. We have a great hope, a stunning gospel, and a free country.

Let us seek to live life together as the church in America. May we strive side by side to defend the faith, and stand firm to the opposition in Missoula, but may we see our lives as bigger. May we join forces with our brothers

and sisters here to make a gospel impact in Missoula, in Montana, to our Nation, and to the globe. We are global citizens of a purposeful savior, live in a manner worthy of his gospel.