

Philippians

“Living as Citizens of Heaven”

Philippians 1:27-2:11

Behave as citizens worthy of the Gospel amidst opposition. (1:27-30)

1. Live in manner worthy of the Gospel (behave as a citizen worthy...v. 27)
 - a. We are in a battle between two kingdoms.
 - i. Phil 3:20 – “²⁰ But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ...”
 - b. The citizenship that primarily defines the Christian is a citizenship of a heavenly kingdom.
 - i. God has highly exalted Jesus and there will come a day when every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that He is Lord.
 - ii. He has conquered death and has secured for His people an eternity with Him in a renewed land where the sting of sin and death are no more.
 - c. “Paul is telling the Philippians to govern their lives according to the Gospel rather than according to society’s requirements for being a good citizen of Philippi.” – Frank Thielman
2. We are granted the grace of belief and suffering. (v. 29)
 - a. The grace of belief – This is a gift that reconciles us to God. It’s this belief that has effectively transferred our citizenship.
 - b. The grace of suffering – With our new citizenship, our new identity, we are promised that we will encounter suffering for the sake of Christ.
 - i. And not only that, but we are told that in some way this is a grace to us.
 - ii. “...granted to you” – We can believe that unmerited belief is a grace, but can we believe that suffering is a grace granted to us?
 - iii. As citizens of heaven, our perspective changes. We view suffering not only in light of the immediate, horizontal vantage point, but we also understand that suffering brings opportunities to bring Jesus glory – the vertical vantage point.
 - iv. We understand that in our suffering we are identifying with our King (Who also suffered and was obedient unto the point of death) and we are enduring to proclaim His glory, and His honor, and in doing so we prove the substance of our faith.
3. We are encouraged to stand firm against the opposition. (vv. 27-28)
 - a. Stand firm in one Spirit...(the uniting power of the Spirit)
 - b. Strive side by side for the faith of the Gospel...(the imagery of joining together, spears drawn, shields above to protect from arrows)
 - c. Don’t be frightened by your opponents...(It’s a reminder of Whose we are, of Who is in control, that nothing can take away our future inheritance.)
 - i. Luke 12:4 - “I tell you, my friends, do not fear those who kill the body, and after that have nothing more that they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear: fear Him Who, after He has killed, has authority to cast into hell.”
4. We have the opportunity to proclaim the truth of the Gospel. (v. 28)
 - a. The boldness that the church would have in the midst of opposition demonstrates the future hope of the church (salvation) and is a sign of the destruction that awaits those that deny the lordship of Christ.
 - b. Be encouraged. Don’t retreat, but press on in the Gospel truth even in the midst of a hostile and opposing culture.

Illustration: A letter from James Oliver Buswell Jr. during World War 1

Dear Father and Mother:

I'm writing just before what will probably be the greatest military activity the world has ever seen. There are lots of interesting things might be told, but I'll tell you all about it when I get back home! One thing that would be very significant in religious work, and it is an order that's scattered everywhere so every private and orderly knows it, is that anyone who at any time orders any kind of retreat or retirement, is to be shot down at once by an officer. If no officer hears it, the enlisted men must take the offender to the nearest officer to be shot.

We're going forward, and no orders to retreat can possibly be official. Germany has repeatedly sent men into the Allied ranks perfectly disguised as Allied officers, speaking English or French perfectly, to order a retreat, just as the Devil sends the same kind of people into the church. The only way to overcome it is to have it understood that our forces never retreat!

This is going to be a great fight! But the fight for Christianity in our forces is the one which includes all other great causes. You don't know how glad I am that I'm in that fight primarily.

Don't worry about me even if you hear our regiment has been 'in it.' I'm in the Lord's hands.

*Much, much love,
Oliver*

Behave as citizens worthy of the Gospel within the church. (2:1-4)

Complete my joy...(There is a joy and satisfaction that is far greater than the satisfaction that comes from self-centered desire – comfort, pleasure, gain, reputation, etc.). For Paul, joy was associated with seeing his friends and fellow believers grow more Christ-like.

1. We are called to be unified in thought and in love.
 - a. Being of the same mind...(vv. 2, 5)
 - i. Doctrinal unity – going back to Scripture, back to understanding who Jesus is and what He has done for us
 - b. Having the same love...(v. 2)
 - i. Genuinely caring for one another – a self-sacrificing love
 - c. Being in full accord and of one mind...(v. 2)
 - i. When opposition occurs, it helps clarify and solidify the church's stance on issues.
 - ii. We've seen throughout church history that it is often heresy and false doctrine that galvanize the church to go back to Scripture and become of one mind.
2. We are called to model Christ-like humility in dealing with each other.
 - a. Do nothing from rivalry or conceit...(v. 3)
 - i. Self-centeredness that seeks credit and praise for what one has done (literally “empty glory” – *kenodoxia*)
 - ii. Contrasted with Christ Who emptied (*kenoo*) Himself to the ultimate glory (*doxa*) of God the Father
 - b. In humility, count others more significant... (v. 3)
 - i. Humility—lowly mind-set – This is not false humility, not low self-esteem, but rather a willingness to forgo one's own agenda, desires, and attitudes in order to encourage and care for others with true concern and respect.
 - ii. “Such counterintuitive humility is the prerequisite to a profound Christian unity that can weather the storms of external opposition and internal disagreements. It is the fountain from which flows a oneness of conviction and affection that gives joy to Paul's heart and gives glory to Jesus.” Dennis Johnson
 - c. Look out for the interests of others...(v. 4)
 - i. When the truth of the Gospel grabs hold of us we begin to understand what Christ has done for us by emptying Himself of His glory so that we might be exalted.
 - ii. This enables us to grow in true desire to care for others with the same care that we care for ourselves.