

# Philippians 1:27-30

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/phil/phil-1/philippians-127-30/>

*Paul urges the Philippians to live out a life that reflects the gospel of Christ. Specifically, he wants to see that they work together in harmonious cooperation in their ministry, and not be divided, nor should they be frightened when enemies oppose them. The fact that anyone opposes them means they are honoring God, and that those who attack them will be judged for it by God. The Philippians have been given the privilege of suffering for Christ, just as Paul has suffered; it is a badge of honor that we suffer for Christ, for it means rewards in the next life, and a fulfilling life of faith in the present.*

Paul admonishes the Philippian believers to *Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ*. Paul will tell them in Chapter 2 how to accomplish this, through having the same mindset that Jesus Christ chose when He left heaven to come to earth.

Paul has made clear his love for these believers in Philippi. They have participated with him as partners in the gospel, both through their own witness as well as financially supporting Paul. It seems clear that Paul believes the very best thing he can do for those whom he loves is to exhort them to live their lives for the purpose for which they were created. The way to accomplish this is to *conduct their lives in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ*. Jesus provided a way for each believer to walk in self-governance, loving and serving others. In doing so, we find our fullest calling.

This admonition makes clear that believers can make choices that are not *worthy of the gospel of Christ*. Although God fully accepts those who believe on Jesus (John 3:14-16) and this is a free gift, gifted by grace and received by faith (Ephesians 2:8-9), our choices have real consequences. Each of our choices create results, and those results bear fruit in this life as well as the life to come. The fruit can be rotten, like the fruit of the flesh. Or the fruit can be worthy of the gospel, like the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:19-23). The deeds of believers will be judged with the fire of judgment, and those deeds that are *worthy of the gospel* will be like gold, silver, and precious stones that are refined in the fire (1 Corinthians 3:11-17). These worthwhile deeds will receive great rewards.

Paul's desire for those whom he loves is that *whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel*. Paul believes he will be released, and be able to come to them. But Paul does not know for sure. So, Paul states that *whether he will come to see them or remain absent* from their presence, he has the same desire for them. And that desire is to *hear that the Philippian believers are standing firm in one spirit*.

The essence of righteousness is all members of a body operating in harmony, with a unity of purpose. The retired Roman soldiers in Philippi might have had the image of *standing firm* from their soldiering days, *standing firm* in formation, unbending in the fight. Unity was what made the Roman army strong. Paul desires that same unity. To fight and win a battle, the soldiers must

share and execute the battle plan. Paul desires the believers in Philippi to be of *one mind*. In having *one mind*, they would be completely unified in perspective or attitude. Paul will tell us in Chapter 2 what that attitude should be.

To win a battle also requires great exertion. Paul desires for the believers in Philippi to be *striving together for the faith of the gospel*. Paul might have had in mind the military past of many of the Philippian believers when he continued his hope for them, to be *striving*. And, in their great exertion for the gospel, that they would be *in no way alarmed* by their *opponents*. The believers in Philippi had opposition, as did all the churches and believers of that era. Christianity was persecuted, and considered unlawful in many places. Paul's hope is that when the Philippians faced *opponents*, they would be *in no way alarmed*. By saying *in no way*, Paul seems to hope that the Philippian believers would be completely unaffected by opposition.

Paul explains a perspective they can adopt, that would result in them being *in no way alarmed* by opposition. This opposition was *a sign of destruction* for the opponents. The gospel will prevail. And those who oppose it can take their opposition as a *sign* that their opposition will be destroyed. When Jesus returns to judge the world, all evil will be destroyed. Even death and Hades will be cast into the lake of fire (2 Peter 3:7; Revelation 20:14). However, that same opposition is a *sign of salvation* for the Philippian believers. The scripture promises that by resisting the devil, he will flee from us (James 4:7; 1 Peter 5:5). When believers resist by walking in radical obedience, it is a *sign of destruction* for the works of Satan.

The word translated *salvation* in the phrase *but is salvation for you* is "soteria" which means "something being delivered from something." In verse 19 it was translated "deliverance." The context determines what is being delivered from what. In this context, the Philippian believers are apparently being delivered from living a comfortable life, and thereby missing out on gaining great rewards for their faithfulness. By *striving together for the faith in the gospel*, while courageously resisting their *opponents*, the Philippians are being saved, or delivered, from wasting their great opportunity of life.

Paul goes on to say their *salvation is from God*, and that *it has been granted not only to believe in Him*. To *believe* in Jesus results in being saved from hell to heaven, from death to life, from being spiritually dead to being spiritually reborn (John 3:14-16). But in addition to being saved from being spiritually dead, God desires to save us from squandering our great opportunity in life, *also to suffer for His sake*. So Paul is exhorting his children and partners in the faith to look at opponents as a blessing. Not only should they not fear them, but they should look at them as an opportunity to *suffer for His sake*. Through this they are being saved from complacency, and being allowed the great privilege to follow the example of Jesus, which Paul will unpack soon.

This granting *to suffer for His sake* is said to have *been granted for Christ's sake*. This suffering for the gospel is *the same conflict* which they *saw in Paul*, and *now hear to be in Paul*, who the Philippians have heard is under house arrest in Rome for the sake of the gospel.

We might look at a few other passages written by Paul to gain some insight into why Paul speaks of suffering *for Christ's sake* as a great benefit, and why their opportunity to suffer as Christ suffered was granted not only for their benefit, but for *His sake*, meaning for the sake of Christ.

In Romans, Paul wrote that all believers have God as an inheritance. It is something we were given unconditionally. But being joint heirs with Christ is a reward given only to those who suffer as he suffered:

“The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.”  
(Romans 8:16-17)

This passage from Romans makes clear that God is an unconditional inheritance for all believers. God is our inheritance regardless of our faithfulness, because believers are born into His family by the Spirit, and made part of the Body of Christ. But being “fellow heirs with Christ” is conditional on suffering as Christ suffered. Receiving the same reward that Jesus received is presented as the greatest of blessings. Anything that stands in the way of receiving that blessing is a great hindrance. Paul views the opposition the Philippians have endured as a great opportunity, because it allows them to suffer as Jesus suffered.

The book of Hebrews (possibly written by Paul) states that Jesus desires to bring many to participate in the glory of reigning over the earth, together with Him (Hebrews 2:10). In Revelation, Jesus exhorts every believer to overcome, as he overcame, that we might receive the same reward He did, to share the throne and reign (Revelation 3:21). It seems that to Jesus, more is better; Jesus desires that as many as possible learn to serve that they might be lifted up, and become great (Matthew 20:27).

In our modern age of comforts and conveniences that the ancients could not have dreamed of, it is perhaps strange to think of the need to gain a “salvation” from being comfortable, and lose out on suffering the sufferings of Christ. However, if Paul’s mentality is adopted, it makes perfect sense to view it this way. In 3:8, Paul will say he has “suffered the loss of all things” for the sake of Christ, but considers them as “rubbish.” No one mourns loss when they take out the trash. Taking out the trash is removing a hindrance. Paul views all his physical comfort, material possessions, worldly reputation, credentials and everything else that was taken from him due to his witness just as we would view a trash can full of rubbish. Such comforts are merely in the way of gaining the benefits he can gain from a faithful witness, which he will soon speak of. This great gain is an immense reward for faithful service that will be granted by Jesus to all who suffered loss for His sake.

### **Biblical Text**

**<sup>27</sup> Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; <sup>28</sup> in no way alarmed by your opponents—which is a sign of destruction for them, but of salvation for you, and that too, from God. <sup>29</sup> For to you it has been granted for Christ’s sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, <sup>30</sup> experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me.**