

LIVING A GOSPEL-WORTHY LIFE: More than Just a Class A

TEXT: Philippians 1:27-30

²⁷ Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. 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.

²⁹ For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him,

³⁰ since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.

INTRODUCTION:

Short personal intro: It was November 2012, right after E12's first training of Ptr. Jerry Lepasana, when I decided to follow God's call to be a minister. Back then I don't have any preaching training, that's why I memorized E12's Encounter Lessons, even the Plastina family heard me preaching these lessons in Pagudpod before. Two years later I enrolled at PBTS Baguio Seminary and finished my MDiv. It was in Baguio where I became a pastor for more than three years before coming here in the United States to pursue further studies.

Now in Baguio City, there is a famous street market that only opens during the late evening; it is open around 9pm until 2am. This is very famous for selling "ukay-ukay" or various secondhand stuff. It's called the **night market** on Harrison street. One time, my friend bought a branded shoe for less than 400 pesos (\$8). It was really a good pick; it seems it was brand new. He was proud of wearing it in our place until its sole flipped away while he was walking fast. What's sad about this is, it was only the third day when he bought that shoe.

We realize that it was not a genuine brand, it was a "Class A" product. It looks good on the outside, but its inside was terrible. The sole was just glued, not even stitched.

Reflecting with this is that many Christians are living a Christian life that is the same as my friend's shoe. A "class A" life, where it seems everything is okay, active in the ministry, and even gifted in preaching. Yet, when you evaluate their inner lives, its worn out, terrible, troubled, living in subtle sins, or just faking it at all.

THE PROBLEM:

What concerns me as a Christian is what Gordon MacDonald says about having or experiencing "**spiritual sinkhole**." A sinkhole is a natural disaster that is a hollow place beneath the surface that can cause large erosion. A spiritual sinkhole, in a sense, is a state of a Christian who looks good on the outside but is weary and shallow inside.

It is when a believer experiences "**spiritual turbulence**" in one's life then it is easy for that person to drift away in the faith. Either that person will breakdown spiritually or be tempted to do immoralities, embrace sin, or is not aware of one's subtle sins.

It is the same as being just a **class A** product. Wherein, a believer may look good on the outside yet weary and troubled in the inside. It is easy to walk in the church from that door and wear your **“spiritual cosmetics”** portraying that everything is just fine, but in reality, you are not okay. You are spiritually dry, emotionally suffering, and physically hurting.

This ought us to be reminded of what it is to live a genuine life, in a manner worthy of the gospel. In this sermon, I will give three things on what it is to live a gospel-worthy life as Christians by studying Paul’s letter to the church in Philippi. We as Christians ought to live life, celebrate it, share in unity, suffer together, and not just survive life.

MAIN IDEA:

Biblically speaking, are we living a “Worthy Life”? Paul’s context was to rejoice with them and give thanks for the church’s financial support and partnership for the ministry of the gospel. Despite being imprisoned, Paul was encouraging the church to continue living according to the gospel. He said, *“whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.”* May it be in his absence or presence, they ought to reflect this reality

Let us dissect the following verses (1:27-30):

- **“conduct”** – The Greek word used here is – πολιτεύω/ politeuō - sounds like politics, it means "to administer the state; to live as a citizen; to conduct oneself according to the laws and customs of a state."
 - Now, what citizenship is Paul talking about? What government or kingdom is it?
 - In Philippians 3:20, *“But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ...”*
 - Paul’s imperative is an ongoing reality in their time and is needed to keep on doing it, “conducting yourselves” as a citizen of God’s kingdom.
- How do we conduct ourselves? It is in the **“manner worthy of the gospel”**. Those who live according to the gospel, they live well. *‘Their lives are honest and honorable; they are people of truth and uprightness; they will have no sources of regret when they die.’*
 - Live the gospel not just in speech, but also in the totality of one’s life.
- **“stand firm, and strive together”** in this context, Paul and the believers were aware of the false preachings that were circulating during their time. There is in the essence of being proud as a citizen under Roman rule, or to live in a legalistic way, strictly following all the Jewish rites; adding to these is the mixing of other pagan beliefs.
 - To point this out, Paul is telling them to be united, live as one, in harmony for the gospel of Christ which we will see later on.
 - In this passage, the main motivation of unity is by the ***Spirit and our faith in Christ*** which is emphasized throughout Philippians.
- **“without being frightened/ terrified”** pertains for us not to be provoked nor compromise since we need to maintain our Christian integrity. In effect, it assures us in the justifying act of our enemies’ destruction in contrast to the citizen of heaven’s salvation.
 - **“destruction”** for those oppressors are certain. They will never prevail.
 - Philippians 3:18-19, *“For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹ Their*

destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things.” A worldly living leads you to destruction.

- **“you will be saved,”** manifestation of assurance, leading to godliness, holiness being a citizen of heaven.
 - **“that by God”** – the One who will make it happen in due time both the destruction of our enemies and the salvation of His children as kingdom citizens.
- **“to suffer for Christ”** is to share in Christ’s suffering for the gospel and His glory.
 - This is **“granted or given”** thus, connotes God’s sovereignty and for believers to embrace this reality, which is evident in the early church’s persecutions.
 - Christ’s sufferings in this world, the persecutions, his crucifixion, and death are also part of Christian living which is to develop growth and intimacy with God.
- **“the same conflict”** there meant that the early believers were experiencing the same oppressions and injustices, and literally for Paul as a prisoner.

DIRECTIONS:

What can we learn from this passage in living worthy of the gospel? Let me share three directions on how we ought to live a “gospel-worthy life” as Christians. *I encourage you to follow me in your Bibles since I will be jumping from verses to verses within the book of Philippians. I won’t be reading all, for the sake of time, thus you need to follow through.*

1. Sharing the Gospel

First, Paul exemplified a gospel-oriented and gospel-proclaiming life. As he encouraged believers to live accordingly, this includes the sharing of the gospel. Throughout the book of Philippians, Paul repeatedly put emphasis that no matter what is happening, he will continue sharing the gospel.

Prior to our passage, in chapter 1 verses 12-14, and 18 pertains to advance the gospel in all circumstances of life. In prison, Paul made sure to proclaim it to his co-prisoners and the prison guards. Likewise recognizing the essential part of the women in advancing the gospel, see Philippians 4:2-3. Therefore, we ought to proclaim the gospel of Christ.

How can we share the gospel especially this pandemic time?

In relevance, I am part of the pioneering stage of **Indigitous Digital Outreach** in the Philippines. Our ministry is to proclaim the gospel through digital networks such as social media, search engines, blogs, media, and more. If you may, I am willing to train the church in how to productively use social media in reaching your friends and relatives for Christ, especially during this pandemic. *You see? There are no reasons not to share the gospel, and we can witness this in Paul’s life.*

2. Sharing in Unity

Second, a gospel-worthy life is sharing in unity both with God and the church. The “one Spirit” pertains to the Holy Spirit which is alluding to chapter 2 verse 1, “sharing in the Spirit”. The zenith or peak of this unity is in Christ, see Philippians 2:5-11. Therefore, God is the source

and ultimate reason for our unity. Gone are the days where unity is natural for Filipinos manifesting in our so-called “Bayanihan.” This historic virtue is no longer practice or hardly seen in our communities.

Likewise, to be united is to “stand firmly” against false preaching. Do not be lenient nor be complacent especially in listening to various online sermons. This is common nowadays because of social media, where most of the churches and preachers are using digital highways as their platform. But do “stand firm” in your faith, be critical, and always confirm those things you hear if it is in the Bible and rightly interpreted, see Philippians 3:1-6.

Additionally, we ought to “strive together” to fulfill his good purpose (Phil. 2: 12-13); rejoicing together (4:4); pursuing godliness together (2:1-2, 4: 8-9), humility (2:3-4), and praying for one another (4:6); also a call for contentment (4:12-13). Yes, “I can do all things for Christ” is in the context of contentment where many Christians misinterpret this for their personal motives. Unity is different from uniformity. The church can be diverse while living in harmony.

3. Sharing in the sufferings of Christ

Lastly, in the context of sharing the sufferings of Christ, with Christ and believers. Early Christians suffer from persecutions, martyrdoms, accusations, and more. With these, Paul was grateful that they share in his troubles in missions and finances (Phil. 4:14-16)

But for us, We tend to escape suffering and skip the process of pain. Paul emphasized that a worthy life is the one who embraces these sufferings of Christ, with fellow believers, for God's glory. As a church, we must journey together in these sufferings. Paraphrasing Jurgen Moltmann, “*‘suffering in suffering’ is not having someone to suffer with or to share your sufferings.*” Therefore, as a church, we ought to suffer together as one. Still, the greatest person who shares with us is Christ.

Even Peter affirms that Christ’s suffering is a redemptive act for His children, this is evident in 1 Peter 3:18. Peter continued in 1 Peter 4:12ff he said, “*Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you.*”¹³ *But rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed.*”

As for Paul, even he desires to be with his fellow believers, he is prepared for his own death (Phil. 1:21, 23). Likewise, with Epaphroditus who experienced being ill, been in sorrow, and almost died (Phil. 2:26-30). Paul encourages us to suffer together for Christ.

In this kind of suffering, we tend to know Christ more, Philippians 3:10-11, “*I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,*”¹¹ *and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.*”

SUMMARY:

Actually, there is a lot more to share from this passage. But I want you to focus on these three directions, which are to share the gospel in all circumstances of your life, to share in unity with your fellow believers pursuing godliness, be accountable for another, and lastly to share in the suffering of Christ and one another for His sake as one church for His glory.

CONCLUSION:

The “Already—Not Yet” Kingdom of God (Phil. 1:27-30)

Overall, this passage implies the kingdom of God, wherein we are called to conduct ourselves as citizens of heaven in a manner worthy of the gospel. The gospel is our hope, it speaks about Christ’s kingship and kingdom as his redemptive work for His creation. This kingdom of God is both “here and not yet here,” it is present at the same time future.

Christ’s death and resurrection inaugurated this kingdom of God; thus, it is already present. But the completion and totality of the kingdom are not yet here. It will be in the consummation of everything; hence we still experience pain and suffering today.

In the coming of Christ, the kingdom of God will be final and completed, thus we desire and pray for the coming of Christ, because in the completion, pain, injustices, indifference in social issues, and sufferings will no longer exist. This is certain.

As for now, we conduct ourselves in the manner of a kingdom citizen. That is what it means to live a gospel-worthy life. A life wholly devoted to Christ’s kingship and kingdom. To share the gospel, live in unity, and suffer with Christ. Commit yourselves to Christ and be part of His kingdom. Rest in His promises.

Live a Christian life worthy of the gospel that is more than just a class A.

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Let me end with a quote:

Cappadocian father **Basil the Great** when he was threatened to be exiled or excommunicated by the emperor for preaching the truth about Christ’s deity, he said:

“All that I have that you can confiscate are these rags and a few books. Nor can you exile me, for wherever you send me, I shall be God’s guest. As to torture, you should know that my body is already dead in Christ. And death would be a great boon[favor] to me, leading me sooner to God.”

Let us pray.

By: **Ptr. John Paul Arceno**

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Soli Deo Gloria!