



**KING'S
CHURCH**
EDINBURGH

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Total Commitment

Philippians 1:27-30

"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 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. For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him, since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have."

At the front of every orchestra is a conductor. All the musicians look to him/her for direction. Their job is to call life and skill and energy out of their musicians. Paul had been “conducting” the Philippian church from when it was started 10 years previously. He’d watched their progress and was a big fan, as shown in phrases such as *“I thank God for you... confident...I long for you...”*. Christian leadership doesn’t make people dependent, but seeks people to “conduct themselves”, which is what Paul says here.

“Whatever happens” (ESV “only this”). Life is by nature full of stuff that happens to us - often uninvited and unwanted! We usually can’t change our situation BUT we can change our response to it. Paul says it’s essential we respond in a Christ-like way.

Bill Hybels once asked the question to a room full of high calibre leaders: *“Who is the hardest person you can imagine leading?”* He then told them assertively, “the answer is: you!” David in 1 Samuel 30 faced multiple death threats and was grieving the loss of

his own family. When pressure came, the Bible says *“David strengthened himself in the Lord”*. He conducted himself. In Psalm 103 we find David talked to himself when he didn't feel like worship: *“Bless the Lord O my soul”*.

“Conduct yourself” in its context also has the meaning, *“Behave as citizens”*, worthy of the Gospel. Paul is reminding his Philippian hearers that their citizenship is of a different kingdom. Christians should be *“in the world but not of the world”*. God's kingdom values should always trump worldly values as we understand our ultimate destiny as believers (and the ultimate destiny of the world). Our lives look like Jesus. We feed hungry people, we care for the oppressed, we confront injustice - eternal kingdom values. But it also means we don't fear what the world fears: death, uncertainty, suffering. Because we're secure in his Kingdom.

“Worthy of the gospel” is not to say the way you live and behave will save you. Nor is it saying that we must work to pay God back for his love for us. Rather, our identity is that we are Gospel citizens. Now like Paul, with delight we can say *“I can do all things through him who gives me strength”* (Phil 4:13).

John Bunyan: *“Run, John, run / The law commands / But gives me neither feet nor hands / Tis better news the Gospel brings / It bids me fly It gives me wings.”*

What does it look like? How do I live worthy of the gospel?

1. Inhibit a culture of individualism

I must fight for deeper community. *“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,[a] striving together as one for the faith of the gospel without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you.”*

Some things you can do better by yourself, but being a Christian isn't one of them! Individualism finds its origins in Satan himself, Eden- where the serpent tempts Eve that she could be like God. If the bible teaches about the origins of Satan in Isaiah, then Satan's downfall is rooted in selfish personal ambition: *“I will ascend to the heavens, I will raise my throne above the stars of God, I will sit, I will make myself like God”*. How unlike Jesus who didn't hold onto equality as necessity (see Phil 2).

Conduct worthy of the gospel is embedded in need for one another.

In a rugby scrum, every person is needed to win the ball. Sometimes we need to remind ourselves that our contribution matters.

Sometimes we need to remind ourselves that our successes are usually a team effort, and aren't all about me!

We're a team of talents, a band of brothers, a company of Christ-worshippers, a gang of gospel preachers, posse of prayer warriors, herd of heavenly citizens, a swarm of Spirit-filled saints, a gaggle of grace-recipients.

"Some Christians try to go to heaven alone, in solitude. But believers are not compared to bears or lions or other animals that wander alone. Those who belong to Christ are sheep in this respect, that they love to get together. Sheep go in flocks, and so do God's people." (Charles Spurgeon)

How do we reach 400 people (our next vision for King's)? By "striving together", owning one vision, being in one spirit, giving, praying.

2. Fight against fear

"Striving together as one for the faith of the gospel 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."

We don't know who these opponents are. Presumably it's people who don't like the message of Jesus. They're antagonists outside the church, as it says, *"you will be saved and they will be destroyed"*. These are people who have thus far resisted the opportunity to have their sins forgiven and live for God and be with him forever.

In Acts 4 Peter and John get arrested for preaching a non-state approved message. They got told to speak no more about Jesus. Instead they pray *"now Lord enable your servants to speak with Great Boldness"* (Acts 4:29).

Opposition is designed to make us fearful, less confident, more private about what we believe. If you live in Syria or North Korea right now that threat is physical and life-endangering. If you live in Edinburgh that threat is appearing "uncool", or "bigoted" or "old-fashioned". Whatever the threat, the solution to be applied is the same: lots of courage! Don't withdraw, but ask for courage to share Christ, SO THAT it will be a sign to those who oppose you.

3. See struggles as essential to your success

"For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him, since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have."

"Not only to believe but to suffer" Both are gifts of grace (Greek word charis- same as spiritual gifts).

New Testament believers understood that to live worthy of the gospel was the same as being worthy to suffer disgrace for Christ. In Acts 5:41, the Apostles left the Sanhedrin, rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the Name.

Whilst God is never the author of evil in our lives, he allows us to suffer pain or discomfort or persecution for our longer term good. Trials develop: perseverance, character, and hope; they make us more aware of God's great love by the Spirit; They prove that we belong to a future more glorious kingdom; they make us more like Christ and identify us with the Saviour who suffered for us.

"Great faith from great fights, great testimony from great tests and great triumphs from great trials."

Questions

- **"Conduct yourself"**: Can you recall people who now or in the past have played a significant role in helping you grow as Christians? What qualities in them help/ed you most? How have those relationships changed over time?
- **"Gospel citizens"**: In what areas do we find ourselves most conflicted between God's kingdom values and "worldly values". How does understanding our true citizenship help?
- **"Live a life worthy of the gospel"**: Paul intends this phrase to energise, not discourage us! In what ways is this encouraging?
- **Individualism**: Do you tend towards not seeing your importance within the church or overthinking your importance? How can we tackle those issues?
- **Fear**: What opposition (if any) do we face that makes us withdraw into ourselves? What solution does Paul suggest here?

- **Struggles accompany the life worthy of the Gospel** What things are you finding tough right now and how can we pray and support one another?



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