Courageous, Grace-Driven Gospel Living

Philippians 1:27–30

[27] Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, [28] and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God. [29] For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, [30] engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

Introduction

- Henry Kissinger, 1945: born in Germany, a Jewish refugee, an American citizen by 1943. Two years later he was back in Germany in an American uniform, setting up a civilian government for Krefeld. He lived in the land he came from by the rules and loyalty of a different country, and went on to serve or advise twelve presidents. Paul, a Roman citizen by birth, used that citizenship for the gospel, but his true citizenship was in heaven (Acts 16:37; 22:25–28). So are we: living in this world, made citizens of heaven by God's grace. Which place owns our ultimate allegiance?

Point 1 — Gospel Living (1:27)

[27] Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel,

- "Only" (v. 27) — Paul switches gears. He has told us how he lives in chains; now, "But what about you all?" Not in prison, not awaiting a verdict — and the answer looks much like Paul's own life.

- "Let your manner of life be" — one Greek word, the verb politeuomai (from polis, "city"; our "politics"): live as a citizen. King James: "let your conversation be" — our whole conduct among our fellow citizens.

- Philippi, a proud Roman colony, where Paul had claimed his own Roman citizenship; yet the citizenship he means is not in Rome but in heaven:

  Acts 16:37 — [37] But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us publicly, uncondemned, men who are Roman citizens, and have thrown us into prison; and do they now throw us out secretly? No! Let them come themselves and take us out."

  Philippians 3:20–21 — [20] But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, [21] who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

- Dual citizenship, living in one place while committed to another: born citizens of a nation (for most of us America, a kindness of the Lord: freedom, prosperity, opportunity, above all proximity to the gospel); in Christ, citizens of heaven. One temporary, the other eternal.

- The passport: rarely a thought at home; abroad, never more than an arm's length away, because it is our way back in. We carry a passport for the kingdom of God, our ultimate allegiance and home.

- What does it mean to live as a citizen of heaven? Word order: "Only worthy of the gospel of Christ — be citizening." Gospel at the start of the verse, gospel at the end ("the faith of the gospel"). Paul, a prisoner in Rome, lives as a citizen of heaven: chained to a different guard every six hours, four times a day, investing that time in conversations about the gospel, until it reaches the imperial guard:

  > *Philippians 1:12–13 — [12] I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, [13] so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ.*

- Later in the verse: Stand firm, one spirit and one mind, unified and not wavering. We are good citizens of heaven when we make the gospel look valuable. If the gospel is our passport, are we keeping it within arm's length, reminding ourselves of our ultimate home and priority?

- "Gospel" means good news. But the good news makes sense only after the bad news: one holy, righteous Creator, and every one of us has sinned against His ways:

  > *Romans 3:23 — [23] for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,*

- The perfect Judge: a judge who lets a confessed murderer walk free is no good judge, so the perfect Judge will not let the guilty go free. We are all guilty; we are all in trouble.

- The good news: God does not let sin go unpunished, nor does He look the other way; He punished His own sinless Son in our place. Saving faith rests on the person of Christ and shows itself true as we fully follow Him:

  > *2 Corinthians 5:21 — [21] For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.*

Point 2 — Gospel Courage (1:28)

[27] … with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, [28] and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God.

- Gospel living takes gospel courage: “not frightened in anything by your opponents” (v. 28).

- Philippi was proud of its Roman roots and its Roman gods. Rome believed allegiance to its many gods brought the empire success; unfaithfulness to them could bring misfortune.

- The Christians would not call those gods gods. Later they were charged as “atheists”: not for denying God, but for refusing to acknowledge the Roman gods.

- A double sign: to the opponents, of their coming destruction; to the believers, of their salvation. Both come by the hand of God: “and that from God” (v. 28).

- Not new: God said it through Isaiah (Isaiah 51:7–16, our Old Testament reading). Destruction for those who deny Him; salvation for the ransomed:

  > *Isaiah 51:7–8 — [7] “Listen to me, you who know righteousness, the people in whose heart is my law; fear not the reproach of man, nor be dismayed at their revilings. [8] For the moth will eat them up like a garment, and the worm will eat them like wool, but my righteousness will be forever, and my salvation to all generations.”*

- Our day: a pluralistic society can move toward a more thoroughly pagan one through the advance of secularism, where refusing its values becomes untenable. People already bristle at the judgment of God, though it runs from the first book of the Bible to the last.

- We must grow in courage: to explain, believe and contend for the gospel together, for us and our children. We will not be frightened.

Point 3 — Gospel Grace (1:29–30)

[29] For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, [30] engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

- The occasion (v. 30), the same conflict: they saw Paul beaten and jailed in Philippi; now they hear he still has it, chained in Rome:

  > *Acts 16:22–24 — [22] The crowd joined in attacking them, and the magistrates tore the garments off them and gave orders to beat them with rods. [23] And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, ordering the jailer to keep them safely. [24] Having received this order, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.*

- Grace talk (v. 29): “it has been granted” is echaristhē, from charis, grace. Grace is a gift: on Christ’s behalf we are given to believe in Him and to suffer for Him.

- To believe: the cross erases a negative and adds a positive. It cleanses us from sin, but that alone is not enough; it also gives us new life, so that we believe and live to righteousness:

  > *Ephesians 1:7 — [7] In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace,*
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  > *Titus 3:5–6 — [5] he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, [6] whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior,*
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  > *1 Peter 2:24 — [24] He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.*

- To suffer: bearing the cost of belief, standing firm when ostracized, fighting sin and temptation. It assures us our faith is real.

- Believing and suffering are both gifts, and both are from God.

Conclusion — Rahab (Joshua 2)

- Gospel living, gospel courage, gospel grace: Rahab shows all three. Grace opened her eyes, she showed courage, and she reoriented her whole life around the good news.

- A Canaanite of Jericho and a prostitute, with no business among God’s people. God opened her eyes; she trusted His mercy and risked everything to belong to His people:

  > *Joshua 2:11 — [11] And as soon as we heard it, our hearts melted, and there was no spirit left in any man because of you, for the LORD your God, he is God in the heavens above and on the earth beneath.*

- She knew the full bad news and believed the good news, then reoriented everything around it: the scarlet cord in the window, her whole family gathered in (Joshua 2:18–21). Going on as if the spies never came would have been foolish.

- Rahab is every one of us. Do we know the gospel, not just explain it? Then let our lives make this gospel look as incredible as it is: only worthy of the gospel of Christ should be our citizening.