

**A
FAITHFUL
CITIZEN OF
HEAVEN
HERE ON
EARTH**

PHILIPPIANS 1:27-30

Sermon by Pastor Rommel Insigne

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Introduction: What we learnt from Paul in Philippians 1:1-20 was his commitment to the growth of the church in Philippi and his earnest prayer for the church. We also saw his commitment to live for Christ and to die for Christ is gain. For Him, it is better to live for Christ for the sake of the progress of the Gospel. Paul chose the path to live for Christ for their continuous joy and service and proclamation of the Gospel (Philippians 1:21). Paul was willing to live and serve the church in Philippi as long as he lives. Paul's motivation was for the church in Philippi to find joy and confidence in Christ Jesus continually. The possible response of the church in Philippi is to do the same to be like Paul and Timothy faithful in life, ministry, and suffering. Standing firm and strong in the Lord.

Martin Luther said in his book, *The Freedom of The Christian Man*: "The Christian is the lord of all, and subject to everyone, because of faith; he is the servant of all, and subject to everyone, because of love. Faith and love are the two governing principles of the Christian life. Faith expresses the Christian's relationship to God, love, and the relationship to humanity. These two Christian principles are interdependent; that is, where there is faith, there will also be love. . . . We conclude that a Christian lives not in himself but in Christ and his neighbour. Otherwise, he is not a Christian. He lives in Christ through faith and in his neighbour through love. By faith he is caught up beyond himself into God. By love, he descends beneath himself into his neighbour."

How can you live your lives in faith and in love in this evil world? How can you live your life if you are living as an illegal immigrant here in Australia or in the US, Canada or Europe? Someone told me there are several pastors living as illegal immigrants in America. Some people can stay illegal in some states in America, like the sanctuary cities. They can work, they can drive, and they can live freely. Statistics say around 12 million people are illegal in the US and around 500,000 in Canada. One leftist political analyst in America said, "The illegal immigrants are better people in America than the American citizens living in America." Here in Australia, most likely far, far less. But for those living legally and permanently and who are citizens of Australia, how should you live your lives as good citizens of Australia? I believe it is easy to live as an Australian citizen. You pay your taxes on time, obey traffic rules, and obey the laws of the land. Do not violate any Australian laws. Be kind to your neighbours and join a community group. Pay your rent on time, be punctual, be a genuine migrant worker, etc. But for the Christians living here in Australia, how should we live our lives as citizens of heaven? Like what Martin Luther just said, "He lives in Christ through faith and in his neighbour through love." How do we live as moral, holy, and righteous citizens of heaven in this evil world? Paul will help and guide us through how to live our lives as true citizens of heaven here on earth with faith and love. There are three ways how to live our lives as worthy citizens of heaven here on earth: First, stand firm in the faith (vs 27); Second, stand tall against all opponents or enemies (vs 28); Third, stand strong in suffering for Christ (vs 29-30);

1) Stand firm in the faith of the Gospel (Philippians 1:27)

27 Only live your lives in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear about your circumstances, that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind contending together for the faith of the gospel,

Why did Paul write this letter of Joy to the church in Philippi? How did Paul motivate the church in Philippi to be more confident in their Christian life? His command was to live their lives as worthy citizens of the Gospel of Jesus Christ here on earth. So now, how will they do it? How will they walk worthy of Christ and the Gospel? How can they live their lives as worthy citizens of heaven here on earth? Verse 27 is a command from God. The church in Philippi must live their lives as worthy citizens of Christ and worthy citizens of heaven while they are still alive in this world. Do you want to be a true Christian? Do you want to be in heaven? Do you want to be like Christ? Let us live our lives in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ. What does it mean to live our lives? Let us read verse 27a, **“Only live your lives in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.”** The phrase live your lives is a command from Paul that while he is away from the church in Philippi and for the progress and joy of the church, fulfil your commitment to live with Christ for the progress and joy of the church. If your life is found in Christ, choose to live for Christ and with Christ here on earth. If you want to live your life, the first thing to do is to live for Christ alone. Only live for the glory and honour of Christ. Live your lives as true citizens of Christ and of heaven. Your life should be focused on living for Christ, a Christ-centred focus and a committed biblical thinker. The focus of living your life is for Christ alone and His glory alone. Choose to serve Him, and choose to live for Christ.

“Live your lives in a manner” is like a faithful Roman citizen in Philippi. Historically, Philippi was just an annex or a colony of Rome. What we know about Philippi is that she was known as a little Rome. Many of them made a pledge of allegiance to the emperor of Rome. In short, they love Rome and the people of Rome. Adapted everything from the Roman culture and pride. Adapted the language, which is Latin, the way they dress, and the lifestyle (music and arts, economics and politics). They were totally sold out to Rome and its culture. They fully embraced everything. Philippi was a commendable city according to the Emperor. That is why if the church in Philippi was a commendable church according to Paul, the church must live their lives in a manner worthy of the Gospel just like the people in Philippi they were excellent Roman citizens. Every believer of Jesus Christ in Philippi must be faithful and active citizens of heaven. Only in Christ and His Gospel alone is the motivation. They should conduct themselves as true followers of Christ and citizens of heaven here on earth. They should be devoted to the Kingdom of God and to Christ. This is what it means “worthy of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.”

Another way to explain the phrase **“Living your lives in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ”** is living in this world that the church is worthy, acceptable, commendable, and fitting to the work of the Gospel. The church is excellent, sincere, truthful, blameless and no fault. A Spirit-filled Church. Empowered and directed by the Holy Spirit and the words of Christ. A responsible church and children of God. Walking by faith and not by sight. Being the light of the world, working out their salvation with fear and trembling, and being blameless and above reproach. This is to say that the church is fully connected to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They have a relationship with Jesus Christ because they were changed or transformed by the words of Christ and the Gospel of Christ.

Now, you live with the Gospel. You share and proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ with joy and suffering. This is a command that we need to fully desire, obey and follow. Live our lives in a manner worthy of the Gospel. Conduct our lives in a manner that is with excellence, sincerity, truthfulness and faithfulness to God. Applying it in our marriage and family, in the church, and in the communities. That is our calling and responsibility while living here on earth. If we want to be worthy citizens of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, let us conduct ourselves worthy of the Gospel. As

believers of Jesus Christ, let us pursue to have a deep connection, communion, fellowship relationship and even partnership with the Gospel of Christ. The motivation is the command of Christ. You and I are called to honour and glorify Christ, your God and Saviour. Our ability to pass the test if our faith in Christ is real and genuine is our consistency in doing good works and applying the words of Christ in our lives. The ability to live for Christ and walk with Christ is based on the gift of grace and the gift of faith by God's Spirit. Now, by the grace and mercy of God, since the first day of our conversion to Christ up to the present, let us live in integrity, sincerity, and truthfulness. This is our calling and responsibility as citizens of heaven here on earth.

There are two reasons Paul expects them to do in his absence. **“So that whether I come and see you or remain absent. I will hear about your circumstances.”** What are the circumstances Paul expects to hear from the church in Philippi just in case he cannot visit the church? What we know about Paul here is the physical constraints surrounding him, his imprisonment in Rome and the uncertainty of being free again. The first expectation of Paul. He expects the church in Philippi to live for Christ continually in spite of his absence. This verse is more of Paul wanting to see them. But if not, he wants to hear more of the church and, by God's grace, a good progress report, their worthiness of the Gospel and being worthy of being called citizens of heaven. Their accomplishments of sincerity and truthfulness in their love for God and for the church are consistent. They are faithful in walking with Jesus and bearing the fruit of righteousness in Jesus Christ. Their continuous fruit of good works report. Their faithfulness in proclaiming the Gospel and their generosity to the churches. Their love keeps abounding inside and outside the church. Their willingness to suffer for Christ. This is Paul's expectation. However, Paul's hope and prayer was that the Lord would sustain his life and service to Christ while in prison and give him freedom so he could visit the church in Philippi again and see them all.

The second expectation of Paul, while waiting for the day of their meeting up in Philippi as a church, is **“that you are standing firm.”** What does standing firm mean to Paul and to the church in Philippi? To stand firm means STEKO in Greek. Sticking or binding together firmly. Firm also means steadfast. Holding firm on a tree branch fighting against the rushing water flood. The word standing is actively standing and never thought of sitting down or being tired, weak, and sick. Or because you encounter bad things in life, you quit or cease to exist as a worthy citizen of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Never backing down and retreating from the evil attacks and schemes of the devil. Choosing to keep going up and striving in biblical theology, in eternal perspective, in sanctification and holiness. It also means standing for your biblical beliefs and principles, guarding and protecting the words of Christ in your hearts. Standing for what is the standard of God in morality, godliness, integrity, and truthfulness. You want to be right with God, so you regularly confess your sins and repent right away.

The first part of the command to stand firm as a church is **“In one spirit.”** What does this mean? Doing it together in unity and in the power of the Holy Spirit. Having one conviction and one heart. Doing it for the unity and growth of the church. Steadfast in one spirit. The motivation of the church is Christ. The purpose and existence of the church is they are living in one spirit and in Christ and Christ alone. They are living a Christ-centred life and ministry. Exalting Christ in the church and pointing people to Christ. This is in one spirit.

The second part of the command to stand firm as a church is **“With one mind contending together for the faith of the gospel.”** What does contending together mean in Greek? To struggle, to fight, to strive or to thrive. It also means to labour or to work or toil. This is not only an

individual fight and work, fighting alone or being a lone ranger. But contending together with fellow believers in Christ. Doing it all as a whole church. Together as a church of Christ, striving and thriving together in one spirit and one mind. You are contending or labouring hard against bad theology, worldly culture, and wrong and unbiblical teachings in school and on social media. Striving together in one spirit and in one mind is not an easy job description. Because it is not easy, you want to invite the church and be invited by the church to strive hard, together with mind or soul against the attacks of the devil, the world and even our own flesh. Striving or contending together as a team and as a church as to how to grow and how to be like Christ. How to show abundant love, forgiveness, grace, mercy, and compassion.

What is the reason for contending together with one spirit and one mind? **“for the faith of the Gospel.”** This is for the growth of their faith in Christ and the growth of the church. That they will not be ashamed in proclaiming the Gospel. They will have joy in their hearts. Paul wanted the church to be united in spirit and to work together and not work alone in fighting the evil and perverse culture. The church must stand firm by focusing on Jesus Christ alone, the story of Christ's life and works on the cross. The church must stand firm in one spirit and in one mind, contending together for the growth of their faith of the Gospel.

As a Faith in Christ Church in Sutherland until the day of our Lord Jesus Christ, let us stand firm together in Christ. Do not quit, and do not stop standing and contending (wrestling and struggling well) for the faith you have received from the Lord Jesus Christ. Point the church to the Gospel message of Jesus Christ on a regular basis. Do not stay long in the cliff of hell. Wake up from your slumber. If you are falling asleep, you need to wake up as soon as possible. Do not let the sun go down in your anger to yourself, to men and to God. Stand tall and firm and contend right away with the faith God has given you. Do it in unity. Do it together as a church. Let us not do it by ourselves or through our own way. We cannot survive without Christ. We cannot survive without being part of the church. We need a church to contend for the Gospel and the growth of our faith in Christ. How can we live our lives as worthy citizens of heaven here on earth? Stand firm in your faith (vs 27).

2) Stand tall against all opposition (Philippians 1:28)

28 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.

Paul made it clear to us that we should live our lives as true, faithful Gospel churches and true citizens of heaven. Never go back as evil citizens of this world. Paul commanded us to stand firm and contending together in the faith and for the faith of the Gospel in one spirit and one mind. The next point is verse 28, Standing tall against all opposition, enemies, and opponents of the Gospel. Enemies of the Gospel whose motive is to prevent the proclamation and the spread of the Gospel. These enemies are false teachers. They create strife, division, and disunity. Let us read verse 28a: **“In no way alarmed by your opponents.”** This is a command to help or guide the church in Philippi not to be afraid of false teachings and those who harm the church. The phrase **“in no way alarmed”** means never or do not think or be overpowered or overwhelmed by fear. The Greek word for Alarmed is PTYRO. Do not be afraid or be frightened. Do not be intimidated, timid, or fearful. It is like you are not moved even though there is a coming stampede of horses or wildebeests. You are unmoved by the movement of cockroaches, spiders, or wasps. This is in no way going to harm me and stop me from moving forward. It is like saying, “No way, Jose.” Do not

be afraid of all false teachers and false Christians. Or do not be afraid or intimidated whether they are more intelligent or influential than you. Especially the enemies of the Gospel and of God who are preventing the growth and proclamation of the Gospel. Do not be intimidated when influential people among you oppose you with anger, hostility, and indifference to the Gospel message and in the name of Jesus Christ. Do not be afraid if they block your goal of following Christ and preaching the way to Christ. Do not be afraid if they resist the Gospel, rebel against God and His word, and damage you in your progress as a church.

If they oppose the church and they are resistant to the Gospel message that you are offering and presenting, it means they are doomed to destruction. God's punishment will be upon them. What is their judgment? When these enemies of the Gospel and their opposition to the Gospel continue to block your goal as a citizen of heaven here on earth and as a faithful proclaimer of the Gospel message, it means God's judgement is upon them, and they are already judged to hell. Paul said, **"which is a sign of destruction for them."** If these people create destruction and damage to you and the proclamation of the Gospel, whoever they are, their hostile and evil negative attitude towards the Gospel are signs of their unbelieving hearts, and they are already doomed and judged to hell. They will die and be separated from God for eternity and be thrown to hell. It is their destruction. This means it is their spiritual ruin. Their souls are separated from the presence and glory of God forever. Their Opposition to the Gospel and Christ's offer of salvation is clear evidence and clear proof as God sees everything, and there is no secret in God's presence. They cannot escape God's judgment and destruction. Hell and everlasting fire and torment are their judgment (1 Thessalonians 4-8).

Paul knew how to encourage the church in Philippi by telling them not to be afraid and not be in trouble, in mind and heart, as enemies will try to destroy the work of the Lord and the progress of the Gospel. The destruction of all enemies of the Gospel is very affirming to Christians in Philippi, but also that their labour in the Lord and service in the Lord is not in vain. God indeed called and saved people who are standing tall, standing firm, and contending with the Gospel of Jesus Christ. They are really saved people of God. As we end this second point of our study, in verse 28b, Paul said, **"But of salvation for you, and that too, from God."** When citizens of heaven live their lives that are worthy of honour and faithful to the Gospel message: Able to stand firm and contend with the church, and able to stand tall against all oppositions, not afraid and confused and weak and quit or run away, that is the sign of your genuine conversion and salvation in Christ. That salvation is from God. You are indeed saved by God. You received the gift of faith, the gift of grace, the gift of salvation, and the gift of the Holy Spirit. Do not be afraid. Always remember your opponents cannot destroy your soul. But with the help of the Holy Spirit and the perseverance of the Lord's call, God will remain faithful to save you and me and to do His will and work until the day of Christ. There is no deadline and no expiry dates for God's help and salvation. Our salvation is from God, and we cannot attain or claim our salvation based on our faithfulness but on God's grace alone and through faith in Christ. Not what others are saying, or the people on YouTube are saying that is not properly diving the truth of the Scriptures and is not biblically sound. But you believe and accept the Gospel message and you apply the Gospel message in your life. You continue to persevere in good works, you don't quit and fall away from the faith, and you stand firm and involve yourself in the church. and you contend together and be able to make a stand as a church (by helping each other, carrying each other's burden, encouraging one another and praying for one another). If you are standing tall against all opposition and all enemies of the Gospel. If you

are defending the truth, guarding the truth, loving the truth and obeying the Truth. You are a man and woman of honour and truthful and sincere, and you have biblical common sense and wisdom from above. You are indeed a true citizen of heaven. A true follower of Christ saved by God's grace. How can you live your life as a worthy citizen of heaven here on earth? Stand firm in the faith (vs 27); Stand tall against all opponents or enemies (vs 28).

3) Stand strong in suffering for Christ (Philippians 1:29-30)

29 For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, 30 having the same struggle which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me.

Now, as we end this message, we are encouraged to believe that we are saved in Jesus Christ but also encouraged that one day, we will face suffering and persecution for Christ. Let us read verse **29a "For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake."** Now, Paul is not only encouraging the church that they are saved because they believed and demonstrated signs of the true salvation in Christ and citizens of heaven, but the church will go through hardship and suffering for Christ. Paul gave this advice and warning without any hesitation. He actually prophesied the future state of a true Gospel church like the church in Philippi. The church in Philippi (for you) will suffer for Christ. The church will struggle and need to fight for their faith in Jesus Christ. The church might suffer or die or be persecuted, imprisoned and put in chains. Or be prevented from proclaiming Christ and to grow as a church. The church might not be allowed to preach and open their church because they preach and proclaim Christ and His Gospel message. This is what it means **"For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake."** Suffering is not accidental or a curse from God or divine judgment. It is a calling from God. It is also a gift from God for the purpose of growth and Christlikeness. To suffer for Christ's sake is a privilege to be closer to God and appreciate the sovereign grace of God. The good news of this grant is from God and Jesus Christ. This favour and blessing from God is the gift of salvation by believing in Jesus Christ (not only believing in Him). To believe Jesus Christ is a gift from God. Faith that God has given us is a gift from God. But this gift of faith and the gift of God's salvation through faith in Jesus Christ has been packaged by God, and it is not alone. It is packaged with suffering for Christ. All true citizens of heaven will suffer for Christ. Paul said, **"But also to suffer for His sake."**

What does this suffering for His sake mean? Let us read verse **30b having the same struggle which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me.** What kind of suffering did Paul experience in Philippi and in Rome? Were they both the same sufferings for Christ? Paul struggled and fought the Gospel and the proclamation of the Gospel. Remember, he was dragged out to the city, stoned to death, whipped 39 times, imprisoned and placed in stocks. They prevented the spread and progress of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In addition to Paul's suffering, he defended the church from false teachers, internal factions and disunity. All were the works of Satan to prevent Paul from spreading the Gospel to the Gentiles and destroying the growth of the church. The church in Philippi saw how Paul defended and guarded the Gospel and the church. The church saw how faithful Paul was in theology, purity, and holiness. Paul was committed to Christ, willing to suffer and die for Christ. Also, Paul was reminding the church in Philippi that because of the Gospel proclamation and the teaching of the Deity of Christ and as the Messiah of God sent by God to take away the sins of the world, he was also doing it in Rome. Paul was in Rome not because he was having a holiday or inside a nice coffee shop and in a hotel facing a nice ocean view with a 360-

degree view so he could write a better exposition and write an excellent sermon for next Sunday. Or having a drink and a Karaoke with friends and fellow believers in Jesus Christ. Anyway, it's my Birthday, or let us celebrate my anniversary. Paul was in Rome and in chains. Alive but no freedom. A prisoner and waiting for his death. The only hope for Him is Christ's salvation and being with Christ in heaven.

One good thing about Paul is that he decided to live for Christ and not die yet, as if it is selfish for him to die soon. It is like praying to God to extend his life so he can continue to help proclaim the Gospel and see the growth of the church, particularly the growth of the church in Philippi. He decided to be selfless, not abandon the church, and live long for Christ. He knew people were spiritually hungry and wanted to know the truth. The church wanted to hear more of the Gospel message, and they wanted to grow with Paul. Paul decided to live on in the flesh in spite of the chains and suffering. Despite the struggles, pains, hardships, tears, and defence against false teachers and envious people in the churches of him and his position as an apostle. He was willing to accept them and even die for the sake of the Gospel.

What we know about the death and martyrdom of Paul is that he died in Rome (traditional belief). In spite of a little freedom in his imprisonment and his ability to teach and proclaim the Gospel in Rome, they still tried to put him on trial, and there were delays for his freedom. But when Nero burnt the city of Rome, emperor Nero accused the Christians who burnt down the city of Rome. Nero knew the Gospel was spreading in his city through the influence of Paul and his followers. He accused the Christians of arson, so he ordered the killing of Christians, and Paul was put to death. Nero beheaded Paul in A.D. 64. Peter, one of the closest disciples of Jesus, was also put to death around the same year. Many Christians left Rome as a result of the persecution of Nero.

What was Paul saying here to the church in Philippi? As believers in Jesus Christ, let us continue to believe in Christ and grow in faith in Christ. Allow Christ to be the Lord and Saviour of our life. Let us continue to fear God and follow Him. Let us continue to hunger and thirst for God and His righteousness. Let us be willing and accept suffering in this world in the name of Christ. If we are serious followers of Jesus Christ, we will definitely be persecuted; We will be abandoned and rejected by friends and family members. We might not get what we want in this world. We will be hated in the world. However, Jesus said, as Paul also said, **29 For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.**

What was Paul saying to us as a church?

- 1) Expect to live an ordinary or simple life because we follow Christ. But we are commanded to excel still more as citizens of heaven.
- 2) Let us live our lives in a manner worthy of the Gospel. Whose lives and conduct are excellent and worthy to be called citizens of heaven.
- 3) Let us be faithful and fruitful in good works. A well-tested by fire, sincere, blameless and Spirit-filled citizens of heaven.
- 4) Let us learn to rejoice in our faith in Christ and keep rejoicing in the Lord.
- 5) Let us stand firm in the faith in one spirit and one mind. Contending together as a church until the day of Christ.
- 6) Let us welcome and accept suffering for Christ in persecution and martyrdom. Suffering for Christ also means being willing to be corrected, rebuked, and disciplined when we are wrong and fall into sin.

- 7) Suffering is not accidental, a curse from God, or divine judgment. It is a calling from God and a gift from God for the purpose of growth and Christlikeness.
- 8) Let us not abandon our faith in Jesus Christ. Never stop, never quit, persevere, and endure long-suffering. To persevere is a sign of our salvation, and it is from God.
- 9) Let us not be afraid of satan's attacks. They cannot kill or destroy our souls. Only fear God, who is capable of destroying and throwing you to hell and to the lake of fire.
- 10) The destruction of the enemies of God and their judgment is also from God.

Conclusion:

How to live our lives as worthy citizens of heaven here on earth?

- 1) Stand firm in the faith (vs 27)**
- 2) Stand tall against all opponents or enemies (vs 28)**
- 3) Stand strong in suffering for Christ (vs 29-30)**