

Gospel Citizenship

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Date: 28 July 2024

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[0 : 00] Philippians chapter 1, picking up at verse 18b. Yes, and I will rejoice, for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, this will turn out for my deliverance, as it is my eager expectation and hope, that I'll not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now, as always, Christ will be honoured in my body, whether by life or by death.

For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I'm to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labour for me.

Yet, which shall I choose? I cannot tell. I'm hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better.

But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. Convinced of this, I know that I'll remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith, so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus because of my coming to you again.

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, and not frightened in anything by your opponents.

[1 : 47] This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation and that from God. 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, engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

Let's pray. Our Father in heaven, as we consider your word now, we pray that you would graft it into our lives by faith and that we truly would be those who are those who have a manner of life worthy of our citizenship in heaven.

For we pray it in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, I do wonder, the kind of thing is, what are we living for? What are we striving for?

The 2024 Olympics have started. They're out of the gate. We've won some gold medals, which is fantastic, isn't it? It's great. But for many, just qualifying for the Games is as far as they get, really. But the aim of getting the Games is to win, is to stand on the dais and actually win the gold medal. The athletes have a single-minded determination, a sharpness of focus, of what they're trying to do and how they're going to go about it.

[3 : 25] For them, to live is to compete. But not just to compete, but to win. Now, the sad reality is, most of them are going to lose, just so you know.

Some, only a few, will win. There's a young man currently at UniChurch who has come from the other side of the world and he is training with a trainer here in St. Lucia so that he might actually compete in the next Olympics.

That's how dedicated he is to the cause of competing in Olympic Games. Now, if I am to win, if I am to live, what will it be in my life?

What will it be in your life? If you were to really live, if you were to win, what would it be? What is my purpose in life? And as I pursue that purpose, how is it going to shape my life's priorities and decisions?

It's got to do it, hasn't it? Really got to shape them. And it means I'll choose one thing, it means I'm not going to choose something else along the way. I can't do everything.

[4 : 42] I just can't. And not only that, it will affect who I associate with and the kind of things that I talk about. The Economist will be familiar with a bloke named Adam Smith, the Scottish economist and philosopher and possibly the founder of capitalism.

They will have read his book, An Inquiry into the Nature of the Causes of the Wealth of Nations. The classical musician, right, the Keith Birch's world, will be familiar with Bach and Mozart and Beethoven and love listening to their music and glorying in that.

The Marxist will be familiar with Mr Marx and speak highly of him. And I see them at the stalls at UQ, calling people to their cause, wanting to give out the magazines and extolling how great Marxism is.

The scientists will be familiar with the scientists in their field and speak highly of them. How about the Christian? I mean, who is it that we'll be familiar with? What will we be living for? Who will be shaping our lives? What will be shaping our choices? Who will we be glorying in? There's nothing like a little bit of suffering to reveal what we're living for and who we're living for and what it is that matters most in our lives.

[6 : 03] And for Paul, to live is first and foremost Jesus, the Christ. Christ. This shapes what he lives for.

This shapes what his choices look like and he makes in life. And he has a razor sharp clarity, doesn't he? Of what his life's about. It doesn't get much sharper than this.

Did you see in verse 21 of Philippians chapter 1? See his clarity. In verse 21. For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain.

Now, why does he say that? Why does he say for me to live is Christ and to die is gain? See that word there for? It's important for us to be reading and understanding our Bibles well.

And so what comes before verse 21 is based on this razor sharp understanding of his purpose in life.

[7 : 08] So we're breaking this chapter midway through his letter and the logic we saw last week in verses 12 to 18 and saw that Paul was first and foremost concerned about the gospel of Jesus advancing, of gospel of Jesus going forward.

It didn't matter who proclaimed it even if they did it for wrong motives or good motives. It didn't matter to him as long as Jesus Christ was proclaimed he'd rejoice in that. And Paul's in a Roman prison writing to a group of people who are in a city that's a Roman outpost.

One that's proud of its status. I mean Acts chapter 16 we read that Philippi is one of the leading cities of the district of Macedonia, a Roman colony. They're proud of this place.

And for Paul he's saying for him to live is Christ and to die is gain. It's the reason for what he's just said in verses 18 through to 20. To live is Christ can roll easily off the tongue but it's radical in its reality.

It means for him his whole purpose, his whole orientation of life is to bring honour and glory to Jesus. That's what it means.

[8 : 21] Everything else he does is to that end. His very existence is for that end which is the ground for what comes before.

So what just comes before in verses 18 to 20? Well he says he's confident of his deliverance. Yes I'll rejoice for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance.

Now it's important to get a hold of the idea here that deliverance is not just one of being released from prison. The word is salvation.

The salvation is the word that sort of brackets this section. Do you see in verse 28 as well? Verse 28 For it's been granted to you Sorry verse 28 And not to be frightened anything of your opponents for this is a clear sign of them of their destruction but of your salvation.

So salvation sort of brackets this little section here. It's a clear sign of them of your salvation he's saying to the Philippians.

[9 : 33] Same word. It's certain his deliverance his vindication his salvation whether by life or by death his ultimate hope is salvation which in the New Testament is always deliverance from the coming wrath of God and entering into the glorious presence of God that's the idea of salvation.

The future for him is either life possibly release or execution verse 20 that's right and the Philippians are praying for him as they pray for him for endurance and perseverance and speaking of the truth clearly the Holy Spirit of Jesus will help him see verse 19 and how is it that the Holy Spirit will help him see for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance now how will the Holy Spirit help him well I suspect it picks up a bit of things from Mark 13 as Jesus promised he'll know what to say in one instance in prison see Mark 13 says and when they bring you to trial and deliver you over do not be anxious beforehand what you say but say whatever he gives you in this hour for it's not you who will speak but the Holy Spirit and brother will deliver brother over to death and the father his child and children rise against their

parents and have them put to death and you will be hated for my name's sake but the one who endures to the end will be saved

I mean Jesus promised this kind of stuff for those who are disciples of Jesus and here he is Paul in prison and what will he say well God will give him some words to say but more than that by the help of the Holy Spirit he'll be not ashamed of Jesus he will honour Christ in his body remember Mark chapter 8 verse 34 come back to Mark chapter 8 in your Bibles open up back to Mark chapter 8 and see it for yourself Matthew Mark it's the New Testament Mark chapter 8 verse 34 I don't know what page the Bible is in your Bible but it's Matthew Mark Luke John Mark chapter 8 Mark chapter 8 verse 34 so Jesus calls a crowd to him with his disciples and said to them if anyone would come after me let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me for whoever would save his life will lose it but whoever loses his life for my sake and the Gospels will save it for what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul for what can a man give in return for his soul for whoever is ashamed of me and my words and his adulterous and sinful generation of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father and the Holy Angels with the help of the Holy Spirit

Paul is not going to be ashamed of Jesus he's not going to water down what he says about Jesus at all and so for Paul to live then is Christ and to die is gain this is true for many brothers and sisters around the world today who suffer for the sake of the Lord Jesus who loved us and gave his life for us Paul needs courage to hear and to honour Jesus whatever happens wherever he's executed or whether he lives and goes on living that he will not be ashamed of Jesus but continue to honour Jesus highly but did you notice here in the passage here that Jesus Christ will be honoured in my body whether by life or death but the idea of honoured here is not just only simply honoured but highly honoured mega honoured really honoured in his life it takes guts and courage to stand firm for Christ in the gospel when there are those who oppose you want to take your life from you who want you to soften the message to make it seem even more palatable and simply not want to obey Jesus in every area of life so Paul is crystal clear about his very existence that to live is Christ and to die is gain and that shapes everything that he says and does and the implication then you see there in verse 22 to 26 goes like this if he goes on living see verse 22 if I go on living in the flesh that means fruitful labour for me labour which is not in vain labour that's about proclaiming Christ in whatever circumstance he finds himself in wherever he is whether it's in prison or not in prison in writing letters to people or being there in person with them frankly isn't it good that he went to jail and wrote these letters for us to be able to read today so far down history so what will he choose it's a struggle against self-interest for Paul his desires to depart and to be with Christ that's better no have a look a bit more closely a bit more closely with the text

I'm hard pressed between the two verse 23 my desire is to depart and be with Christ for that is far better much more better there's no fear in death for Paul for that is the doorway to life which will be gain if he dies eternal life in the presence of the glory of God is all that awaits him but to remain is better for the sake of the Philippians to keep living in this world and possibly coming to them and going to help them make progress and join the faith progress and joy in the faith growing maturity and resilience confidence and joy because of their partnership in serving the gospel and seeing it go ahead while ever he lives and if he remains in the flesh see verse 26 if he remains in the flesh well they can boast more of Jesus

[16:24] Christ and how good Jesus has been to Paul that's what they can do if Paul is restored to them he can encourage them more and more in the things of Jesus and so they can actually give glory to Jesus more and more as well I mean how wonderful it would be to have him turn up into Philippi don't you wish sometimes wouldn't it be awesome if we could have been around and met the Apostle Paul that would be awesome met one of the disciples and heard from their lips first hand about their time with Jesus wouldn't that be the kind of experience you'd cherish it's the kind of thing that Paul was hoping to be able to bring to the Philippians but we have his word the words of the Lord Jesus written down in scripture for us to hear him any time we like now just a little aside here I want to just carefully think about this for a second with you when Paul says his desires to depart and be with

Christ for that is far better we need to be clear that Paul's not advocating any kind of death wish right he's not talking about taking his own life or that anyone would actually want to do that now if you feel that life's a struggle feeling overwhelmed if you're feeling life's not okay then please do talk to someone about it talk to me or a trusted friend we don't want you to keep suffering in that kind of

way alone or in silence at the same time I don't want to overly alarm you if you're thinking just like Paul it's a good way to be thinking Josh had a helpful diagram at Uni Church a couple of weeks ago hopefully you can see it behind me here and show it to you just on the screen here it's a way of being aware of how we're travelling the idea is four quadrants you can see there of personal awareness you can be not well and don't know it and not going well and you can know it or you can be going well and don't know it just ah that's alright or you can be going well and know it and that's a really healthy place to be and we can help one another in these places as well the place that's not so good to be in is the not doing well and not being aware of it that's not such a good place to be which is where the kind of question of are you okay is the kind of question that's good to be asking each other from time to time we can be feeling down at times but if it's prolonged and drawn out and affecting your ability to function as a person well then it would be really good at least to be aware of that that's the aside but the important aside now notwithstanding let's get back to the passage before us and see

Paul's plea and here we probably have the topic sentence of the book of Philippians chapter 1 verse 27 only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ so that whether I come to see you or an 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 Paul's plea is to verse 27 be living as citizens it's kind of like he sort of raised the finger and says now listen one important thing here here's the exhortation that he gives the Philippians only that your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ now this one thing lets you a manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ needs to be a bit sharper than that even though right a little bit sharper than that for in English it's more like this if you sort of do a sharper translation only let you that is Philippians right live as citizens worthy of Christ that is Christians those who have bent the knee to the Lord Jesus and recognized him and trusted him as saviour are now citizens of the kingdom of heaven that's who we are we are first and foremost citizens of heaven our citizenship has changed they are now having a heavenly citizenship where they first and foremost were loyal to Jesus as king not Caesar Caesar may think he's God right this is the Roman colony in the outpost in Philippi this is what the people would think that Caesar is their king Caesar is their God but their citizenship has now changed those who are in Christ in reality Jesus is the anointed king of God and is God Caesar might think he is but God is and Jesus is the anointed king the gospel of Christ is that Christ is king of the kingdom of God which has come Caesar has been deposed currently the kingdom of God is opposed right in our world we live in today by the citizens of this world we are people opposing the rule of God but one day it will become in all its finality and there will be no opposition to the kingdom of God and so right now as

[22 : 51] Paul writes to the Philippians the Philippians are to live as citizens worthy of the gospel that is good news the good news of Christ and what will it look like in verse 27 see what verse 27 says whether Paul is released or comes to them or not Paul will know well what will he know what will living as citizens look like well there's three key things that living as a citizen will look like first of all striving for the gospel they'll be united in the cause of the gospel every one of them not just some of them but all the believers in Philippi will be partners and partners in the gospel venture convinced of the priority of the gospel of

Christ that he is king striving side for the faith of the gospel the unity of purpose that only comes by having the spirit of Jesus working in them holding fast to the faith of the gospel it doesn't come up anywhere else in the new testament the faith is the body of truth that's what the faith is right and the body of truth is based on the message that Jesus Christ is Lord and that is his death and his death alone is a sacrifice for our sins that saves us and that is resurrection from the dead means that he is the eternal ruler the ancient of days the one who's come to the ancient days who is now the son of man who reigns ruling over heaven and earth his resurrection guarantees his sacrifice worked and that by relying on him we're okay with

God we are to be striving for that good news to be claimed in the whole world or that is what we should be doing with one mind with one purpose striving for that is what he's saying to the Philippians and by extension saying to all believers and we are to be courageous for Christ see verse 28 and not frightened in anything by your opponents a life worthy of the gospel of Christ one that's not frightened by those who oppose us or oppose it we don't fear those who oppose the Lord Jesus Christ we have courage in the face of opposition Paul wasn't afraid he sets the example in his razor sharp clarity on his purpose in life even with the threat of death looming over him for his

stand for the gospel he sets us the example of who he wants to be talking about all the time Jesus Christ so that whether in his life or in his death Jesus is exalted in his body by standing firm in the midst of conflict by those who oppose Jesus it's a clear sign to them that their end will be destruction whether they see that or not that's reality but it's salvation for those who stand firm for Jesus so firstly that they will actually be striving in one mind for the cause of the gospel secondly courageous for Christ in the face of opposition but thirdly look at God's granting it's very strange verse 29 and 30 why will be this be the case that we won't be frightened well notice what verse 29 says that word for comes up again this is the reason why we won't be frightened it's been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake God has graciously granted the Philippians not only to believe hear it not only to believe but also to suffer for his sake God grants belief in Christ yeah that's true but how often do we hear that God grants suffering for Christ as well and that is God's gracious thing God sends even the persecutions that they endure and the persecutions that

[28 : 43] Paul endures I mean the promise back when he was converted was to see how much he will suffer for my sake and God enables the solid stand that they must take against the suffering God gives the assurance of the salvation that follows the solid stand made for him so what they are going through is no different to what Paul's going through see verse 30 engage in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have so standing firm in one mind for the gospel is what got Paul in jail and it's what caused you strife in life as well dear Philippian and it shouldn't surprise him then and it shouldn't surprise us when it happens to us as well to live is Christ and to die is gain that may be the clearest personal mission statement anyone could ever have it gives us something to live for in this life now and hope beyond it now at one level what

Paul writes to Philippians he writes to us for Paul has been saved he has been delivered he has been rescued from the wrath of God he has died and it's now far better for him for him to live was Christ and to die has been gained for him he set the example of what it means to live as a citizen worthy of the gospel of Jesus and God's word to us is this let us live as citizens worthy of the gospel of Christ King Jesus and what will that look like partnership in striving for the faith of the gospel a unity of mind in that striving being unashamed of Jesus and his cross boasting in our association with

Jesus standing firm when people around us oppose the gospel of Jesus and want to deny him and disobey him it's great to see that happening here at church with us the kids holiday club was a recent example of it let's keep striving for the faith of the gospel more and more with God's help I think this is a timely reminder from God's word a timely imperative to hear from God's word may may may it be that he gives us this unity of purpose that we might stand firm in one spirit and one mind for the cause of Christ and so live in a manner worthy of being citizens of Christ Jesus and his kingdom let's pray our father in heaven thank you for your word for us to hear and thank you for the truths that are contained in there and we pray that having heard your word this morning we would be encouraged to keep pressing on we pray in Jesus name Amen