



# KING'S CHAPEL

## Daily Devotional - Philippians Study

Week 2 - Day 3

### Approaching God

Yesterday's passage revealed Paul's consideration of his future prospects as he sat in a Roman prison cell. Will he survive his present imprisonment, and then be released so he can visit the Philippian church again, or will the powers of the world decide that he's better off dead. The curious thing in yesterday's passage is that Paul agrees with them, he would indeed be better off dead - **"for me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain!"** But that doesn't mean Paul is moping it in, or is living in despair. Paul, as this letter shows, is full of life and energy and quite ready to get back to work the minute they let him out of prison. But Paul is also a man in love - with the king, the Messiah, the Jesus who, as he says in Galatians 2:20, "loved me and gave himself for me." As you begin your time with the Lord today, think about how the things we love and hope in shape our attitude and outlook. Ask God to begin shaping your life again around the love of Christ today. Talk to God about places where other affections are stealing away your joy.

### Bible Reading, Study & Meditation - Philippians 1:27-30

***From the first-century Mediterranean world to the 21st century in China and the middle-East, there have been plenty of people determined to stamp out the Christian faith and have used every trick in the book to do it. In our post-Christian West today, the forces of skepticism and cynicism within our culture are extremely powerful, not least in the media and on tv. It's easy for Christians to feel intimidated; but Paul insists we mustn't.***

***"Let your manner of life" in vs. 27 in the greek is politeuesthe which means "live as citizens" or "live as members of a community." Paul continues to appeal to a vision of a bonded fellowship of believers who are united together representing and defending the gospel of Christ. Hold this vision in mind as you study this letter from Paul.***

**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.

**Start with Engaging the Text:** Take a few minutes to highlight, circle, or underline key words. Which words or phrases stand out to you as significant, important? Is anything repeated or emphasized?

## Daily Study Questions

You may find it helpful to read through the commentary in “Resources for Further Study” at the end of today’s study to answer these questions.

- What does it mean to “let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ” vs. 27? What would be some examples of behavior which does and does not match up with the gospel?
- If we refuse to be intimidated by our opponents, what will be the result? (vs. 1:28)
- What could the Philippians learn from Paul’s example (1:29-30)

## Meditation & Reflection Questions

- Paul urges the Philippians to stand firm with a single spirit, struggling side by side with one united intent for the faith of the gospel. The aim is not unity for the sake of unity, because people can stand united for evil purposes. In your experience what is unique about the unity of Christians?
- Regarding what gospel issues do you and your community need to hold its nerve and remain unafraid in the face of resistance? Where is the place you feel most attacked and need the strength of Christian community?

## Close in Prayer:

Pray for unity among believers today, that we would be centered on the love of Christ. Pray especially about specific cases of disunity which you know about. Ask the Lord what you could do to help bring reconciliation.

### Commentary on Philippians 1:27-30

While Christians in North America don't face the type of persecution and imprisonment that occur in other parts of the world, the forces of skepticism and cynicism in the post-Christian Western world are extremely powerful. These messages permeate our culture through media, news, and television 24/7. It's easy for Christians to feel intimidated, but at the end of chapter one, Paul insists that we mustn't.

Why not? Don't they have the power to harm us? Well, yes and no. As Jesus said, **they can kill the body but not the soul (Matt 10:28)**; and the living God is looking after you. More particularly, from Paul's point of view, the whole business of being a Christian is about living by the belief that Jesus is *already* the true Lord of the world. Most of the world doesn't know this yet, so the loyal Christian is inevitably out of step with people all around, and this will result in misunderstanding, hostility, and even persecution.

That's why it's all the more important that Christian actions in the public sphere should be beyond reproach. **(vs. 27- let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel)** The Philippians actions and behavior in public, as he says, must match up to the gospel. They must not acquire a reputation for being uncivil, boorish, or rude. They must be known as honest, reliable, good neighbors, even if people are accusing or attacking them. They mustn't be intimidated into retreating into a private ghetto where they can ignore the rest of the world and nurture their own faith away from it.

At the same time, they must maintain their solid unity of spirit and intention, working together like members of the same sports team all equally intent on winning the game. That's what **striving side by side** really means. Appropriate public actions, and behavior, and united work **("contending as one man" - NIV)** for the gospel will together send a signal to opponents: we're not afraid. And that signal is itself part of the gospel message. It functions as a sign to the Christians that they already belong to the coming King, and to their opponents that a new world is beginning in which the threats of the old one don't work anymore.

Paul's world was familiar with the situation where a great army might be taken over by a new general, who would demand different standards of behavior and different practices in warfare. News of this would take time to work through the ranks, and many of the old soldiers would prefer to remain loyal to their former general. But those who knew that the new general had indeed taken over and would get his way in the end would be in the position of strength. The fact that they would hold their nerve, believing that the new regime was firmly in place, would itself be a sign to their doubting fellow soldiers that it was actually true.

This is more or less exactly what Paul believes about Jesus. **(vs. 28 - This is a sign to them...)** He is the new king; most people don't realize it; but those who do must hold their courage **(vs. 28 - without being frightened)** and remain loyal to him, because one day the whole world will acknowledge him as Lord. And that very loyalty itself, that holding of their nerve, will themselves be the sign that the message they are proclaiming is true. So, too, will their suffering be - and suffering is bound to come, sooner or later, if they really belong to Jesus. The world, the opponents of the gospel, will turn on loyal Christians for being out of line, out of step, or on the wrong side of history.

Like Paul and the Philippians, Christians today are called to live lives worthy of the grace and servanthood of Jesus. Since we are united to Christ and our citizenship is in heaven, we are to face persecution with joyful steadfastness. In doing so, we uphold the truthfulness of the good news of Christ who suffered for us. Amazingly, we can face even the most difficult situations with joy. We are called to a joy that defies any explanation by the world's categories.