

Philippians Chapter 1

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[0 : 00] So before we look at God's word, let us unite our hearts. Lord, you call us to be still, for indeed your presence is with us.

You have called us to worship again, O Lord. We have come to meet with you, and we come in humility and we come in reverence, O Lord.

For you are a God who is far and set above over this creation, and is transcendent but yet is close to us.

Father, you are the creator and the sustainer of the universe. And Lord, you have created us in your image. And Lord, you call us the pinnacle of your creation, but yet, Lord, we are fallen.

But Father, you have offered us salvation in and through Jesus, who is indeed the author and the perfecter of our faith, the sinless one, the one who took the form of a servant, the one who was hung on a cross, the godly for the ungodly, in our place and in our stead.

[1 : 31] We come to worship this evening, O Lord, for you alone are God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, one God. And we thank you and we bless you this day, O Lord, that you are with us.

Father, we are undeserving of your presence, and we are undeserving of your grace and of your mercy, but you call us to yourself, O Lord. Lord, you have the words of eternal life.

Lord, Jesus Christ himself said, I am the resurrection and the life. And our prayer this evening is that each and every one of us in here has that gift of faith in our hearts.

Lord, we pray that you will be at work transforming, convicting, molding, comforting, your people. And our prayer this night, O Lord, is that you would get all the glory and all the honour. And Father, we thank you for all that you have done in this community and for this church.

[2 : 53] We thank you, Lord, for the wonderful spirit that we have felt here this day. I thank you for all your servants here, Lord. Lord, and we pray, Lord, for each and every one of them.

We remember the prayer meetings, Lord, mid-week. We pray that you would be there in the midst. We pray for those that will preach at the prayer meetings, Lord.

And we bless you and we thank you that you are raising up young men who will go out and to proclaim the gospel. Lord, we thank you for the wonderful gift of preaching that you have granted to so many of your servants in this church.

Lord, we thank you for that blessing. We thank you for all the gifts that you have supplied to your people here. Gracious Lord, we remember those who are out on the mission.

Lord, be with them who remember the suffering church, Lord. give them peace. We remember those even within our own community who are unwell, O Lord.

[4 : 04] Father, we pray for healing power, not only of the body but of the soul and mind. We remember the residents of Harris House, Lord, and our prayers and our hearts are with them.

Encourage, O Lord, the staff also. Lord, we remember our children, our grandchildren and our great-grandchildren and we pray, O Lord, that they would remember their Creator and their youth.

Lord, we have so much to pray for. We remember David and Mary, O Lord, and the family and Lord, we pray that you would return them back here safe and sound and all else who are away on holiday at this time.

Lord, and we remember loved ones near and far. Protect them, watch over them and be with them. So Lord, would you be with us here this evening in the preaching and in the hearing of your word. And Lord, may we decrease and may Jesus Christ, our Lord and Saviour, increase. And Lord, we remember those who cannot be with us here this evening.

[5 : 15] who used to be with us so often. We are but dust, Lord, and our days are few. But you have placed a joy within our hearts knowing that when Christ is for us, nobody can be against us.

For he has conquered the grave, sin and death. Glorify your name this evening and bless us, Lord, for we ask it in Christ's name. Amen. If you will turn back with me to that portion of scripture that we read in Philippians and we're going to, I'm going to read again from Philippians 1 and at verse 27 down to the end of the chapter.

Philippians 1 and at verse 27 down to verse 30 which is the end of the chapter. 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.

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.

Prince Charles and Princess Anne as teenagers were heading off to a banquet or a ball from the palace and they jumped into the limousine but before the driver had a chance to pull away the Queen Mum remember the Queen Mum the Queen Mum came running out beckoning them to lower the window the window was lowered and the Queen Mum pointed into the car and she says now remember you are royal children so royal manners royal children royal manners and Paul here in a very real way is saying the same thing to this Philippian church he is saying to them that their heavenly citizenship which he describes in this little book in this letter that heavenly citizenship requires obedience verse 27 verse 28 it requires courage and verses 29 to 30 you will receive gifts good gifts but also gifts of times of trouble obedience courage gifts and of course as he goes into chapter 2 he talks about

[8 : 22] Jesus himself who is the perfect citizen of heaven and what did Jesus do what does he remind them he took the form of a servant took the form of a servant and was obedient to his father's will even although he was a king look to Christ as your example Paul is saying so the first thing we are going to look at here in verse 27 is heavenly citizenship requires obedience heavenly citizenship requires obedience only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ so that whether I come and see you or I 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 citizenship involves royal laws now let's have a little bit of look at the background to this the historical background the Philippians were Roman citizens and they were very proud of the fact that they were

Roman citizens not everyone in the Roman world was a Roman citizen Paul was if you remember and they took their Roman citizenship very seriously but with that Roman citizenship it carried with it a certain responsibility with privilege comes responsibility they practiced their civic virtues and they obeyed the law of the empire you see the Romans were sticklers for law a lot of our laws come from Roman law as well as well as from the scriptures but we know that Roman law ultimately came from the scriptures although they would not admit that because the ten commandments are written on everybody's hearts but that's another point altogether we won't get into that so they were very proud of being Roman citizenship you know that their actual names were written on scrolls back all the way back at Rome their names were written on scrolls back at Rome and they enjoyed this coveted prize they had the same legal standing as anyone who lived in Rome so Paul here in verse 27 says only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ and he is absolutely emphatic with this only this one thing and this one thing only no distractions no excuses live as citizens that are worthy of the gospel of Jesus

Christ because Paul is absolutely confident that the folk back at Philippi are citizens of heaven because if you look at verse 6 of chapter 1 this is what it says and I am sure of this the apostle says that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ I am sure of this I have seen you in action you belong to Jesus I have been with you I have shared worship with you I have pastored you I have loved you you have loved me I know you are the real deal you belong to Christ you belong to Christ and then if you go to chapter 3 and verse 20 Paul says this but our citizenship is in heaven and from it we await a saviour the Lord

Jesus Christ who will do what who will transform our lowly bodies to be like his glorious body Paul is certain they belong to Jesus that they are citizens of heaven you know when it comes to faith it doesn't mean that we have to have super faith in order to be saved Jesus says that you can have faith as small as a mustard seed and be saved it's not about being super Christians it's about being obedient and to live as citizens worthy of the gospel of Christ they have the Lord Jesus Christ as the Lord and saviour they have been redeemed they have been bought at a great price the price of the

death of the son of God they belong to Jesus he is their king and as citizens of this king who acts as their mediator they enjoy all the benefits of the gospel what are the benefits of the gospel think about it what are the benefits of the gospel well justification if you have grace and if you have Christ in your life you're innocent in the sight of God no matter how much mild and sin we ever wear or will be what is another benefit of the gospel regeneration you're being transformed you're being renewed adoption you are the sons and daughters of the living king sanctification you're being made holy you are holy already because you're in

Christ if you believe in Jesus but we have ongoing sanctification as well which is tough at times is it not but it's a command the benefits of the gospel are all in Christ and they do not exist apart from them there is no other way to salvation but through Jesus through Jesus their names are not only back at home but their names are written in heaven is your name here this evening written in heaven is your faith and is your trust in Jesus or is it in anything else because if your faith and trust is in Jesus your name is in the large book of life in glory itself on scrolls that are eternal and this offer of the gospel is open to all no matter how much sin we have ever committed or whatever we've done our hearts are black this offer is open to all

[15:16] Christ came for the ungodly Christ came for the unrighteous Christ came for the sick Paul is reminding them of their salvation and all that they enjoy in Jesus and he is such a wonderful pastor he loves this little Philippine church he really does he loves them and he wants the best for them he says you're saved you're in Jesus you're saved for time and for eternity but with that carries the command only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel you to be witnesses live as citizens worthy of the gospel of Christ you see the gospel is always in the indicative what does that mean the indicative in grammar means it's a statement of fact that cannot be changed Christ died for the ungodly it's in the indicative nobody can change it verse 6 of chapter 1 what does

Paul say we've talked about it before and I am sure of this that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ that's in the indicative it cannot change there's no command there it says that if you're in Jesus you're safe if he's working in your life you're safe you just need to obey what he says all in the indicative the gospel is all in the indicative it's good news we cannot earn our salvation the gospel is always in the indicative but here Paul comes with a command so what's he getting at here well he's getting and he's talking about a full orbed gospel he has not only in view here for the Philippians and for us this evening he is talking not only of our justification and being innocent in the sight of God through the death and resurrection the atoning work of Jesus but he's talking about our sanctification our sanctification you're being changed I'm being changed we might not feel it at times but that is what the word of God says that we have been molded and transformed and changed into the image of Jesus even if faith is weak and imperfect it's not merely let's just believe in Jesus more no he's moving into the imperatives the commands that are built on the indicatives of the gospel Christ has died in the place of his people and he is calling his people to holy living that's what he's doing that's what sanctification is this is what he is definitely not saying Paul is definitely not saying now listen go out and live as citizens worthy of the gospel and when you do well

Christ will save you that is not what he is saying it's not what he is saying what Paul is saying you have been redeemed already by King Jesus you believe in his free grace you possess this gift of faith from God you know the gospel and you know that you can never merit salvation now let's live for King Jesus let's live for King Jesus I hope that's clear I really do I hope that's clear we cannot live holy sanctified lives unless we believe in the free grace of Jesus that our salvation is all of grace and grace alone it is absolutely crucial that we get that and it's the toughest job for a minister to explain that at times it is it's tough to explain that at times

God is offering Jesus to us tonight and all we have to do is accept this gift of salvation and say Lord thank you thank you I was a sinner and I was lost and you have come and you have saved me thank you and it's all of grace I have not earned it none of us have earned it now live as citizens worthy of the gospel now when we look at the context of the Philippians can I have a wee bit more water thank you now when we look at the context of the Philippian letter when we see what's going on here Paul is obviously Christ focused he's gospel focused Paul is writing this letter from a Philippian jail from a Roman jail sorry for a letter going back to Philippi now a fellow called Epaphroditus you'll meet him and he talks about him in chapter 2 verses 19 to 30

[20:35] Epaphroditus came all the way from Philippi to Rome with a gift for Paul money and stuff to keep him going and Epaphroditus actually nearly died on the journey to get this to Paul so the

Philippians are not only worried about Paul they're actually worried about the life of Epaphroditus because he's poorly so they've sent this gift to Paul and Paul has sent this letter back and Paul's in this Roman prison and the Philippians are thinking to themselves you know he's shackled 24 hours a day to a member of the emperor's elite guards and bodyguards that's where Paul is he's chained but yet he has somebody write letters for him and the Philippians are wondering how can the gospel of free grace carry on going out into the known world if Paul the main apostle is languishing in a prison but Paul knows why

Paul knows why because you see these elite guards and bodyguards that Paul is chained to in this Roman dungeon do you know who they are they are the movers and they are the shakers of the next generation they're elite this is where they started for all we know Paul could have been chained to one of the next caesars down the line that is one way to influence an empire here was Paul with the movers and the shakers of the next generation of the Roman Empire you see God's ways are not our ways indeed you see his imprisonment did not hinder the gospel it advanced it Paul's gospel became the talk of the imperial guard all the way up to the palace isn't that absolutely staggering the way the

Lord worked through the life of Paul when he was in prison and Paul's example is encouraging all the other Christians in Rome and he's trying to encourage the Philippians as well and Paul was focused on the defense of this gospel he saw in verses 13 to 18 of chapter 1 he saw that his imprisonment as beneficial for the proclamation of the gospel all the Roman Christians were encouraged by it and once again in verse 27 Paul is once again focused on the gospel and he's calling the Philippians to holy living worthy living of the gospel he's talking about sanctification to them he wants the best for them that is the context that is the context it's not about being super Christians it's about being obedient Christians very ordinary very ordinary I'll tell you another wee story about when

I met my granny after I was saved and I went to see her I hadn't seen her for many years because of my lifestyle my lifestyle was bad the Lord came into my life saved me and she said to me Jomordo it was always Jomordo and I said yes granny and she said to me see when you were in the world the world only had one eye on you but see now that you're a Christian they have two eyes on you watch how you walk watch how you walk and that is exactly what Paul is saying to the Philippians be a witness be a witness John Owen said you must leave your sins or your God this is the same John Owen that said the seed of every known sin is in my heart you must leave your sins or leave your God yet he said the seed of every known sin is in my heart you see privilege brings responsibility privilege brought responsibility for

Prince Charles and Prince Cezanne in her illustration at the beginning but the citizens of heaven we have an even greater responsibility than Prince Charles and Princess Anne we are royal children you are royal children if you are in Jesus and we have royal laws to guide us heaven is all laws and there is an obligation for us to take our citizenship very very seriously it should be all in all Jesus should be everything to us everything to us but I know how often he is not in our experience but he knows our weakness and he knows our fragility it was while we were yet sinners Christ died for the ungodly so we have the gospel here and then Paul gives the command to live lives that are worthy of the gospel law you see there's this great debate that's been going on since the garden of [25 : 58] Eden we've got the law of God on one side we've got the grace of God on the other side and when we become Christians how do we relate to the law of God what influence should the written law of God in its narrowest sense the Ten Commandments how should that affect our lives and every theologian all the way through time has wrestled with that topic how does God's law bear on us as Christians we are saved we are safe in Christ and I have a quote here from a fellow called Richard Gaffan and he explains it perfectly I can't find anywhere else that explains it better and listen to what he says he says apart from the gospel and outside of Christ the law is my enemy and condemns me why because God is my enemy and condemns me but with the gospel and in Christ united to him by faith the law is no longer my enemy but my friend because now

God is no longer my enemy but he is my friend and the law as reflective of his character and of concerns eternally inherent in his own person and so of what pleases him is now my friendly guide for life and fellowship with God it's a long quote I know but when we are outside of Christ the law is our enemy we do not want anything to do with God's laws did we did we no but now as Christians God's law is our guide it becomes our friend and I met our brother Angus in the chip shop a few weeks ago and while we were standing in the queue to get our chips we started to talk about the

law and the gospel and the difference and talked a wee bit of theology and we talked about a book by Sinclair Ferguson called The Whole Christ and if you want to know the debate about the law and the gospel go to

Sinclair Ferguson The Whole Christ I cannot explain it here I don't have time but he will explain it perfectly there the law becomes our friend we want to obey God's laws when we become Christians whatever pleases God we want to do isn't that what it is because God's Ten Commandments are written on our hearts even before we were saved they were there but sin pushed them away and pushed them away William Ames calls it the doctrine of living for God privilege brings responsibility but Paul does not leave it there he now drops hints and clues on how to live as heavenly citizens practicing gospel obedience following God's royal laws he does this by focusing on the church as a unity as one corporate body of God's royal children and that's what you are here you are a unit you are together you are all co-heirs if you are in

Christ with Christ and this citizenship this heavenly citizenship involves that you all have a unity of spirit you all have a unity of spirit what does he say I may hear that you are standing firm in one spirit with one mind thriving side by side for the faith of the gospel he says as a church we must stand fast as the AB has it stand fast we are to be unyielding in a hostile world and that's what you're called to do you're called to be unyielding in a hostile world you're not to be secluded and cut away from the community and not have anything to do with the community around you you're to expose yourself into the community and when we do that as individual Christians when we expose ourselves and go to our neighbour and say listen let me tell you about Jesus we expose ourselves we make ourselves vulnerable we make ourselves vulnerable but that is what we're called to do that's what

Paul is calling the Philippian church to do to stand fast and when they do that they may become vulnerable but we do not stand alone the Holy Spirit of God is with us and that is what the apostle is implying here stand firm not individually but all of you together stand firm for a church to stand firm and to maintain its witness that Jesus Christ as Lord requires unity of spirit and unity of soul cooperating for the glorious faith that we all hold in common that is why we are all here that's why we're here we have that in common we want to love Jesus with all of our heart we want to show those that do not enter in this building or any other church that Jesus Christ is King and Lord of the universe and that his grace and his mercy is open to all that is why we are here and to worship to worship you remember

[31 : 17] President Kennedy at his inauguration said ask not what your country can do for you but ask what you can do for your country well ask not what your church can do for you but ask what can you do for your church what can you do for your church standing firm requires a unity of spirit and soul steadfastness grounded in unity you know God in his wisdom knew that we could not stand alone that's why we have fellowship we need one another we do we need one another we are to be there for one another we are to continue to pray for one another we carry each other's burdens one with another you do not have to do it alone if you are in here tonight and you do not have

Christ in your heart and you are worried that I cannot do this it's too difficult it's too hard you don't have to do it on your own you have Jesus to take you by your right hand and he will surround you by other heavenly citizens to help you to encourage you you do not have to do it alone there are other Christians in this world who do have to do it alone Jesus himself said I will not leave you as orphans you see heavenly citizenship involves unity of spirit grounded on what the Lord Jesus has done and is still doing for us you know this unity is something that God has accomplished he brings his people together and not only they to have a unity of heart and mind their citizenship involves unity of heart and mind standing firm in one spirit with one mind you know the church is not a marriage of convenience

God has placed each and every one of you in this church he has preordained that you be here this evening he has preordained that David would be your minister to preach this gospel of free grace every week to you you are called and if you are in Christ you are chosen and you are elect nothing by chance nothing by chance there is no marriage of convenience in the church and Paul is also commanding the Philippian church to strive side by side shoulder to shoulder Alic Mottier says the church which is experiencing unity must be a church without passengers you know each and every one of you as God's people have been given a gift and look at this building the gifts that you have been given you have used to build a house for

God praise God praise God and those that were not physically fit to actually put nails into the walls were praying and encouraging it's all of God and he's done wonderful things for you and he's did wonderful things for the Philippians as well but do not rest on your laurels there's work to be done you know for Rome to continue to function and expand as an empire each and every citizen had to take seriously his role and his responsibility he had to take seriously likewise every citizen of heaven has a responsibility and a role to play in the expansion of God's kingdom live as citizens worthy of the gospel of Christ to live a life worthy of the gospel Horatius Bonner says holiness is not measured in one great heroic act or mighty martyrdom it is of small things that a great life is made up not wonderful it's of small things that a great life is made up

Murray McShane one of the most used ministers of the gospel from another generation said the greatest need for my people is my own holiness he did not say the greatest need for my people is my wonderful preaching gifts or my pastoral skills or my administration or any of these things no what he said was the greatest need for my people is my own holiness you know a dying world needs you to be with God more than it needs you to be with it this is not legalism and rule keeping it is living worthy of the gospel and God by the power of his Holy Spirit gives us the power to do this to do this and we spoke this morning about the many times we fail and we will fail because we're full of sin if we are to defend and proclaim the gospel of a wonderful saviour who has died for us and to present him to others we must take our heavenly citizenship seriously seriously verse 28 heavenly citizenship requires courage we're to be courageous during his premiership nikita khrushchev do you remember him when he came to power he denounced many of stalin's policies and atrocities and once when he was in a public meeting and he was denouncing stalin a heckler said what do you mean you were one of stalin's colleagues why did you not stop him and khrushchev roared at him who said that and there was a deafening silence it was an agonizing silence and khrushchev replied quietly now you know why now you know why fear fear fear is something that we all suffer at times like paul is saying in verse 28 and do not and not do not be frightened in anything by your opponents this is a clear sign to them of their destruction they're called to keep the faith to remain faithful to christ and to be courageous courage not fear not frightened in anything by their opponents now we do not know who their opponents were it doesn't really matter paul commands this church which is standing firm in one spirit with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel to remain tenacious and not frightened to have faith and not to have fear and we don't need to go into who the philippians opponents is what does fear do to us what does fear do to us it immobilizes us doesn't it it paralyzes us you know when you're first saved and you're called at prayer meeting to pray sometimes we have fear but I ask all the men doesn't the Lord help us doesn't he of course he does we shake and we're full of fear every time

[39 : 11] I come in and stand in our pulpit I am naturally fearful the Lord helps us every step of the way as he and he preached last week he does do not be fearful it immobilizes us or it seriously affects our activity you know Jesus Christ by his atoning death and resurrection and his heavenly intercession for us is the unique liberator of fear do you want to be liberated from fear then you have to come to Jesus you have to there's no other liberator for fear than Jesus himself you know back in a former life I was full of fear and I turned to drink and drugs that was my medicine until Jesus came into my life we must turn to Jesus if we have fear Paul elsewhere says for you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear but you have the spirit of adoption as sons by whom we cry

Abba Father and that's what we do here this evening we cry Abba Father we have this dynamic force that casts out all anxieties and fears in Philippians 4 6 he says Paul says do not be anxious about anything but by everything in prayer and supplication take your requests to God Paul is saying listen the conflict you are experiencing if you are going through conflict in your life as a Christian it's just a reminder that you are in a battle a cosmic battle between God and the prince of this darkness and if God is with you who can be against you that commanded the Philippians to remain faithful full of faith not fearful and their lack of fear is to be a witness to their opponents of the power of the gospel and we read in our missionary newspapers that come to us of other Christians who are led to death for their faith we can read of historical martyrs who were burnt at the stake for their faith and they prayed for those who were burning them and remember Jesus Christ himself hung on a cross with a mob around him be courageous I'm going to miss a bit out the final point is heavenly citizenship requires accepting gifts from God verses 29 to 30 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 have now and here that I still have you see that

phrase granted to you that you may suffer it comes from the same word as grace comes from the same word grace remember

Ephesians 2:8 where Paul says for by grace you have been saved through faith and this is not of your own doing it is the gift of God Paul here is saying that even when you are suffering it is a gift from God we cannot follow it we cannot fully understand it but as we heard this morning suffering completes the Christian at times if we are to accept and rejoice in the gift of faith that we have been given we must also rejoice through times of difficulty and trouble you know there is a myth which has permeated the church of Jesus Christ in our western world and this is the myth this is a myth trusting in Jesus will make our lives problem free forever you know there's people that believe that you know pain free Christianity is not

Christianity at all Paul himself talked about the thorn in his own flesh and I told you this morning that sometimes the Lord will calm the storm but other times the storm may rage about us and he will calm his child how often that is true and when we see suffering we come to Calvary and we meet a God who entered into our experience a God who became human as well as divine and who suffered greatly we don't have a God who does not understand we do not have a God who is aloof we have a God that is near and present with us and we have great joy in our hearts being in [44:47] Christ what did Job say to his wife shall we accept good things from God and not trouble we're heading that way if we're in Christ we're heading that way and our prayer is that all of us in this room will be there and together we'll look back and we'll see fully all that Jesus has done for us he's watching us he's listening to us he knows us and he wants the best for us he wants us to remain steadfast and to live lives that are worthy of the gospel but of course when we fail he's there to pick us up time and time and time again he knows we are but dust but a saviour we serve and Paul knew this he's chained in a dungeon and he has a joy inexpressible in his heart and he knows that when he leaves the scene of time he will be with

Jesus for time for eternity let us pray let us go Snow really day will lofty cannot fully comprehend all that Jesus has done in and through the gospel.

Lord, we thank you that he intercedes for us at your right hand. And we thank you, O Lord, that he is still at work, not only in this community here in North Harris, but to the corners of the world.

Lord, we pray that your kingdom would be extended and expanded today and that sinners will come to repentance when they see the beauty of Jesus. Lord, our hearts are dark and black.

Would you take away our sin and would you fill us with your glorious Holy Spirit and help us to live in this world as royal citizens of the King of kings and the Lord of lords.

[47:25] Go before us and bless us all. For Christ's sake we ask it. Amen.