



Call to Live as Kingdom Citizens Worthy of the Gospel (1:27-30)

This paragraph marks a transition in the letter, introducing a section that runs through 1:27–4:3. The opening clause of 1:27 provides the thesis for the entire section: ‘Live out your heavenly citizenship in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.’¹ Paul transitions from recounting his own circumstances to exhorting the Philippians to live in a certain way. His purpose in this exhortation is simple; he wants to hear that they are standing firm in the gospel despite the opposition they are encountering (1:27b-28). The reason that the Philippians must live worthy of the gospel is that God has graciously granted to them not only to believe in Christ but also to suffer because of him (1:29-30). In making this exhortation, Paul directs the Philippians to follow his own example (described in 1:12-26) and anticipates the ultimate example of Christ Himself (2:5-11).

Because we are citizens of God’s kingdom, our lives should be governed by the charter of that kingdom—the gospel of Jesus Christ. But we cannot do this alone; we must join together with fellow believers to stand firm in the Spirit even in the face of opposition to the gospel. After all, God

1. The fact that this is the first imperative in the letter further signals the beginning of a new section; cf. Thielman, *Philippians*, 90.



has graciously given us not only the faith to believe but the suffering to demonstrate that Christ is in fact our greatest treasure. If we follow a suffering Savior (2:6-8) we should not be surprised that we too suffer for His sake.

1:27 *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,*

Paul's abruptness in introducing the first imperative of the letter draws attention to its importance. By using the adverb **only** Paul in effect says, 'this is the only thing necessary.' That one thing is **let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ**. A more precise way of translating this phrase would be 'live out your heavenly citizenship in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.' This translation reflects a number of exegetical decisions that warrant explanation. Most significant is how best to render the verb *politeuomai*. The question is whether the verb has the broader meaning of 'live, conduct oneself'² or the more specific meaning of 'live as a citizen.'³ Generally speaking, when an explicitly political sense is intended there is an indication within the larger context.⁴ Here

2. So most English translations; cf. BDAG 3; TDNT.

3. So NLT, TNIV; cf. VGNT; EDNT; LSJM.

4. This verb occurs at just one other place in the New Testament (Acts 23:1), where Paul is defending his way of life before the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem. The eight occurrences in the LXX all refer to Jews living in accordance with the Mosaic Law (2 Macc. 6:1; 11:25; 3 Macc. 3:4; 4 Macc. 2:8, 23; 4:23; 5:16; it also occurs in addition E of Esther, inserted between 8:12 and 13). Its usage in the writings of the Apostolic Fathers reflects both the general sense of 'live' as well as the more specific sense of 'live as a citizen.' Three examples are particularly relevant for Philippians 1:27. In the context of exhorting his audience to unity, the author of 1 Clement states that 'these are the things that those who live as citizens of the commonwealth of God [*hoi politeuomenoi tēn ametamelēton politeian theou*]'—something not to be regretted—have done and will continue to do' (54:4). The second example comes from the Epistle to Diognetus. In a long section of contrasts that explain how Christians are similar yet distinct from non-Christians the author writes, 'On the earth they spend time, but in heaven they are citizens [*epi gēs diatribousin alla en ouranō politeuntai*]' (5:9). Here the prepositional

in Philippians there is such an indication in 3:20, where Paul writes, ‘Our citizenship [*to politeuma*] is in heaven, from where also we eagerly await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.’ Fuller discussion must await that section of the epistle, but the use of the cognate noun *politeuma*, which means ‘commonwealth, state, citizenship,’ is noteworthy.⁵ The use of this term in 3:20 suggests that the cognate verb *politeuomai* in 1:27 has more than a general sense after all. When all of this data is combined with Philippi’s status as a Roman colony populated with a large number of Roman citizens,⁶ interpreting *politeuomai* with a political sense here best fits the context.⁷ Thus Paul’s point here is to instruct the Philippians on how to properly conduct themselves as citizens of a heavenly commonwealth. Regardless of their status in Philippi, Paul reminds believers that they possess

phrase *en ouranō* makes it clear that there is a political component to the use of *politeuomai*. Perhaps the most relevant among these occurrences is found in Polycarp’s letter to this same Philippian church about fifty years later (ca. A.D. 110): ‘just as he promised that he would raise us from the dead and that, if we conducted ourselves worthily of him [*ean politeusōmetha axiōs autou*], we would also rule together with him—so long as we believe’ (5:2). Such an overlap in language may suggest that Polycarp was familiar with Paul’s letter to the Philippians.

5. Cf. BDAG.

6. On the significance of Philippi’s status as a Roman colony, see the Introduction.

7. So also Fee, *Philippians*, 159-60; Thielman, *Philippians*, 92-3; Fowl, *Philippians*, 60-2. Witherington helpfully draws out how the term would have resonated with the Philippians when he states, ‘One will take one’s cues for living from the story and model of Jesus and of other faithful Christians like Paul, and not from the model of Caesar or other lords who were set forth as paragons of civic virtue in the larger society’; see Ben Witherington, *Friendship and Finances in Philippi: The Letter of Paul to the Philippians* (Valley Forge, PA: Trinity Press International, 1994), 52. Hawthorne (*Philippians*, 68) reads too much into the passage when he suggests that Paul has in view the believer’s dual citizenship in both the earthly and heavenly commonwealth (so also Hansen, *Philippians*, 94-5). As will be noted below, the Philippians’ opponents are likely their pagan neighbors and perhaps even authorities who may have questioned the loyalty of the Christians to the Empire in light of their adherence to Christ and the gospel. In fact, it may have been the Philippians’ refusal to live as ‘good Roman citizens’ that brought about their suffering in the first place.

a far more valuable identity as citizens of God's kingdom.⁸ The challenge is to live as citizens of God's kingdom while they are physically living in Caesar's empire.

This status of kingdom citizens produces not only great privilege but a responsibility to live a certain way. Their conduct is to be **worthy of the gospel of Christ**. Paul elsewhere uses the same Greek adverb *axiōs* ('worthy of') to express the way that believers should live: worthy of their calling (Eph. 4:1), worthy of the Lord (Col. 1:10), and worthy of the God who calls them into His glorious kingdom (1 Thess. 2:12).⁹ Here the standard against which believers are to assess their conduct is **the gospel of Christ**; it is a measuring rod against which believers must evaluate how they live. The gospel not only gives life, but provides the pattern of life for the believer as well. The gospel can govern the believer's life because it is the **gospel of Christ**; in other words, it is the good news about the person and work of Christ.¹⁰

To live worthy of the gospel of Christ does not mean we do something to earn God's grace. Nor does it mean that we work to 'pay God back' for what He has done for us in the gospel. Rather, it means that those who have entered the kingdom of God through faith in Christ must live in a manner that reflects the way that Christ their King lived, a point that Paul will eventually make clear in 2:5-11.¹¹

8. Witherington (*Friendship and Finances*, 52) notes parallels to Paul's citizenship language in Philo, *De confusione linguarum* 77-8, with the twist that in Paul's inaugurated eschatology the heavenly realm has already invaded the present realm to bring about transformation in anticipation of the new creation.

9. In each instance the verb used is *peripateō* ('walk, live'). The fact that Paul uses the political term *politeuomai* rather than *peripateō* further indicates that Paul has in mind the idea of living as a citizen.

10. Hence it is an objective genitive, though O'Brien, *Philippians*, 148, has a point when he suggests it may be both subjective and objective: 'Christ is mightily at work in its proclamation (for when the gospel is preached he is the one who speaks) and which at the same time has him at the centre of its content.'

11. Compare the conclusion of Witherington, *Friendship and Finances*, 54: 'the gospel is the charter in that the narrative of Christ's life provides the

Paul then states the purpose for the Philippians living worthy of the gospel of Christ: **so that whether I come and see you or am absent I may hear of you.** As the one who brought the gospel to the Philippians in the first place, Paul wants to hear about their progress in that gospel, whether in person or through other means.¹² What exactly does Paul want to hear? That **you are standing firm in one spirit.** Paul often uses the verb ‘stand firm’ (*stēkō*) in the context of ethical instruction.¹³ The picture is of Roman soldiers digging in like the linemen on a football team relying on their teammates to the right and to the left in order to stand united against the onslaught of the enemy’s advance.¹⁴

Although most translations understand **spirit** here as referring to the human spirit or the common attitude Paul expects from believers, Fee has made a convincing case for seeing a reference here to the Holy Spirit.¹⁵ Just as elsewhere

pattern for Christian living. Paul exhorts the Philippians to live up to its claims because he believes Christ-likeness not only is required, but also is ultimately the believer’s destiny.’

12. Paul here is likely not expressing uncertainty regarding his release from prison, since he has just stated his belief that he will be released (1:25-26). What remains uncertain is whether he will visit them once released or remain absent. In any case his intention to send Timothy soon (2:19) would provide him with opportunity to hear of the Philippians progress in the gospel (cf. 1:25-26), as Fee (*Philippians*, 161) notes.

13. Romans 14:4; 1 Corinthians 16:13; Galatians 5:1; Philippians 1:27; 4:1; 1 Thessalonians 3:8; 2 Thessalonians 2:15.

14. Lightfoot (*Philippians*, 106) offers a slightly different analogy: ‘Like criminals or captives, the believers are condemned to fight for their lives: against them are arrayed the ranks of worldliness and sin: only unflinching courage and steady combination can win the victory against such odds.’

15. Fee, *Philippians*, 163-6, puts forward five arguments. (1) The idea of ‘in one spirit’ has no analogy in Greek literature and there is no indication in Paul that ‘spirit’ is ‘an anthropological metaphor for a community disposition’ (164). (2) Whenever Paul uses the verb ‘stand firm’ followed by the preposition *en* (‘in’) the prepositional phrase is invariably locative, indicating the sphere in which one stands firm. (3) In 2:1-4 the language of ‘spirit’ (*pneuma*) and ‘mind, soul, life’ (*psychē*) is picked up and there *pneuma* is clearly a reference to the Holy Spirit. (4) Paul uses similar language ‘in one Spirit’ in Ephesians 2:18 and 4:4 (another prison epistle) as well as in 1 Corinthians 12:13 to refer to the Holy Spirit in the context of believers’ common experience of the one Spirit as the basis for unity. (5) Contextually a

Paul instructs believers to stand firm in the Lord (Phil. 4:1; 1 Thess. 3:8), so the Philippians are to hold their ground in the Spirit as they live out their heavenly citizenship in a hostile environment.¹⁶ When the church does so, the gospel advances and God's people are emboldened (1:12-18).

Paul further explains this concept of 'standing firm in the one Spirit' with two contrasting participle phrases (one here in 1:27, the second in 1:28). Positively stated, it means **with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel**. The verb translated 'striving side by side' (*synathleō*) occurs in just one other place in the NT; later in 4:3 Paul uses the verb to refer to Euodia and Syntyche, who 'labored side by side [*synēthlēsan*] with me in the gospel.'¹⁷ The Philippians are

stronger argument can be made for an appeal to their unity in the one Spirit leading to believers contending as one person against opposition than a dual statement of unity, since the reference to 'the one Spirit' stresses the source of their unity. Of these five arguments, the first and last are the weakest (the idea of believers being 'one spirit' as an indication of unity is found in Shepherd of Hermas 90:5-7, and the claim that there is no indication in Paul of 'spirit' as an anthropological metaphor for a community disposition is overstated; cf. Romans 8:15; 11:8; 12:11). But the weight of (2), (3), and (4) are sufficient to carry the day and make an explicit reference to the Holy Spirit here probable. Even O'Brien (*Philippians*, 150), who sees *pneuma* as a reference to the human spirit, admits, 'Such a unity of purpose is effected only in and through the Holy Spirit. To this extent the two interpretations are closely linked.'

16. Another possible way of understanding the phrase 'in one Spirit' (*en heni pneumati*) would be 'by the one Spirit,' in which case the phrase would refer to the Spirit as the agent by which one stands firm. While this is no doubt true theologically, the fact that the other places where *stēkō* ('stand firm') occurs with the preposition *en* clearly refer to the sphere in which one stands tips the scales in favor of the locative idea here as well.

17. The verb is absent from the LXX, Josephus, and Philo and appears just once in the Apostolic Fathers. In his letter to Polycarp, Ignatius includes within a series of exhortations to unity 'contend together [*synathleite*]' (Ign. Poly. 6:1). Compound verbs that begin with the preposition *sun-* often are followed by the dative case to indicate either the person with whom the action of the verb describes (Phil. 4:3) or the object for which someone contends (cf. BDAG, which labels this a dative of advantage; see also LSJM and EDNT). When one further considers the verb *athleō*, we find a few more uses. Both New Testament uses are found in 2 Timothy 2:5, where Paul compares the Christian life/ministry to the athlete who must

to contend together **with one mind**.¹⁸ The word translated 'mind' (*psychē*) has a breadth of uses,¹⁹ but here the context clearly suggests a unity of purpose and mindset, which will be essential as the Philippians contend together, similar to the common mindset that led the early believers in Jerusalem to share their possessions with one another (Acts 4:32). Like teammates who set aside individual glory for the success of the team, believers must set aside individual agendas for the common good of the church.

What they are to contend together for is **the faith of the gospel**. Although there are several possible ways to interpret this phrase, it seems best in this context to render it along the lines of 'the faith produced by the gospel.'²⁰ As believers

compete according to the rules. There is just one occurrence in the LXX; in 4 Maccabees 17:13 it refers to competing in the divine contest for virtue. Although it is absent from Josephus, there are five occurrences of *athleō* in Philo (*Ebr.* 1:22; *Mig.* 1:26, 200; *Cng.* 1:108; *Spe.* 2:183; the related verb *diathleō* occurs 23x). Philo uses it to refer to contending or competing, mostly in reference to contending for virtue or against pleasure.

18. Thus it is a dative of instrument. O'Brien, *Philippians*, 151, notes some interesting parallels to this Greek phrase (*mia psychē*) in Aristotle (*Eth. Nic.* 9.8.2.1168b) and the Pythagoreans (Iambl. *Vita Pyth.* 30.167) as well as in 1 Chronicles 12:38 and Acts 4:32.

19. It can refer simply to the non-material aspect of a person (i.e., soul/spirit/mind), a particular facet of a person's non-material being (e.g., the soul in distinction from the mind, heart, etc.) or to the entirety of a person's life (similar in this respect to the Hebrew word *nepeš*); see further the entries in BDAG; NIDNTT 3:676-88.

20. There are two primary issues. The first is to determine how Paul is using the noun *pistis* ('faith'), which can have three senses: (1) trust, confidence, or belief in someone/something; (2) faithfulness or fidelity to someone or something; (3) that which is believed, a set of beliefs (cf. BDAG). One can find advocates for each meaning in 1:27. Although all three senses can be found in Paul, the first is most common. The fact that Paul has just used *pistis* in the active sense of belief/trust in 1:25, combined with the use of the cognate verb *pisteuō* in 1:29 to speak of trust/belief in Christ, strongly suggests that *pistis* here in 1:27 should be understood in same sense. The genitive *tu euangeliou* ('of the gospel') is the second issue. There are at least five different ways to understand the genitive: (1) objective ('faith in the gospel'); (2) attributive ('gospel-faith'); (3) apposition/expegetical ('faith—that is, the gospel'); (4) origin/source ('faith originating from the gospel'); (5) production ('faith produced by the gospel'). Although the last two are quite close in meaning, the final one seems preferable in that it stresses the active

hear the gospel preached, the Spirit produces and deepens their faith in Christ (Rom. 10:17). But the fact that believers must contend for this faith reveals that resistance should be expected and demonstrates the need for believers to work together for progress in the gospel.

So here in 1:27 Paul is exhorting believers to reflect their status as participants in God's kingdom by patterning their lives after the example of their King Jesus. Such a kingdom-oriented life demands standing firm in the one Spirit by joining forces in their common fight for continued growth in the gospel.

1:28 *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.*

Having provided the 'positive' aspect of what it means to stand firm in the one Spirit, Paul now proceeds to explain what it means negatively with his second participial phrase. Thus negatively stated it means **not frightened in anything by your opponents**. The verb translated **frightened** (*ptyrō*) occurs nowhere else in Jewish or Christian literature. But it is found in Greco-Roman literature to refer to animals being frightened, such as horses being startled in battle.²¹ The second-century Roman emperor Marcus Aurelius (A.D. 161-180) used the term to speak of the soul being troubled.²² But whereas Stoics such as Marcus Aurelius pursued a life unaffected by external circumstances, Paul calls for believers to pursue joy even in the midst of persecution. By refusing to be frightened, the Philippians show that they are standing firm in the one Spirit who empowers their steadfastness to the gospel.

role of the gospel producing faith. Paul makes clear in Romans 10:16-17 that is the proclamation of the gospel that produces faith when he states that 'faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.'

21. See the list in Holloway, *Consolation in Philippians*, 117-18 n.79-80. He goes on to suggest that Paul's use of this rare word stems from his use of standard consolatory *topoi* (i.e., standard categories or expressions used to structure arguments or communicate ideas) to comfort the Philippians in the face of opposition.

22. *The Meditations* 8.45, as noted in LSJM.

Paul wants to ensure that his recipients are not frightened or intimidated **by your opponents**.²³ Who these opponents are is not immediately clear. Some have attempted to connect the opponents mentioned here with the false teachers mentioned in chapter three,²⁴ but that is unlikely. The parallel that Paul draws between his own suffering and that of the Philippians (cf. 1:12-26 and 1:30) strongly suggests that the threat described comes from outside the church rather than from within it.²⁵ Such intimidation may have come from a variety of sources such as friends, family, neighbors, or even the authorities.²⁶

23. As is common, the one performing the action of the passive verb is expressed with the preposition *hypo* + the genitive. Paul uses the substantival participle of the verb *antikeimai*, which means simply 'to be opposed to someone/something' (cf. BDAG). It occurs a total of eight times in the New Testament (Luke 13:17; 21:15; 1 Cor. 16:9; Gal. 5:17; Phil. 1:28; 2 Thess. 2:4; 1 Tim. 1:10; 5:14); all but two (Gal. 5:17; 1 Tim. 1:10) are substantival participles that refer to someone's opponents or enemies. Similar usage is found in the LXX as well. Most noteworthy is Exodus 23:22, where at the end of stating the covenant laws (Exod. 20:1–23:19) God promises that if Israel will obey Him, He will be an enemy to their enemies. This larger biblical-theological theme can be traced at least as far back as God's initial promise to Abraham, where he says 'I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse' (Gen. 12:3). Paul says much the same thing when he exclaims, 'If God is for us, who is against?' (Rom. 8:31). God has so identified himself with His people that those who oppose His people are said to be opposing God Himself. For similar line of thought, see Timothy C. Geoffrion, *The Rhetorical Purpose and the Political and Military Character of Philippians: A Call to Stand Firm* (Lewiston: Mellen Biblical Press, 1993), 70.

24. See, e.g., Silva, *Philippians*, 82; Witherington, *Philippians*, 104-5. Hawthorne (*Philippians*, 72) while not confidently equating the opponents here with those mentioned in chapter three, still asserts that these opponents were 'evangelistically fervent Jews (i.e., non-Christian Judaizers) who either resided in Philippi or who had come from Thessalonica to attack the growing church.'

25. For more on the identity of these opponents, see Introduction 34-5 and 47-8.

26. With varying nuances, so also Bruce, *Philippians*, 57; O'Brien, *Philippians*, 153; Fee, *Philippians*, 167; Fowl, *Philippians*, 64-5; Hansen, *Philippians*, 98-9. Based on his hypothetical reconstruction of the Philippian church, Oakes (*From People to Letter*, 89-96) has a lengthy description of how pagan persecution of the church would have affected the members/families of the different social strata on social, economic, relational, and political

To drive home his point Paul adds that he does not want them to be frightened **in anything**. The phrase is intentionally broad and comprehensive, leaving no area of life untouched. Whether it is verbal or physical abuse, ridicule, loss of possessions or loved ones, or even the possibility of dying for one's faith, the believer is not to be frightened because of what opponents of the gospel do or threaten. This does not mean one is emotionless in the face of such persecution or tribulation; Paul himself admits to the Corinthians that he himself despaired of life at one point (cf. 2 Cor. 1:8-11). But it does mean that such persecution or tribulation does not produce fear that paralyzes the believer or, worse yet, results in abandoning the gospel.

By refusing to be intimidated in the face of persecution, they demonstrate two things to these opponents.²⁷ First, believers' resolute confidence is **a clear sign to them of their destruction**. Although the noun for **destruction** (*apōleia*) can be used in a non-eschatological sense of ruin or temporal destruction, it is more commonly used in the eschatological sense of eternal destruction (cf. Matt. 7:13; Rom. 9:22; Phil. 3:19; 2 Pet. 3:7). Despite the efforts of some to redefine or eliminate the doctrine of hell,²⁸ Scripture is clear that those who reject Christ await conscious eternal torment in hell forever.²⁹ That such is the

levels. He concludes that the most significant kind of suffering would have been economic.

27. This 'concept' is the antecedent of the relative pronoun *hētis* ('which'); the nominative case can be explained by its attraction to the noun *endeixis* ('sign'; so also O'Brien, *Philippians*, 154). The grammar of this section is difficult, but certainly not as impossible as some commentators suggest. Hawthorne (*Philippians*, 72-4) offers an elaborate reconstruction of the syntax (and consequently the meaning) of this last half of the verse. The number of insertions necessary, combined with his understanding of *apōleia* ('destruction') as the temporal destruction of the believer rather than the eternal destruction of their opponents, make his reconstruction unlikely. Among the few to follow Hawthorne here are Fowl (*Philippians*, 66) and Hansen (*Philippians*, 100-1).

28. The most prominent recent example is Rob Bell, *Love Wins: A Book About Heaven, Hell, and the Fate of Every Person Who Ever Lived* (New York: HarperOne, 2011).

29. For a helpful response to Rob Bell that upholds the biblical doctrine of hell, see Michael E. Wittmer, *Christ Alone: An Evangelical Response to Rob Bell's Love Wins* (Grand Rapids: Edenridge Press, 2011).

meaning of ‘destruction’ here in 1:28 is confirmed by the contrast with ‘salvation [*sōtēria*]’ as the destiny of the believer.³⁰

The Greek word translated **clear sign** (*endeixis*) refers to ‘something that points or serves as an indicator of something.’³¹ ‘For the wicked, when they wage war against the Lord, do already by a trial-fight, as it were, give a token of their ruin, and the more fiercely they insult over the pious, the more do they prepare themselves for ruin.’³² Courage in the face of persecution demonstrates the reality of the gospel’s assertion that those who oppose God and His people face eternal destruction (cf. 2 Thess. 1:5-10).³³ The second thing such steadfastness demonstrates is **your salvation**. Just as Paul used this term in 1:19 to refer to his eschatological salvation on the last day and its accompanying vindication, here too the term has the sense of deliverance from sin and God’s wrath against us, a deliverance based on Jesus’ death, resurrection and ascension (cf. Rom. 5:6-11). Paul can speak of salvation in the past, present, or future tenses. Believers have been saved (Rom. 8:24), are being saved (1 Cor. 1:18), and will be saved (Rom. 5:9-10). Based on the contrast between destruction and salvation here in Philippians 1:28, Paul has the future aspect

30. In this clause it is probably best to understand *autois* (‘them’) as a dative of reference (so O’Brien, *Philippians*, 155 and Fee, *Philippians*, 169) or the closely related dative of disadvantage. ‘Here the dat. indicates both ref. (“which is a sign of destruction with reference to them”) and disadvantage. The *emphasis*, however, is that of disadvantage (“which is a sign of destruction unto their detriment”).... The apostle’s point is heightened by the following *genitive*: ὑμῶν δὲ σωτηρίας. That is, the enemies of the gospel do not possess their destruction, but are the unfortunate recipients of it; but believers do possess their salvation. The contrast in the two cases here is not merely stylistic, but involves rich subtleties that are often not brought out in translation’ (Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 143-4).

31. BDAG 1. This noun is a uniquely Pauline word, occurring just four times in the New Testament (Rom. 3:25, 26; 2 Cor. 8:24; Phil. 1:28) and not at all in the LXX. Lightfoot (*Philippians*, 106) connects this word to imagery of the arena when he writes, ‘The Christian gladiator does not anxiously await the signal of life or death from the fickle crowd.’

32. Calvin et al., *Philippians*, 47.

33. The contrast is not, as Hawthorne and Martin, *Philippians*, 74, claim, between two different outcomes for believers in this present life.

of salvation in view. In other words, when believers remain unshaken by those who oppose the gospel, it demonstrates both the eternal destruction that awaits unbelievers and the eternal salvation that awaits believers. Such steadfastness anticipates the great day of judgment, when God's people will be vindicated for all the universe to see and God's enemies will receive the wrath they have been storing up for themselves by opposing God and His people (cf. Phil. 2:9-11; 2 Thess. 1:5-10; 2 Pet. 3:7).

Paul concludes this verse by stating **and that from God**. The antecedent of **that** (*touto*) is the content of 1:28 up to this point.³⁴ In other words, courage in the face of opposition to the gospel, the destruction of unbelievers and the salvation of believers are all from God Himself, who will accomplish this on the day of Christ (Phil. 1:6, 10). Paul's relentless God-centeredness should not be missed; he evaluated everything in light of its relationship to God. Or, as he puts it elsewhere, 'For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be the glory forever. Amen' (Rom. 11:36).

Although it lacks any direct linguistic connection, Paul's description of believers not being frightened by their opponents in light of God's eventual vindication of them is reminiscent of God's call of Jeremiah: 'Do not be afraid of them, because I am with you to deliver you' (Jer. 1:8). When God called Jeremiah to be His instrument in the midst of a people who opposed His purposes, He promised to deliver him. In a similar fashion God through Paul promises salvation to the Philippians as they remain steadfast in contending together for the faith produced by the gospel in spite of opposition.

1:29 *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,*
Here in verse 29 Paul supplies the reason that the Philippians should live in a way that is worthy of the gospel of Christ.³⁵ **For**

34. So also Bruce, *Philippians*, 60; O'Brien, *Philippians*, 157; Silva, *Philippians*, 82. In light of the eschatological nature of both 'destruction' and 'salvation' this conclusion seems preferable to limiting the antecedent only to 'salvation' (e.g., Fee, *Philippians*, 170).

35. So also Gerald W. Peterman, *Paul's Gift from Philippi: Conventions*

it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ. In the Greek **to you** (*hymín*) is put at the beginning of the sentence for emphasis. Paul uses the Greek verb rendered **granted** (*charizomai*, which is a cognate of the noun *charis* [‘grace’]) elsewhere to speak of the gracious and undeserved nature of God’s giving (e.g., Rom. 8:32; Gal. 3:18), and that is clearly the sense intended here.³⁶ The grammar that follows from this point is somewhat awkward,³⁷ perhaps as a result of Paul wishing to expand his thought in the middle of the sentence he is dictating.³⁸ But the meaning remains clear enough. Paul

of Gift-Exchange and Christian Giving (SNTSMS 92; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 111. The *hoti* (‘for’) that begins this verse is most commonly linked back to ‘and that from God [*kai touto apo theou*]’ at the end of 1:28, which itself refers back to the whole of 1:28 with particular reference to ‘salvation [*sōtēria*]’ (e.g., O’Brien, *Philippians*, 160; Fee, *Philippians*, 170; Silva, *Philippians*, 83). But in light of the fact that the command ‘live out your heavenly citizenship in a manner worthy of the gospel’ (1:27) governs the entirety of 1:27-30, it seems best to regard 1:29-30 as providing the reason believers are to do so.

36. Cf. BDAG 1. The implied subject is clearly God (thus one might loosely refer to this as a divine passive). According to BDAG, the word also occurs in civic documents recognizing the generosity of patrons towards public works (see also *exx.* in VGNT and LSJM).

37. In effect Paul writes ‘because this has been granted to you for the sake of Christ.’ The articular prepositional phrase (‘for the sake of Christ [*to hyper Christou*]’) expresses the grammatical subject of the verb (‘granted [*charizomai*]’). The article connects the prepositional phrase to the twofold antecedent that follows (thus the article is kataphoric; cf. Wallace, *Greek Grammar*, 220-1). Because it refers forward to the two articular infinitives that follow, the article is best translated as ‘this’. The sense of the preposition *hyper* is disputed. It could have the sense of ‘on behalf of’ (BDAG A.1.a.ε; cf. Col. 1:24) or ‘because of, for the sake of’ (cf. BDAG A.2; cf. 2 Thess. 1:5). Although a case can be made for the former (cf. Hawthorne and Martin, *Philippians*, 75), there is no indication in the context that suffering is being viewed here as vicarious. Thus the latter sense of ‘for the sake of’ is to be preferred (cf. BDAG A.2; TDNT 8:514-15; Robertson, *Grammar*, 632; O’Brien, *Philippians*, 160). The result of the awkward grammar is to create ‘a striking focus on Christ’ (Fee, *Philippians*, 171).

38. Cf. Fee, *Philippians*, 171: ‘Paul (apparently) began to dictate the subject (“to suffer on behalf of Christ”) immediately after the verb (“it has been graciously given”). But he got as far as “on behalf of Christ” and interrupted himself with a “not only” phrase, intending to emphasize their suffering for Christ, but within the context of what he has just said about their salvation.’

indicates two things God has graciously given to them, with an emphasis on the second.³⁹

First, God has granted that **you should ... believe in him.**⁴⁰ The faith in which the Philippians are progressing and delighting (1:25), the faith that the gospel produces when it is proclaimed (Rom. 10:17), this faith in Christ is God's gracious gift to His people. Similar to Ephesians 2:8-10, where he insists that being saved by grace through faith is a gift of God, Paul here emphasizes that the God-ordained response to the gospel is the God-provided response to the gospel. God does not believe on behalf of a person, but rather removes the veil that rests over a person's heart that prevents belief. Once that veil is removed and the Spirit makes that person spiritually alive, the inevitable result is that person believing in Christ as a result of seeing the 'light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ' (2 Cor. 4:6). Although from a human perspective it appears that faith is solely attributable to man, Paul here reminds the Philippians that even believing in Christ is something that God has graciously granted. Christ has done everything necessary to accomplish our salvation, even securing our faith.

It is difficult to overestimate the importance of faith as a gift from God. However, the gift Paul mentions next is even more striking, especially in its context: to **also suffer for his sake.**⁴¹ This emphasis is a natural extension of discussing the Philippians' opponents in 1:28. Paul does not specify the nature of the suffering, so it is best to understand it in the broadest sense as any opposition that the believer faces when trying to live in a way that is worthy of the gospel of Christ. Because of their identification with Christ (established by faith and expressed in one's actions,

39. By using two present-tense infinitives, he suggests both are continuous in nature.

40. The expression 'believe into' (*pisteuō + eis*) is rare in Paul, occurring elsewhere only in Romans 10:14 and Galatians 2:16; it is far more common in John. Hawthorne (*Philippians*, 76) suggests that the expression 'is the most emphatic way of expressing absolute trust in Christ.'

41. The emphasis is signaled by the use of the 'not only ... but also [*ou monon ... alla kai*]' construction. Usually in this construction the emphasis falls on the second element, which is often seen as somehow related to the first (whether as an extension or a contrast).

words, and thoughts) believers suffer. Paul makes it clear on numerous occasions that believers should expect to suffer because of their identification with Christ (see, e.g., 1 Thess. 2:14; 2 Tim. 3:12). Jesus Himself repeatedly mentioned this inseparable connection between following Him and suffering (cf. Matt. 5:11; 24:9-10; Luke 9:23; 11:49); after all if people persecuted the Master, why should His servants expect anything less (cf. John 15:20)?

To claim that faith in Christ is God's gracious gift is one thing; to claim that suffering for Christ's sake is also a gracious gift may have been harder to swallow.⁴² But Paul does not stop at simply saying that God is sovereign over the believer's suffering; he refers to it as God's gracious gift. It is a manifestation of His kindness to His people. Why? Because as Paul makes clear in Romans 5:3-5 the end result of suffering is hope in the love of God, which the believer experiences through the presence of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Suffering is evidence that the believer already participates in the age to come while still living in this present evil age (1 Cor. 10:11; Gal. 1:4; Eph. 1:21). And suffering is one of God's appointed means to make His people more like Christ (Phil. 3:10; Rom. 8:28-30). In light of these considerations, it should not be surprising that Paul can refer to suffering as God's *gracious* gift. Consider the reflections of John Calvin:

Oh, if this persuasion were effectually inwrought in our minds—that persecutions are to be reckoned among God's benefits, what progress would be made in the doctrine of piety! And yet, what is more certain, than that it is the highest honor that is conferred upon us by Divine grace, that we suffer for his name either reproach, or imprisonment, or miseries, or tortures, or even death, for in that case he adorns us with his marks of distinction. But more will be found that will rather bid God retire with gifts of that nature, than embrace with alacrity the cross when it is presented to them. Alas, then, for our stupidity!⁴³

42. The concept of suffering for God would have been a foreign concept to most pagans; see TDNT 5:904-7; NIDNTT 3:1719-20.

43. Calvin et al., *Philippians*, 48-9.

1:30 *engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.*

Having explained that suffering for the sake of Christ is God's gracious gift, Paul now further describes the type of suffering he has in view. The Philippians are **engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have**. Saying it is **the same conflict** does not demand the Philippians have been imprisoned or physically punished.⁴⁴ To have the same struggle as Paul is to suffer for the sake of Christ; so in as much as the Philippians suffer because of their identification with Christ, they share Paul's own struggle. This conclusion is confirmed by the Greek word translated **conflict** (*agōn*). This noun, along with its cognate verb (*agōnizomai*), is used throughout Paul's writings in reference to the Christian life.⁴⁵ By using this word Paul makes it clear that he expects following Christ to be difficult. The use of this word also continues the athletic imagery of 1:27. Like athletes in the heat of competition, believers will experience resistance in their efforts to follow Christ. What else should believers expect from a world whose rulers do not understand the wisdom of God and as a result crucified its true Lord (cf. 1 Cor. 2:8)?

Paul makes two further qualifications to describe this conflict. First, it is the same conflict **you saw I had**.⁴⁶ As noted in the Introduction, when Paul (and his companion Silas) initially preached the gospel in Philippi, he was thrown in prison for the civil and economic unrest he provoked (Acts 16:19-24). Only a divinely timed earthquake and a

44. Contrary to what Fowl, *Philippians*, 69-70, claims. Instead, the point of contact is the theological point that such sufferings are for the sake of Christ; see O'Brien, *Philippians*, 162.

45. Five of the six New Testament occurrences of *agōn* are in Paul (Phil. 1:30; Col. 2:1; 1 Thess. 2:2; 1 Tim. 6:12; 2 Tim. 4:7; the other is in Heb. 12:1). The cognate verb *agōnizomai* occurs eight times, six of which are in Paul (1 Cor. 9:25; Col. 1:29; 4:12; 1 Tim. 4:10; 6:12; 2 Tim. 4:7). These words are used in a variety of ways, ranging from the very general idea of 'fight, struggle' (Col. 1:29; 4:12; 1 Tim. 4:10) to the more specific, including 'face opposition' (1 Thess. 2:2) and even 'compete in the games' (1 Cor. 9:25).

46. Literally this phrase reads 'you saw in me [*eidete en emoi*].' The translation captures the basic thought, but has the disadvantage of hiding a possible connection between this verse and the same phrase 'in me [*en emoi*]' in 1:26.

terrified jailor rescued them from a full night in prison (Acts 16:25-34). Even though they were essentially acquitted the next day, Paul and Silas were still asked to leave town by the Roman officials (Acts 16:35-40). The Philippian church witnessed all of this first-hand.

Second, it is the same struggle they **now hear that I still have**.⁴⁷ Paul now comes full circle back to his own circumstances,⁴⁸ but does so in a way that challenges the Philippians to follow his example. The conflict that Paul experienced during his time in Philippi continues to the present hour as he sits under house arrest in Rome because of his obedience to Christ. Yet despite the distance separating them their shared experience of suffering is yet one more example of their fellowship in the gospel (1:5-7).⁴⁹ Paul wants the Philippians to evaluate their own suffering in light of his own example (1:12-26), which itself is modeled on the pattern of Christ himself (2:5-11).

Suggestions for Preaching/Teaching and Application

Paul's main point in this section is contained in the opening command to 'Live out your heavenly citizenship in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.' In the verses that follow, he gives two reasons: (1) he wants to hear they are standing firm in the one Spirit and (2) God has granted both faith and suffering to His people. Each of these two reasons is further explained, resulting in an outline that might resemble something like this:

47. Literally this phrase reads 'and now you hear in me [*kai nyn akouete en emoi*].' The translation captures the basic thought, but has the disadvantage of hiding a possible connection between this verse and the same phrase 'in me [*en emoi*]' in 1:26.

48. The present tense verb 'hear' (*akouete*) combined with the adverb 'now' (*nyn*) reinforces that Paul is referring to his present circumstances, some of which he has just related in 1:12-26.

49. This connection is helpfully noted in Eadie, *Philippians*, 79-80.

Main Point: We must live out our heavenly citizenship according to the pattern of the gospel.

- I. Reason 1 – Opposition to the gospel demands standing firm in the Spirit together (1:27-28)
 - a. Standing firm means working together for greater gospel-produced faith (1:27)
 - b. Standing firm means not being intimidated by gospel opponents (1:28)
- II. Reason 2 – God graciously gives both faith and suffering to His people (1:29-30)
 - a. We are identified with Christ by faith in Him (1:29a)
 - b. We are identified as Christ's by suffering because of Him (1:29b-30)

For Christians who live in nations that have a Judeo-Christian heritage, it is particularly easy to think that this world is our home. Therefore Paul's command to live in this present world as citizens of another is particularly needed. Our thoughts, beliefs, emotions, words, and actions all must be shaped by our citizenship in the Kingdom of God. As children of the New Jerusalem (Gal. 4:26-28) we are pilgrims and sojourners in this world (1 Pet. 1:1; 2:11), exiles who long for our true home in the new heavens and new earth.

But our identity as exiles must not result in withdrawal from this world. Jesus prays not for His people to be removed from the world, but to be kept from the evil one as they live in this world because they are set apart for God's special purposes (John 17:15-17). Just as the exiles from Judah were instructed to pursue the welfare of Babylon during their exile (Jer. 29:7), so too believers are commanded to pray for those in authority so that they may live a quiet life of godliness (1 Tim. 2:1-2). God intends the church to be an outpost of God's kingdom, a place where His rule and reign can be seen tangibly on both the individual and corporate levels. Such kingdom life demonstrates the power and wisdom of God in uniting people with little or nothing in common except

their devotion to Jesus Christ (Eph. 3:8-10), and reveals to a lost world the possibility of new life in this world and the one to come. But when being a 'good citizen' of an earthly commonwealth and living as citizens of the new heavens and new earth come into conflict, the believer must choose fidelity to the latter. It is just such a conflict that demands that we as believers stand firm in the one Spirit together. This means that we encourage and confront each other as necessary to grow deeper in our trust in Christ, which the Spirit produces through listening and responding to the gospel. It also means refusing to allow those who oppose the gospel to intimidate us into living no different from the citizens of this world. As we do so, it both advances the Kingdom of God in this present evil age and anticipates the eternal destruction of God's enemies and the vindication of His people in the age to come. To further encourage our efforts to live as heavenly citizens, Paul reminds us that both the faith to believe in Christ and the inevitable suffering that follows are both graciously granted by God. We are more inclined to see faith as God's gift and think that suffering is not, but as Job says, 'Shall we accept good from God and not adversity?' (2:10). God graciously grants both to conform us to the image of His Son, preparing us to live in the new heavens and new earth where 'there will no longer be any mourning or crying, or pain' (Rev. 21:4).