

A Gospel-Shaped Church Life (part 2)

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[0 : 00] Philippians chapter 1. We're going to begin reading at verse 27 and read into chapter 2 till verse 11. Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.

Then whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel. Without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you, this is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved, and that by God. For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him, since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.

If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.

Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus, who being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.

And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death, even death on a cross. Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth.

[2 : 21] And every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. Well, there is nothing like singing the gospel to prepare our hearts to receive the word of God to us.

The gospel of Christ is not only something to believe, it is something to shape your life. It's to dictate your behavior.

It's to control your conduct. It's to guide and inform and shape the way you live. In fact, if you really believe the gospel, it is doing that to one degree or another.

We've come in our study of this little letter to the Philippians to verse 27 of chapter 1. And it's the first command in the letter. And it's one of those all-inclusive rules of conduct.

Notice it with me. 127 A. Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel. See to it that your lives in every part line up with the gospel of Christ.

[3 : 39] That your conduct adorns the gospel, makes it attractive and winsome. Last week we sought to apply that principle, that all-inclusive rule of conduct.

And gave several examples of how this works. And just how broad and far-reaching this command is. We notice that since the gospel is a gospel of love, of God's love, then we need to major in loving others.

And especially those who are sinning against us, which is what gospel love is all about. We notice that since the gospel is a gospel of grace, we need to give grace to others.

We have received. Freely we've received. Freely we give. Freely we give.

God who has been very patient with us. And therefore, conduct worthy of the gospel is for us to be patient and to wait on God. And to wait and be patient with each other.

[5 : 13] And so, on and on we could go. The gospel's good news. And because it's good news, we don't keep it to ourselves. We share it with others. Because it's good news, we rejoice in it.

You see, all of this and more, then, are applications of this all-inclusive rule of conduct. To conduct yourself in a manner worthy of the gospel.

Now, today, we're going to see how Paul went on to apply that all-inclusive rule specifically to the needs there at Philippi. The church of God in Philippi.

What will conduct worthy of the gospel look like in that church? Indeed, in this church. And any church of the Lord Jesus Christ.

As these things have been written down to teach us. Even as they were to teach the church at Philippi. And we do need to see that this call to a gospel-shaped life is not only for individual Christians.

[6 : 19] But for them collectively as a church. This is a letter to the church. And verse 27 is a call to a gospel-shaped church life.

Now, to be sure, what applies or what is a universal always applies to the particulars that make up the universal.

But we need to think of it in terms of our corporate life together. What does a gospel-shaped church look like? And the apostle, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, will give us three ways.

Notice in verses 27 through 28b. Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel. Then whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel, without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you.

Notice by way of introduction, Paul is wanting them to live their lives as under the eye of God, not merely under the eye of God's ministers.

[7 : 39] Can you believe it that sometimes people act differently when their minister is around? What's up with that? You'd think that people would be more careful living under the eye of God than they would the eye of their minister.

But lest you feel that I'm any different, I want you to know that sometimes ministers act differently when their people are around for the same reason.

We're failing to live before that audience of one primarily, and we need to remember that the Lord is near. I live under his eye.

And so Paul wants them, whether he's there or not, to be conducting their lives in a manner worthy of the gospel. And so whether I come to you or whether I just hear about you, this is the message I want to hear, that you are conducting your life in a manner that lines up with the gospel.

And if you are, then I'll know three things about you. Number one, that you're standing firm and fighting for the faith of the gospel.

[8 : 49] You see it at the end of verse 27, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel.

Now, the gospel of Christ is precious to us. It's through that message that we have been saved, that our eternal destiny has been changed from hell to heaven, that we have been made right with God and enjoy a life here and now in fellowship and communion with this God, which is just the beginning of an eternity of knowing and fellowshiping with him.

It's a precious thing. It's called the gospel of the glory of Christ because it reveals his glory. Now, is that not worth fighting for? If the gospel is worth anything, it's worth everything, Matthew Henry says.

If the gospel is worth believing, then it's worth standing firm on and contending for, fighting for. That's conduct worthy of the gospel of Christ.

People who are willing to let go of gospel truth never tasted the grace of God in the gospel and knew something of its preciousness, that it's the most precious thing in the world.

[10 : 12] This is the only good news for poor and needy sinners like us in how we can be saved.

So, we stand firm in the faith. Now, to stand firm means to let nothing move you. The clear inference is that there are forces out to move you from the truths of the gospel.

So, think of the sumo wrestler. He's to stand firm. The object is for the other guy to move him outside the circle or to bring him down to the mat.

So, he's not able just to stand casually, is he? No, if he's to stand firm, he must set his posture and distribute that 350 pounds out over those legs and not let the other guy move him out of the ring.

That's what the picture conjured up by Paul's language here is. If we are to stand firm, it's going to take some doing. Why? Because there are those that would move us from the faith of the gospel.

[11 : 25] Now, the other word is the word contend, not only to stand firm in the faith, but to contend for the faith of the gospel. And this word, too, implies stiff opposition.

It's the word for a struggle or a fight, like soldiers at war or gladiators in the arena fighting for their lives. And so, if the gospel is to spread and advance, it's going to take a fight.

Not with the weapons of this world, but with spiritual weapons that have divine power to demolish strongholds and to bring every proud thought that exalts itself against the knowledge of God into obedience to him.

You see, we fight not with a sword, but with a cross. Not with angry shouts, not with angry shouts, but with bold and loving entreaties. Jude, the stepbrother of Jesus, also tells us in verse 3 of his little letter, to contend earnestly for the faith once for all given to the saints.

We're not only to believe it, we are to stand firm on it, and we are to contend for it, fight for it. That's conduct worthy of the gospel of Christ.

[12 : 50] Now, what these terms reveal is that the Philippian church was meeting up with opposition to the gospel. Not everyone greets the gospel as good news.

He'll speak later in chapter 3 of those who are enemies of the cross of Christ, enemies of the gospel. And there were and are enemies both within and without the professing church.

Paul's going to deal with both in this letter. There were Jewish legalists who taught that salvation is something we can merit by our keeping of the law. And he'll deal very pointedly with them in chapter 3.

And on the other hand, you had Gentile libertarians that said, well, if salvation is free, it doesn't matter how we live. And so they were all about turning the grace of God into a license for sin.

Both errors remain alive and well today within the broad confessing churches of Christ. Legalism and anti-lawism are both alive and well.

[13 : 57] And oppose the gospel that we believe. And opposition from outside the church came both from pagans as well as the religious people.

It came from pagans because our gospel condemns idolatry. And idolatry encourages immorality. And the gospel does not let us go on living in our immoral lifestyle.

We're just saying that the gospel has a double cure for sin. It cleanses not only from its guilt, but from its power. And so we'll find the gospel to be full of those who oppose it.

And that was the case at Philippi. We shouldn't be surprised at it. And the folks at Philippi shouldn't have been surprised. They would have remembered Paul's first visit when he first brought the gospel to them.

And how he and Silas were slandered and falsely accused and mobbed and stripped and flogged and thrown into prison with their hands and feet in the stocks.

[15 : 03] So Paul had been in prison for the gospel. And we know that man's sinful nature is opposed to the gospel. It's hostile toward God.

So the spirit of the age has never been friendly toward the gospel of Christ. The world finds it offensive. Because Jesus claims to be the only way to heaven.

All religions are not equal in the sight of God. No one comes to the Father but by him. And the world's offended. Proud flesh is offended to say that you are so sinful that nothing less than the Son of God being damned on the cross in your place will ever make up for the offense that you have made against God.

This holy great God that made you. That's offensive. And that's what the gospel is about. A Savior who is damned in the place of his people to save them.

The devil hates the gospel of Christ because it magnifies God's love. It magnifies God's grace and mercy and glory. So he's ever out to oppose it and seeking to move the church away from it.

[16 : 17] So if you value the gospel, you will stand firm and fight for it. That's conduct worthy of the gospel. It's precious.

Now, tremendous pressures are being exerted today. Pulling and pushing us, trying to move us from the faith of the gospel. And not all churches are standing firm.

There are pressures to change the gospel message so that it saves man not from sin and wrath, but from social and economic and institutional injustices and oppression done to him, which makes him an innocent victim of the sins of others rather than seeing himself as the sinner guilty before God.

That's not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. There are constant pressures to leave some of the sharp edges of the gospel out, to round them off.

We don't like to speak of the wrath of God, but that's what Jesus Christ was satisfying on the cross. The gospel demands that we preach a God who must punish sin with everlasting, infinite wrath.

[17 : 36] We want to... We want to... There's the temptation to just be silent on some aspects of the gospel and not to speak of them.

To not speak of repentance for the forgiveness of sins. To not speak of our need to deny ourselves, to take up our cross and follow Christ.

To not speak of the gospel's purpose, to make us holy like our Savior. Church history has been the story of the church being tempted in every age to give up the faith of the gospel.

500 years ago, Luther, Martin Luther, was being pressured on threat of his life to give up. One of the cardinal teachings of the gospel.

Justification by faith alone. Not by the works that a man does. And he stood on trial. And you remember what he said. Here I stand.

[18 : 42] It took some real grace to say that. Because there was a lot of opposition, not only from the religious world of his day, but even from the political world, for him to move from that truth of scripture.

And he said, here I stand. I can do no other. And just reading that account, 500 years later, we instinctively feel that is conduct worthy of the gospel.

To take our stand and not be moved. No matter what. The cost. Our Lord Jesus stood firm to the end to give us the gospel, didn't he?

We sang of it. And what he endured for us. Temptations to move him from the cross. But he stood firm. That there might be good news for sinners.

And now he says, I want you to live in such a way that is worthy of the gospel. Stand firm for a gospel that is so precious.

[19 : 46] Jesus says, He who stands firm to the end shall be saved. So that's the first way that Paul tells the Philippian church that he'll find them doing if they are causing their behavior to be such that commends the gospel.

They will be standing firm and fighting for the faith of the gospel. The second conduct worthy of the gospel is to be united for the sake of the gospel.

To be united. The Reformation Study Bible says, Paul is appealing for unity among the believers. Unity is one important way in which believers' lives are shown to be worthy of the gospel of Christ.

End quote. Notice the double emphasis on unity here in verse 27b. I will hear or I will learn from you that you stand firm in one spirit contending as one man for the faith of the gospel.

So, we're to live in unity as we stand firm. We're to live in unity as we contend for the gospel of Christ.

[21 : 05] It'll be harder to move us from the gospel if we're all standing firm together. Won't it? And this double emphasis is simply saying that unity is critical for our gospel witness as well.

Contending for the gospel. Seeking to advance it. To hold on to it. To not lose any part of it. But to bear witness to it. To see it given to our world.

Unity is critical. If our unity suffers, our mission will also suffer as well. And this unity is not just of outward actions.

You see, it's to be united in one spirit. That's talking about your inner life. Your heart's affections. To be affectionately bound together with the brothers and sisters of the church.

That's what he's speaking of here as we're standing firm and contending for the gospel. Now, it's an interesting phrase, this contending as one man for the faith of the gospel.

[22 : 13] Contending as one man. There were a lot of retired Roman generals and military men living in Philippi. And they knew all about what it meant to fight and to war.

And the picture here, contending as one man, can be pictured by the Greek phalanx that Alexander the Great used to conquer the world.

It was a group of highly trained spearmen who fought together in the closest formation. Often there would be ten in a row and at least four deep.

Sometimes more. But just think of forty men then. And they're not out each doing their own thing, but they're fighting, they're moving, they're advancing together as one man.

Shoulder to shoulder. Side by side. Arm in arm as it were. So close that they could even fasten their shields onto the next guy.

[23 : 21] So that what you had coming at you was like a, an armored, human tank with swords and spears coming at you.

They strove and fought together as one man. And what a beautiful picture of Christ's desire for the church to be fighting as one man.

Here we are. We're to be one phalanx fighting together, taking our stand together and advancing the gospel together. The togetherness needed by the church for our gospel mission.

Closely united in heart and mind as one man. So our witness to the world, brethren, is to be a shared effort.

A shared effort. Not everybody out doing their own thing with, with no shared endeavor. That's not the picture here. We need to act as one man as we act for the gospel.

[24 : 29] And so we gather together to pray for each other. As we're each, yes, going out into our world where God has planted us and seeking to give the gospel to sinners.

But we come back together to pray because that's the spiritual weaponry of divine power. And a united church prays together.

It's what makes our preaching of the gospel like this morning. A united effort. You're praying for us as we preach. But it's not just that. It's I'm praying for you as I hear who you're seeking to bring the gospel to.

And we come to pray for one another in our gospel endeavors. We gather together to encourage one another in our witnessing efforts. It's tough work.

Hearts are hard. They're dead in sin. And so on some Wednesday evenings, once a month, we gather and we say, who are we seeking to bring to Christ?

[25 : 29] Let's pray and let's encourage each other. We do that in our discipleship groups. We do it in our one-to-one meeting together. I wonder if you're doing it.

Are you right in the midst of the phalanx of the church? Are you in the bloodstream of the church? Or are you out here on the fringe doing your own thing?

Unattached. No, we're to be doing this as one man in one spirit. A beautiful picture. Notice the contending is not against one another, but it's contending together for the gospel.

Unity gets the enemy right. It's not us. It's not each other. We don't shoot at each other. We face the spiritual enemy that wants to move us and silence us from the gospel.

His enemy or his the enemy's mission is to divide and conquer. He knows that united we stand but divided we fall.

[26 : 42] That phalanx has to stay together and work together. If we can divide it up and kill off each one they won't be able to stand. But united oh united there's this tremendous thrust of the gospel and over the past year we've seen churches with infighting and division over COVID sanctions and a host of other things effectively sidelining the mission of the gospel.

Christ is giving us a word about that. No, no. We've got to be united arm in arm if the mission is to go on unhindered not torn by dissension and malice but united in heart and combined effort not weakened by intramural squabbles but moving together.

Can you imagine the catastrophe if Alexander the Great had this great phalanx moving out in battle and right in the battlefield they start stabbing each other there in that phalanx.

What happens to the real enemy? He's not fought and we see this sometimes in athletic teams when a fight breaks out on the sideline and two guys start sharing words exchanging words with each other and then they come to blows and then their own teammates have to pull them apart.

It's a sign that they're losers for sure. They're not going to win they've forgotten who the enemy was and it's almost hilarious but it's not hilarious when it's the church of Jesus Christ that as Galatians 5 says is biting and devouring one another because while we are biting and devouring one another the real enemy is going unfought and the mission is not advancing and so unity is critical to standing firm and contending defending and going forward on the offensive with the gospel.

[28 : 50] If our life together cannot demonstrate God's power love and grace then why in the world should the world even want to hear our message? The gospel claims to tear down walls that divide indeed to reconcile enemies to God and to one another.

The gospel claims to unite all of us together into one family that my being united to Christ and your being united to Christ makes us brothers and sisters in Christ and that's the vision that Paul is giving us of the church and our gospel witness will only have credibility.

It will only have a note of authenticity when the world can come among us and see us loving one another with a supernatural love. God's love and come among us and see a harmony and a unity that is not found in the world where everything's divided and everyone's fighting for their own turf.

How this world needs to see Grace Fellowship Church standing as one man in one spirit striving for the gospel.

Enemies you know they will unite to strive against the gospel of Christ. We see that in the Gentiles and Jews that united to fight against our Savior and crucify him.

[30 : 12] Then can we not unite in order to advance the gospel? Well, that's the challenge, isn't it?

That comes to us from this text. So we conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel when we make every effort to maintain the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace.

standing firm in one spirit contending as one man for the faith of the gospel. Third, the third behavior that marks conduct worthy of the gospel not only standing firm and contending for the gospel not only being united for the sake of the gospel but thirdly to be courageous in suffering for the gospel.

courageous in suffering for the gospel. You see it in verse 28 without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. Now this word for frightened is that which was used of a startled horse struck with fear overcome with panic.

Maybe some of you cowboys and girls know something about that. A snake on the trail some sound and suddenly the horse is spooked and Paul says don't get spooked.

[31 : 35] Don't get panicky. Don't be overcome with fear when your opposition is persecuting you. And they were undergoing persecution there in the Philippian church even as Paul had encountered when he first went there.

He says in verse 30 you are going through right now you are going through the same struggle you saw I had and that you now hear that I still have.

You saw how they treated us when we first came with the gospel and threw us into prison flogged and in the stocks. And you've heard now that I'm still being persecuted and opposed for the gospel.

They're in Rome in prison as he writes this letter to them. And so what you are going through is what I'm going through. So the Philippians were undergoing persecution but they weren't to be surprised or startled as if something strange was happening.

Peter says the same thing in his letter doesn't he? No it comes with the territory. Are you Christian? All who live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution of some sort or another.

[32 : 50] 2 Timothy 3.12 It's just you take a Christian loyal to his savior and to his gospel and you set him down in a world that hates Christ and his gospel.

There's going to be opposition there's going to be some persecution did they persecute me Jesus says they will persecute you also and that's what was happening so don't be startled don't be surprised don't be frightened and panicked and intimidated in the least by your opponents to back down to be silent to repudiate your faith you know that's what the opposition aims at that's why they take up persecution they want to silence you they want to shut you down they want to move you from the truth of the gospel and to move you because of fear of what might happen if you keep on standing firm for the gospel and it's right here that the gospel has something to say to us about our conduct in the face of suffering persecution from wherever it arises if we're wanting to have conduct worthy of the gospel what does the gospel say to us well the gospel says

Christ suffered for us Christ suffered damnation for you is he not worth suffering something for besides with God is our helper what can man do to you that's what the gospel says well he may he may confiscate my possessions the gospel of Christ says not to fear you can joyfully accept the confiscation of your property because you know that you have better and lasting possessions oh but but men may lock me away in prison and the gospel answers but nothing can separate you from the love of Christ neither trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword oh but men may make me suffer in some way physically emotionally and the gospel answers our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us but they may take my life and the gospel says because

Christ died for our sins there is no sting in death for the believer to live is Christ and to die is gain to depart and be with Christ is better by far and that means the very worst that your enemies can do to you is to send you to heaven early and by the way isn't that the goal of your faith 1 Peter 1 9 so be willing to suffer for Christ that's what the gospel says the gospels we're suffering for it says be willing to suffer for Christ and to remain courageous under the persecution unmoved and and verse 28 says that your fearless courage under persecution is a sign it's a it's a clear proof that they will be destroyed that is your persecutors and that you will be saved and that by God when you fearlessly endure suffering it's proof that it's futile to oppose God and his saints and those who do will be damned that's the message it sends while you will be saved speaking of ultimate final salvation nothing they do can stop that our Lord

Jesus has said be faithful even to the point of death and I will give you the crown of life you see when you endure suffering patiently you're showing that you will be saved eternal life will be yours it's proof of coming salvation so Paul is telling us better to be persecuted for Christ than to be persecuting Christ and his people you know he had done both hadn't he by this point he started out a persecutor of Christ and now he's being persecuted because of Christ and the gospel and he says oh it's a lot better to be persecuted than to be the persecutor it's a lot better to be saved by God than to be damned by God and so he encourages us to fearlessly endure persecution whatever form it may take and he gives us further encouragement for steadfastly enduring persecution verse 29 for it has been granted to you on behalf of

[37 : 41] Christ not only to believe on him but also to suffer for him I want you to notice the two gifts that God grants to his people here in verse 29 two gifts first it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ to believe on him to believe on him saving faith is not something that you just worked up on your own it is a gift of God we see it here it's granted given by God and what a gift it is I never would have or could have come to Christ with saving faith he had to give me that that disposition that ability to come to Christ and to throw my sin and my hopes for heaven all upon him and to receive him in that sweet surrender of faith as my Lord and Savior he gave me that ability he gave me that disposition enabling me to believe on Christ so if you're a

Christian this morning you have God to thank for that believing on Jesus that's what he's telling us that's the first gift but he says that's not the only gift that's been granted to you not only to believe on him but secondly to suffer for him now we like the first gift but we don't like the second gift but he gives both he gives both and it's not just the suffering itself that he gives he gives the ability and the willingness to endure the suffering the ability to be satisfied to bear with the suffering for Christ's sake and that too is a gift it's a high gift it's a privileged gift it's an honor to suffer for Christ you remember when the apostles were called in for preaching in Jesus name and the high court of Israel the religious high court flogged them and then warned them to never again speak in the name of

Jesus and they went out with their tails between their legs and never mentioned the name of Jesus again no if that would have happened we wouldn't be here this morning no they went out rejoicing they went out rejoicing Acts chapter 5 and verse 41 rejoicing because they had been counted worthy of suffering disgrace for the name and notice that the emphasis is more on the disgrace that they suffered than the pain that they suffered and we sometimes get hung up on the fact that we haven't been thrown in prison yet for the gospel or had our feet put in stocks and tortured for Christ and so we wonder well these passages have nothing to say for us it really didn't say anything about the pain of their suffering it said everything about the emotional disgrace that they suffered so these are law abiding men and they are treated as if they were criminals and it was meant to shame them into silence we bear that kind of persecution here don't we trying to shame us into silence and that that's just as much persecution as the pain and it reminds us that our

Lord Jesus was put on a cross of shame for us let us therefore go to him outside the camp bearing the shame that he bore!

for us he wasn't ashamed to call us brethren he was willing to bear the shame of the cross for the joy of bringing many sons and daughters to glory he put up with the disgrace of the cross the high and holy and harmless sinless son of God being treated like a criminal one on either side of him and he bears the shame with joy because of what it would do in saving you and saving me so this is talking to us and those conversations where we're shut down because we get ashamed of speaking up for Christ no that's what we're talking about here enduring persecution for Christ rejoicing that we would even be counted worthy to be on the side of being persecuted rather than to still be in the world where we're laughing at those Christians what a blessing what a kindness to be counted worthy to suffer is what the gospel teaches us and so enduring persecution for

[42 : 45] Christ is a badge of genuine discipleship to Christ it marks you out as a true disciple and not one of these easy come easy go professing disciples there are those who appear to be followers of Christ until persecution come Jesus talked all about it in his parable of the stony ground here didn't he these are the people that when they hear the gospel they receive it at once with joy this is great isn't this great stuff this gospel about Jesus and forgiveness and they can't speak about it enough they can't rejoice in it enough but since they have no root they last only a short time and when trouble or persecution comes because of the word they quickly fall away these are the fair weather friends of Christ and his gospel and as long as following Christ causes no difficulty then count me in at the moment it costs me popularity and men's praises and some money some discomfort

I'm out of here I didn't sign up for this well then you didn't hear the gospel my friend the gospel is if anyone would come after me and be my disciple let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me a man carrying a cross was carrying it for one thing in that time he was carrying it to his death and Jesus is saying if you're following me you better have a cross you better be aware that this is life and death stuff you're saying I'm a follower of Jesus you're going to have a target on your back for opposition for persecution and so when we persevere and we endure suffering for Jesus sake it's a sign we're no hard ground stony ground here but the true grace of God has taken root in our hearts and we deem Jesus and his gospel so precious we are willing to suffer for his sake that's conduct worthy of the gospel it's our

Lord himself who promises blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness for theirs is the kingdom of heaven you see the promised reward blessed are you when people insult you persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me rejoice and be glad for great is your reward in heaven for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you and they are now rejoicing in their reward Romans 8 17 says sharing in Christ sufferings proves that we will share in his glory 2nd Timothy 2 12 says if we endure suffering we will reign with him so if suffering is a gift granted by conduct worthy of the gospel of Christ to be suffering for him and if it's a gift granted by

God and it comes from his hand then I know that my sovereign God is in control of it no suffering comes to me but that is given to me by God isn't that a comfort Christian it's not that we're at the mercy of the whims of men or of luck and just happen to be in the wrong place at the wrong time if you ever suffer anything for Christ you've received it from the hand of God he's not an idle spectator in our sufferings he's for us in our sufferings and it's because he's for us in our sufferings that we're more than conquerors in our sufferings through him who loved us so courageously facing down our persecutors is conduct worthy of the gospel not spitefully oh that's an ugly thing for the gospel isn't it when someone persecutes you to spitefully throw it back at them but no but lovingly enduring persecution even as our savior did when he was being tortured for the gospel sake that there might be a gospel and he says father forgive them they do not know what they're doing and when that thief was mocking him and laughing at him he didn't curse him he continued to show kindness and speak kind words such that that thief repented right there on the cross and sought the

Lord for mercy and the Lord didn't say oh no you you've been too rotten you've lived a whole life in crime there's nothing but hell for you buddy no he said when the man cried Jesus remember me when you come into your kingdom he said today you will be with me in paradise more grace you see for his enemies he's imprisoned for the sake of Christ he's not cursing those soldiers he's wanting to see them come to Christ and he's witnessing to them loving them this courageous confidence is conduct worthy of the gospel you know as we sit here in the comforts of our church building we have brothers and sisters we're united with them in other parts of the world and they are going through very severe persecution and though our persecution is less it is not nothing so let's pray that both they and we may bear up willingly graciously responding in a manner worthy of the gospel so what have we seen today everyone claiming to be saved by the gospel of

[48 : 59] Christ is under obligation to conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of that gospel yes the gospel brings us many privileges and blessings that will keep us astonished for all eternity but it also brings this obligation are you a soldier of the cross well then conduct conduct yourself worthy of the cross stand firm and fight for that gospel because if we lose the gospel we lose everything secondly maintain a loving unity for the sake of the gospel mission united we stand divided we fall and thirdly be courageous and willing to suffer persecution for the gospel is there not a cause was david's cry as he came upon the battlefield with goliath making the challenge is there not a cause i would ask is christ not worthy and the gospel says he is he is well then may the lord himself by his spirit enable us then to apply this all inclusive rule of conduct in these three areas for the glory of god and for the salvation of sinners!

amen thank you father for your word that meets us and searches us and leads us to the same gospel of christ that brought us into this relationship with you and we find all that we need in jesus we need to be washed and forgiven of our sins this morning and we thank you for that fountain open for sin and uncleanness we thank you lord that we live in a land where we heard the gospel of christ and having heard it and having believed it help us then to take our stand and not to be moved from it to endure and to endure whatever opposition comes against us have mercy upon our brothers and sisters in China in Sudan in Myanmar!

Iran and Iraq and Syria and many other places that are suffering severely for christ and have mercy on us and make us willing to endure insult and shame for the one who bore the shame of the cross for us and keep us united oh thank you that you've put us together into christ thank you for this family of god thank you for the way you have kept us and continue to enable us to lock arm and arm shoulder and shoulder to extend the gospel as we've had this privilege of coming together on the lord's day make us to encourage each other and then send us out with that mighty gospel wherever you've planted us we ask it all for Jesus glory and for the salvation of sinners amen■

Thank you.

Thank you.

[53 : 47] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.