

# Are You Living in a Manner Worthy of the Gospel?

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[GraceLife Church, Edmonton](#)

Speaker: Jacob Spenst

Key Passage: Philippians 1: 27-30

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Thank you, music team, for leading us. Oh, great is Thy faithfulness. Never has there been a day in history when God has not been faithful. And He continues, and He is faithful here. And He is faithful with our brothers and sisters all around the world, we can be so thankful.

I have to say that I'm very uncomfortable when people stand up and clap. And so I realized that that was an expression of your love for the Lord Jesus Christ. And we can be so thankful that we can be here this morning. Tens of thousands of people have been praying for us. I have absolutely no doubt about that we've heard from congregation after congregation, across Canada, throughout this province, we know that many have decided that they're going to open their churches. And we pray that that will continue.

We pray that that the church would see its faithful response to open because of what the Lord Jesus Christ has done for us. I want to also welcome those on live stream. I realized that we probably have a number of people tuning in, not only from GraceLife here, but also from across Canada, around Alberta, and certainly around the world. And you've tuned in to, again support us, but you've also come, to come under the teaching of God's Word this morning.

And this morning, we'll be in Philippians chapter one and specifically, the last four verses of Philippians chapter one.

I have to say that, prior to attending Seminary in Los Angeles, I had been watching the senior testimonials that the Masters Seminary puts out. So, these are men in their graduating year. And they testify to the faithfulness of God; how God brought them to the Master Seminary from all around the world, from virtually every nation around the world; how God then took them and delivered them through their time in seminary.

And then even as they would anticipate what the Lord would have in store for them next, they would testify to the goodness and faithfulness of God. And it was in listening to these senior testimonies that there was one thing - and you may find this to be a little bit odd - but there was one thing that really resonated with me.

One thing that several men said that I really desired specifically when I was looking for a seminary - and many of the men said that the Lord had provided a brother in seminary to come to them and to rebuke them when they saw sin in their lives - seminary!

And I thought this is remarkable - that they would be so thankful for that and I, I sought that certainly. And that really appealed to me, to know that I would be among brothers, that would hold me accountable - that would urge me to continue to live faithfully for Christ who is worthy.

And so I desperately wanted to attend TMS and the Lord made that happen.

Now, I say that, because I know that in Scripture, the Lord has commanded that exact action - that we are to be teaching and admonishing one another.

And we read about that in Colossians, chapter one, verse 28, where we see "We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ", and this is the work of the church. This is a part of our fellowship, and it's a vital part of church life. It's certainly not an easy task, but it is a necessary one.

And the reason why I bring that up is because, just as Pastor James addressed the government, and laid out the duties of government last week, I want to shift the focus here a little bit, because he pointed out several deficiencies in theology. And he pointed out that he believed that there were churches that were missing implications that we find in the Word of God. And as a result, it's taking them in a different direction. And in a direction that, we would say is not faithful.

And so my purpose this morning is to shift the focus from government, to the church - to the local churches. To the church, that has been purchased by the blood of Christ, Acts 20:28. And there's a truth that there are fundamental attitudes and behaviors characteristic to the Christian, and certainly evident in the Christian church. Certainly, these fundamental attitudes and behaviors must be present then among local churches.

And I would say that, if a church is not adorned with the gospel, then she is an unfaithful church, and she is in need of repentance. And now, I know it's certainly true in our generation, we've entered into a most difficult time. For those of us here, I don't think that we know of a time when the church has faced a greater or more divisive issue than the one that we've seen in her proper response, what her proper response should be to government encroachment.

And our beloved pastor has clearly exegeted Romans 13, to help us understand this government overreach. And those sermons, and our position, are posted on our website, and you can certainly feel free to visit there.

The Word of God has been clearly explained. Our theological positions are clear, as is our desire to be citizens here in Alberta, certainly, and be responsible with that.

And we feel a responsible response is to love our neighbors by making sure that the gospel goes forward; to make sure that those who are the ambassadors of Jesus Christ are constantly being fed, so that they can go out continually, week by week, into the world and testify to Christ.

So as we've journeyed through these 11 months, for me certainly, and I'm sure for for you as well, God's Word has consistently been bringing clarity to the stand that we've been taking, and affirmation after affirmation from God's Word has come; certainly.

It's not just one argument. It's not just based on the authority of Christ as head of his church, although that is our primary stand. But there are so many other details that have been made clear. And it's also been interesting to see some of the parallels that we can draw from Scripture. The church has seen many a Pharaoh around the world reject God's messengers, and at the same time, increase the burden on God's people to ensure that they would serve him, and not God.

And Pharaoh has certainly sent his taskmasters. We've had AHS and RCMP officers in our building here, virtually every Sunday. We've been videotaped. And shortly after each service, there's a report that is issued to us. But it's also to equip the courts with ammunition for an affidavit against us. And this has been in an effort to try to bring us into compliance with the burden that Pharaoh wants to place on us.

I would say that the church has also seen Ahabs and Jezabels, as God's men have coward - right? - like Elijah did in Scripture when he was threatened by Jezabel.

And yet, certainly this week, but long before this week, we also have been reminded that God has His 7,000 and they have remained faithful. And they have not bowed their knee to another. And we can be thankful for that; we are strengthened by that certainly.

I've been reminded of Jesus' trial, and even the trials of the apostles, as false charges were placed as evidence against them. And certainly we've seen that take place as well, hearing that our pastor, just simply doing what he has done faithfully for the last decade of his ministry, and now to be deemed as a danger to the public and to this province; to be seen as a threat for doing nothing different than he's done for 10 years plus. It baffles the mind.

We've seen our premier and a bureaucrat behave like Pilate and wash their hands of the injustice.

But most troubling, for me, has been the response of professing Christians who have handed over the headship of the church to the provinces, premiers and unelected chief medical officers. I've heard church leaders ask - I've heard church leaders in this province ask our premier and the chief medical officer "Will you allow us to sing?" "Would you be willing to give us 30%?" "Will you allow us to teach our children in Sunday school?"

It's shocking; to hear church leaders first praise these people for what they're doing, and then to ask allowances of them.

And perhaps it's more shocking to see that they have the audacity to answer those questions. That they think that they can give those allowances. I'm reminded of Acts chapter 12, and Herod. God wasn't so patient with Herod, was he?

Disunity and division in the church continues. Many of us have experienced brother betray brother. Many of us have been chastised by other professing believers. I've heard many a professing Christian read this online as well say that pastor James is simply encountering some self-inflicted suffering. And that this is certainly not persecution.

And some of those same people I'm certain that if, it was another political party in office in this province, their tune would change.

I'm here this morning to say Christian, you need to check your allegiance.

And Paul writing from prison in Rome provides believers - he provides the church - with the litmus test. Now, one of Paul's reasons for writing the church in Philippi is to exhort the body to a joyful and unified life in Christ. And he does this; he encourages this pursuit despite the threats of persecution, as we see in the letter, despite pride and ambition, despite false teachers that are applying pressure against the church, and despite even their own material needs.

And so our text this morning, in verses 27 through 30 of Philippians chapter one. This This appears as one long sentence, really, it's one imperative in the Greek, that Paul is giving to us. And it's an imperative that he places on believers while explaining exactly what fulfilling that obligation should look like. And so, just to lead our way up to the text here, let me just give you just a simple and short outline of Paul's letter here.

We see in the first 26 verses, that Paul urges joy in persecution, and also he stresses that Christ is our life. Christ is our life. And then in the next section, he commands unity. He commands unity in ministry. And he points to Christ as our example, and he does that from chapter one and verse 27, where we find ourselves all the way to chapter two and verse 30.

And I would say at the same time that Paul's command in this paragraph results also in a sharp plea for unity among those who say they belong to Christ. And so let's read the text here. Please follow along in your Bible, starting with verse 27, of Philippians, chapter one. And Paul writes, "Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; and in no way alarmed by your opponents - which is a sign of destruction for them, but of salvation for you, and that too, from God. For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me".

In our text here Paul, using an imperative instructs Christians to live in a certain way, which will be clearly manifested in their attitudes, and behaviors. And we shouldn't say in their individual attitudes and behaviors, but in their collective attitude, and behavior.

And I've titled this sermon, "Are you living in a manner worthy of the gospel?" So my outline will be simple, three parts. First, we'll see the demand of living in a manner worthy of the gospel. We'll see this in the first part of verse 27. There's one simple command there for us. And then secondly, we'll see the description of the manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. And there we'll see the life characterized by certain traits. We'll see that in the latter part of verse 27, all the way through to the end of verse 29. And then finally, we'll see the difficulty of gospel living. And we'll see that in verse 30, where we'll see that this is, well it's a gifted life that we've been given even to suffer. It's a life marked - not marked with ease. It's a life marked with hardship.

And so first, the demand of living a gospel life. "Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you". And so Paul is stressing something of singular importance here. Right? We see that in the word "only", he really wants us to focus on one thing in this paragraph. How are you, as the one saved by the gospel of Christ, to conduct your life? How are you to lead the Christian life?

Well Paul uses a, the main verb here, which the NASB renders as from the word "polis", meaning city. It even can refer to one's citizenship within the "polis", within the city. And so literally he's saying here - and the Philippines would understand this - he's saying, live as a citizen, live as a citizen.

Now, Paul is calling the church to practice responsible and loyal citizenship. But there's more to what he's implying here.

He understands that those in Philippi are closely connected to Rome, and there's even a bit of a pride ingrained in them because they're Roman citizens. It's a privilege status that they enjoy. And Christians would be able to make this connection as they hear him say this, but also understanding what he has already instructed them. And we, for our own sake, we gain clarity to this in chapter three and verse 20, of Philipians, where we read, "for our citizenship is in heaven".

So there's a connection that we need to make here. We need to understand that he's really telling them that they need to apply the values, their lifestyle, even as they were proud of the Roman citizenship, that they need to view themselves as a citizen of heaven.

This is the imperative. So you live as a citizen of heaven.

And not only that, but then live in a manner worthy in a worthwhile manner of that citizenship. Paul uses the same term in his letters to the churches in Colossae, and also in Thessalonica. And he uses this term, right in a manner worthy, he often is talking about the walk - right? - the Christian walk. And so he uses it to describe the acceptable walk of the believer.

And now we can, we need to understand that we are being commanded to conduct ourselves in a certain way. And so there's an implication here that there's actually manners that would be unworthy of the gospel that we

could walk in. And that's what he's warning about here; that's what he wants to bring to the surface. How, how does this life - a life that is conducted in a manner worthy of the gospel - what does that look like?

Well, Paul certainly has an objective standard in his mind. And this is a standard that cannot be tampered with. We don't mess around with what Paul is saying here. We don't change anything here. We need to understand that, although he has made reference of dogs and evildoers - and those are the false circumcision; these are false teachers and pseudo shepherds that he describes early in chapter 3 - these are those that are trying to encourage those in Philippi to walk in that unworthy manner.

But he's calling them to walk in the worthy manner.

And so for us, it's critical to understand - to fully comprehend - what is this worthy manner that Paul is talking about. And it results from this worthy manner - results from and is fashioned after the gospel of Christ. He's telling us to live according to the good news, found only in the Lord Jesus Christ; only in the Gospel, a manner worthy of the gospel. So we need to take a moment here and just understand what is this gospel that he's talking about, right? It's this gospel that has brought us here this morning. It's this gospel that fuels our soul. It's God's good news to man. And we see this, this gospel described even in Jesus's ministry, in Luke chapter four in verse 18, I invite you to turn their. Luke chapter four, and verse 18. Now Jesus has entered into the synagogue; He's picked up a scroll, and he's reading from the prophet Isaiah, and he reads these words, which are found in Isaiah 61, and Isaiah 58, respectively. So starting in verse 17, we read, "and the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. And he opened the book and found the place where it was written, 'the Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he appointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the favorable year of the Lord'." What a glorious passage this is describing Jesus's ministry. This is the reason why he came. It's the fulfiller reading about what he is about to fulfill. It's about Christ accomplish work. It has everything to do with the Father's redemptive plan, which is the greatest news. You can go and click on any website that you want, you will not find greater news. You can open up any newspaper, you will not find greater news. You can turn to any media channel and listen to hours and hours - you will not hear greater news than the news that Jesus just read from Isaiah.

And immediately we're confronted with some realities here. Immediately, we're confronted with a realization that man has a need. We see in these verses that there's poverty, there's captivity, there's blindness, and there's oppression. And at the same time, we see that the Spirit has anointed the work of our Lord Jesus Christ, to address each of these needs. He is sent to preach, sent to proclaim, release, to give recovery and to set free. Friends, God sent His Son to save sinners, plain and simple. Isn't it interesting that our pastor sits in captivity, in a jail, north of Edmonton. And yet, he's set free. And then those that are free, those that have placed restrictions on us, are in essence, those who remain in captivity. This is a wonderful truth that God would send His Son to set the captives free. And we pray for those who remain in that captivity. We desire that the Lord would give us an opportunity to present the gospel, even as I saw some of the pictures yesterday from the rally and seeing some of the brothers proclaiming the truth. This is our desire that others would come to this realization. But they can only come to this realization, if they hear the gospel proclaimed. They need to hear the gospel proclaimed. This is a gospel about the spotless Lamb of God, the perfect sacrifice, to take away the sin of the world according to

John 1:29. And yet we know that this same lamb was despised and forsaken of men. A man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, according to Isaiah 53:3. And so we see that God sent a suffering servant. And yet, he gave of himself, he was determined to give of himself, determined to give us his affection, and he healed the sick. In fact, he came not to be served, but to serve and give us life as a ransom for many, Mark 10:45. And it's in our Lord Jesus Christ, that God demonstrates His love, His own love toward us, and that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. So we see the needs of man being addressed in only one way and that is through sending the Savior to pay the penalty for sin, a penalty that we could not pay. This is a gospel that's sourced in God, if we try and write it, we would write a different gospel, we would make it simpler, we would make it easier on us. We might even make it fun. But God hasn't done that. This is His gospel. This is not our gospel. And it's a gospel of grace. It's a gospel of unmerited favor. There's nothing that you can do to earn your salvation. You can walk 100 old ladies across the street, and it would count for nothing - for nothing. It's by God's grace alone. And it's a gospel of power. This is a gospel capable of regenerating the dead heart of man. For in it the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes, for in it is the power of God unto salvation, to everyone who believes is what Paul writes to the Romans in one and verse 16. It's an effectual gospel, right? It's powerful, it's effectual, and it results in man's regeneration. Turn to Ephesians chapter two. Let's take a look at Ephesians chapter two.

This is an effectual gospel. Ephesians two in verse one says, "and you were dead in your trespasses and sins." That does not sound good. But take a look at verse four. "But God." You were dead, but God did something - right? Back to verse two, "in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience." But God, God did something, right. To take us out of that. We too all formerly lived in the lust of our flesh, but God saved us. "But God . . . made us alive together with Christ." We indulged in the desires of the flesh, and of the mind, and we're by nature, children of wrath. But God, God effectually saved us. Ephesians two and verse eight, indicates that this is a gift. He's gifted us faith. And not only has he gifted us faith, but then second Timothy 2:25 says, he's gifted us with repentance as well. Faith leading to repentance. So this is a gospel sourced in God. It's an effectual gospel, the gospel of grace, unmerited favor, it's a gospel of power. It's also an exclusive gospel. Jesus said, I am the way the truth and the life. There's no other way. It's the biblical Jesus that saves. Right? Let's not get confused with the historical Jesus, the historical Jesus has been manufactured to mean different things to different people. We believe in the biblical Jesus. And the biblical Jesus is the Jesus that saves. And He is the only one that saves. He is the only way to the Father. He is the only way to be reconciled to the Father. There's no other way. And all of this has been accomplished, through His death in His resurrection. Galatians two in verse 20, reads, "I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. And the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me." Now, it baffles me, why would any church - why would any church, depart from this gospel? Why would any church rather allow the government to dictate how you're going to conduct yourself? No conduct yourself in a worthy manner of the gospel. Why would you allow the government to hinder the advancement of the gospel? We are obligated to proclaim this gospel. Matthew 28:19-20 we see that commission that's been given to us, it has to go out, it's the only way man is saved. Nothing should get in the way of that, nothing should hinder that. Nothing should hinder this gospel of love. It's the grace of God, it's the mercy of God poured out on sinners. And we know and hear clearly, those of you here, those of you on Livestream, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart, that God raised Him from the dead, there's a promise, you will be saved, you

will be saved. But that's the only way. And we need to understand that it's this gospel that talks about the regeneration of heart, where we're brought into union with Christ, we're justified, our sin placed on Him. And then there's an exchange that takes place - our sin is imputed on him but his righteous life is imputed to our account. It's credited to us. Not only that, but we're adopted and as we're adopted, we're given an eternal inheritance, and from that moment on we are continually being sanctified. And at the same time, we're simultaneously being preserved, ultimately heading toward final glorification.

Why would we not want to preach that? Why would we, why would we try to hinder that in any way? Why would we actually preach anything else? It's this gospel that saves. And it's no wonder then, that Paul says in verse 27, of Philippians, one, he says, "Only conduct yourself in a manner worthy of the gospel." And you can see where the church might lose some steam if they interpret it this way. Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of current AHS health restrictions. That's going nowhere. That's not something that saves. So let's let's not lose our focus here. Let's not be found dancing around a golden calf. Let's conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of this gospel, and let's proclaim it - every opportunity that the Lord presents to us. And Paul tells us to live this way, whether he's with the Philippians, or whether he's absent from them. He says, it doesn't matter. This is the way that you live as a citizen of heaven. You live according to conducting yourself in a manner worthy of this gospel. Now I know GraceLife delights in this gospel. This is a gospel that's proclaimed here, Sunday after Sunday, Lord's day after Lord's day, but not only that, it's a gospel that's proclaimed in our Bible studies. It's a gospel that's heard in the fellowship, even after we depart from this worship service. W

We, we take such great delight in this gospel, because we know what is done for us. And as we mature in our faith, we only take greater delight, we only receive greater satisfaction from sharing what the Lord has done in our lives. But we do know that other churches - there are churches that work towards other ends. There is the the preaching of themselves. There's not preaching Christ and Him crucified. To them, it's not a matter of first importance. But we need to understand how Paul viewed this. This was a matter of first importance to Paul. In fact, he says in Philippians, one a little bit earlier, a little bit before a text, he says, "to live is Christ, and to die is gain." His life revolved around Christ, around nothing else. And so we should expect to see from someone living in a manner worthy of the gospel, we should expect to see certain things. And this brings us to our second point. So we've just seen, the demand that's been placed on us, conduct yourselves worthy of the gospel of Christ. And now, the second point is the description of living a manner worthy of the gospel. This is a life characterized by certain traits. But what are those traits? What are those characteristics? What are those qualities that we ought to be seeing? Now these are, these are the traits that Paul was eagerly anticipating to hear from Timothy as he sent them out and he's waiting for his report back he wants to hear is this going on in the lives of the Philippians in the collective life of the church. So follow with me in middle of verse 27, let's, let's take a look at this description. Remember, this is all one imperative, Okay. Conduct yourself. Now he's going to describe what that looks like. So that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you, that you are: one, standing firm and one spirit - that two, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel - and that three, in no way alarmed by your opponents, which is a sign of destruction for them but of salvation for you and that too from God.



And then, finally, fourth, for to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake. So we see four aspects of this life - of a life conducted in a manner according to the manner worthy of the gospel. So first, Paul describes the standing firm, and we need to understand that the term here that Paul is using as a plural term, okay. It's plural he's talking. He's not saying stand firm to one person. He's saying, stand firm church, stand firm people okay. This is a position. This is remaining firmly committed to one's convictions. This is being unwavering. This is being very principled. This isn't open mindedness. Rather, this is a tenacious steadfastness that he's describing here, and it's fueled by the gospel. Now, Paul's life most certainly exemplified exactly this manner of living. Right. And he wasn't, he wasn't motivated by a pursuit of rights and freedoms. No, he wanted to proclaim the gospel. Certainly, certainly, he appealed to his Roman citizenship, but that was only for the advancement of the gospel, to give him another audience that he could proclaim it to. Right. So we need to understand this that this is, this is, this is important. And this is the the attitude that needs to be prevalent. And so it requires our conscious efforts. And we see this in, in First Corinthians, actually were Paul after giving much correction to the Corinthian church. He exhorts them to do exactly this. Listen to this in First Corinthians 16 and verse 13; "Be on the alert, stand firm in the faith, act like men." That's a whole sermon unto itself right there. Be strong he finishes with, right. This is the conduct. This is what that conduct in a manner worthy of the gospel looks like. But let's not miss the modifier here either, right. He says stand firm, but there's more - stand firm in one spirit. This is a collective attitude, as I've already said. And this is no doubt fostered by unity that's only made possible through the Holy Spirit. This is a gospel driven church. It's unified in their stance because of Christ's saving work. And they stand firm. They're unanimous in their, in their view?

Why?

Why are they unanimous in their view? Why are they? Why, would they conduct themselves in this way? Well, we already know we've heard the gospel. It's because Christ is worthy. Because He's the, He's the object of our faith. And He is worthy of exactly this conduct. And isn't it true Christian, that the fact that Christ is worthy, as I've already said, increases, the delight that we take in Him, the delight that we have in Him as we mature. You know, Ang, I made it, guess how many weeks it took us before we yearned fellowships so much back last March, when when we were, you know, essentially told stay home, you can't come to church? So we went by first Sunday, second, third Sunday. It was excruciating. It was over it was done. We we couldn't bear it any longer. And so I don't, I don't have a clue why anyone, who's been saved by this gospel, would remain content and say, it's all right. We can wait until the church gathers again, we'll just continue on zoom, we'll continue to meet virtually, I don't understand, I can't wrap my mind around that kind of thinking. I want to be with the people of God. I want to be in corporate worship. I want to be rubbing elbows together with the brothers and sisters. I want to be hearing the testimonies of the people. And I want to be proclaiming the good news forth, there's so many times, that we encounter people, even on a day to day basis. If we're not practicing this gospel, then how are we proclaiming this gospel?

And so we need to be unhindered in our corporate worship. No restrictions placed on that. God is never delegated the government to say your church can only be this size. They have no business there. And also, there should be no restrictions placed in any way that would hinder the church from the Great Commission. Let's take a look back at the text here. Notice, notice without, I'd like you to notice this right. So without standing firm in one spirit, we actually can't do this three that follow that. Okay, track with me here. How will you strive

together? How will you strive together, if you're not standing firm in one Spirit? Or how will you face opposition, if you're not standing firm in one Spirit? Or how are you going to possibly endure the suffering, if you're not standing firm in one spirit, if you're not taking this on together, corporately. And so we see a second trait here that that Paul is describing. He says, with one mind strive together for the faith of the gospel. And Paul uses a compound word here. It's pronounced soon-ath-leh'-o, and it literally translated means competing together, ok competing together. When we compete, we usually think we're competing against people. But here he's saying, we're competing together. So there's a teamwork here. And this again, is a plural, a plural word. So he's talking about a group obviously, this is teamwork. This is, this is a unified struggle that the church finds itself participating in. And it's what the gospel requires. Now, apathy is not something that characterizes the believer. Some might say, you don't really need to be with others to worship, right? You don't need to be with them. I can worship God with my feet up on the coffee table. This is what people say they're apathetic. But what does the writer of Hebrews say, in the context of worship? Does he say, don't worry about forsaking your own assembling together? Is that what the writer of Hebrews says? Not at all. The Bible says, "Let us not forsake our own assembling together." So contending is necessary. Stimulating one another, to love and good deeds is necessary. There's no room for complacency, there's no room for lethargy, there's no room for slumbering. And certainly, there's no room for any person that calls themselves a shepherd that would facilitate this. We need to think of Paul's ministry. We've been given so much of Paul's ministry, in the New Testament. What did his ministry look like? Certainly, it didn't look like anything that I've just described there. We need to be imitators of him. He struggled for the gospel, he contended earnestly for the gospel. He was constantly locked arms together with his brothers in ministry. This was the pattern This is what he's describing exactly here. Now, given the implications placed on the local church - globally, I'm not sure that there's a more critical time in church history, for the church to be striving together for the sake of the gospel. I've heard it. I've heard that it said that it's most difficult to evangelize somebody who professes to believe, right, they think they're already saved. And you see clearly there's no fruit being born in their life, right. There's, there's clear evidence that something is amiss. And they're incredibly difficult to evangelize. Well, I think the same can be said, for the church. For a church that's gone wayward. For a church that's no longer focused on the gospel. You know, we read about these churches in Revelation, what did Christ say regarding Laodicea, and it's lukewarmness.

He said He'd spit them out. So we need to be heeding the words of Scripture. We need to not fall into just a complacency or even fall asleep. And we need to urge Brothers and sisters, and that's what we've already done this morning continue to do, we want those churches open. That's the only place where people are going to find salvation, they need to hear the gospel proclaimed. You need to be a gospel proclaiming church. And so Paul really is stressing a unity here that revolves around that there is one resolve, it's harmonious. There's no one out of tune in this, okay. You don't have one church that's off key, everybody together for the gospel. And, and Paul, again to the Corinthians, he writes, "now I exhort you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all agree that there be no divisions among you, but that you be made complete in the same mind and the same judgment", First Corinthians 1:10. Then in Second Corinthians when he's defending his ministry, he tells that same group, be like minded. Why is Paul calling for harmony? Why is he so insistent on this? Well, we see in Ephesians four, he, he wants this in order that we would walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you've been called. And that we would be then diligent to preserve that unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. But, but pastor Jake, but pastor Jake, you're not being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit and the bond of

peace. You're just not. You're speaking against the church. You're speaking against local churches, I should say. We need to pay attention here to the participle that Paul is using,

he's saying, competing together, competing together. What does that look like? Would the Holy Spirit lead the believer away from the practical aspects of fellowship for close to a year? Is that the work of the Holy Spirit? Would He urge you to stay away physically from your brothers and sisters in Christ? It makes no sense. And I could find no satisfaction in that as a believer. So we need to pay close attention to what Paul is describing here. Let's take a look at the third trait here, living in a manner worthy of the gospel. Now, this is where, this is where he's saying, let's just pick up the verse here again. Let's go back to verse 28. He says, "In no way alarmed by your opponents, which is a sign of destruction for them, but of salvation for you and that too, from God."

So the Christians, not alarmed. He's not alarmed by those who oppose him. Paul here is describing a fortitude that's found in the collective of the church. And they display courage amidst pain. They remain strong in the face of adversity. They're not intimidated by their opponents. I've sometimes thought, what would the apostles say? What would their response be? Or what would the martyrs in church history say? If they saw the Western world and the Christians, I think they might say something like this; "So let me get this straight. You're not gathering because of a people a piece of paper that's been threatened, that you'll receive it, you're going to receive a piece of paper. That's what's keeping you from. Really? That's what's caused you to stop meeting the threat of government." But our church can't afford the fines, we'll have to close the doors. While there's house churches, there's there's very various ways that you can still continue to meet as a church. The point here that Paul's making is that the believers response is not controlled by fear, but rather by resolve. And we can, we can say here, open and honestly, we are not afraid. We are not alarmed by our opponents. There is no fear in us, not in the least. And if they take one, there'll be another that will stand in his place. And when he's gone, another will stand in his place, and we'll continue again and again and again. Why? Because Christ is worthy! Because of this gospel. Has your life not been changed by this? Absolutely. So we don't, we don't suppress this in any way. But we have it go forward. Gospel proclamation continues. As long as the church isn't intimidated. As soon as the church is intimidated, the gospel is hindered. Not with us, not with GraceLife, and not with many other churches. And I'm thankful for all those words of encouragement that we've already received. Many churches are standing and they continue to proclaim the good news of Christ. And so this is a life that's aligned with gospel. And it actually serves as a sign twofold, right. It should cause a warning to the opponents, to cause a warning that they are heading for destruction. They need to open their eyes, they need to understand that there's a danger here, there's a warning being given to them. And at the same time, that's strength in us is our assurance. It's an assurance of our salvation. It's a clear evidence that Christ is working powerfully in us, and powerfully through us. And so, brothers and sisters, friends, churches, let us not forsake the diamond, that is salvation in Christ, let us not let us not fear man, but rather, let us proclaim this gospel. Now, it would seem that those Protestant churches that have acquiesced to government, actually betray church history and misplace their fear. But Jesus is clear when He said in Matthew 10, "Do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul, but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell." And so it's Him that we fear, it's Him that we fear. And as a result, we have no need to fear any other. And then finally, there's this fourth trait that we see. And it's this belief that's gifted to us that's also then accompanied by suffering. And we read that in verse 29, where Paul writes, "for to you it has been granted for Christ's sake not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake."

Paul's explanation here reaches all the way back to the imperative how do we, how are we to conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel? How are we to live as citizens of the gospel of Christ?

Well, we do so by receiving these gracious gifts. First, we're given belief, we believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. And here it's, it's almost like it's assumed, right, the way it's written, it's not only to believe in Him, but then there's an emphasis placed, but also to suffer for His sake. And so we need to pay close attention here. It, it allows the believer to identify here with the sufferings of Christ. And Peter writes exactly about this in First Peter four, verses 12 and onward where he says, "Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery ordeal among you, which comes upon you for your testing, as though some strange thing were happening to you. But to the degree that you share in the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory, you may rejoice with exultation. If you're reviled for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests on you. Make sure that none of you suffers as a murderer or a thief or evildoer, a troublesome meddler; but if anyone suffers as a Christian, he is not to be ashamed, but is to glorify God in His name." And so, just as the grace of God abounded in Christ's suffering, when believers suffer for His sake, when believers suffer for His sake grace then abounds in them as well. And so suffering endured successfully then makes faith abundantly, visibly obvious. And it affirms one's salvation. Now the Western world doesn't know as I'm reading commentaries this week out of Philippians, a number of commentaries say the Western world knows nothing of suffering and persecution. I think that they need to rewrite portions of, of those commentaries now, I think the Western world now is starting to see suffering, starting to see the persecution. And so the Western world hasn't really been prepared for what lies ahead. It hasn't been prepared to stand firm in the Spirit, does that stand firm in one spirit collectively, because we're in a very much an individualistic society right now. And so we need to, we need to address the deficiencies that exists in us on how to take a unified stance, what does unity in the church really look like? Unity is not just getting along at all costs. That's not unity. Unity is being like minded as a result of Christ. And so I'm thankful for the unity that we've had as elders and the unity that has been found in GraceLife. We are standing firm in one Spirit, I believe. But there's another, another exhortation that's poorly heeded, and that is to contend for the faith of the gospel as one person. Well, we find ourselves that in a, in a time where the gospel is being watered down, it's watered down by liberalism, it's watered down by materialism. And this is encroached into the church. And really, when that happens, it makes it a gospel that's no longer worth contending for. Right? It's been altered so much, it's not really a message that we would want - the local church would want to contend for. Or, you know, sometimes there are churches that are so secluded, they're so unto themselves, that they, they really can't contend earnestly for the gospel, they have no one else to lock arms with to help in the face of the pagan opposition that surrounds even their local church environment. And so these are all things that we need to take and pay close attention to. So we've seen the demand of the gospel. It demands us to conduct ourselves in a worthy manner of the gospel of Christ. We've seen that it's defined or described by these four things. And finally, I'll just close here briefly. We also need to understand that there's a difficulty

that comes along with living in a manner worthy of the gospel. That difficulty is shown vividly in the life of Paul. We see him right, even as he's describing how he endured hardships. But how those serves as a powerful example for the authenticity of his ministry. He writes in Second Corinthians, this list of things that he endured through he says, "far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of

death. Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I've spent in the deep. I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren. I've been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches." He even suffered, out of a concern for the churches caused him to suffer. It's an incredible list. How many of those can we say we've participated in? I think we're entering into a season where that's going to become, we may very well be checking off things on that list. But we can be satisfied in that as well knowing that the Lord has brought that about for a purpose in our lives. In fact, the Lord uses our suffering, to save other people and we've seen that witnessed here again, even as GraceLife has been caused to suffer, people are being saved as they're coming under the proclamation of the Word. It's no different than the thief on the cross as he viewed Christ's suffering, and came to saving faith. It's no different than the Philippian jailer, who saw Paul and Silas suffering in jail, and as a result of the testimony that they gave, he asked, "What must I do to be saved? What must I do to be saved?" Well, it's this gospel. It's this gospel that has caused Paul again in Philippians, to say that he counts all things as loss. Everything else is lost. And this last week, this last week for me, and I'm sure for many of us, has really been helpful in counting more things as lost than ever before. It doesn't matter anymore. It's rubbish, as Paul describes, "I count all things to be lost in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus, my Lord, for whom I've suffered the loss of all things and count them but rubbish. So that I may gain Christ." Let us have that attitude. Let us have that exact attitude. Now I realize that there are people on Livestream tuning in, maybe they were hoping to see a disaster today. Maybe they're just curiosity seekers, you know, they're, they wanted to see something. They're curious, what's this church doing in the news? Maybe there's some of you here that have come for that same reason. Maybe you want to pound on your rights and freedoms and make sure that you're expressing that. Maybe you've, you've come here you haven't heard this gospel before. I need to tell you, you've been conceived in sin. You have right from the time you were born, you waited to a moment when you could first sin where you can first commit that first sin, it was so ingrained in your, in your being already your sin nature. And from that time on, you've been self-seeking, self-serving, and have continued in that way. And it's an offense to God to live that way, because He has created you. And He should be the object of your affection, not yourself, right. But He should be. In fact, coming to Christ demands that we count the cost, right? There's a, there's a price to be paid. We need to count all things as lost, as Paul has said. And so currently, you're sitting here, or you're online, and you don't know this Jesus. You don't know the Savior that God sent into the world, to go to the cross, to have the sin of man placed on Him, because God demanded a punishment for sin.

He demanded death. And He's followed through on it. Death entered into the world, and many people, the majority of human history has gone to their demise. And few are saved. But it's not too late for you. You can repent, you can turn from your wicked ways. You can turn from your selfish desires. You can rid yourself of the pride, but you need to come before the Lord Jesus Christ and say that He will be your Lord, you need to surrender everything to Him, your entire life. And then you have to believe in Him. You have to believe in what He has accomplished on the cross, that effectually dealt with your sin, that God then has removed that sin from you. His righteous life has now been credited to your account, and it's the only way. If you don't surrender your life to Christ, you will die in your sin, you will be eternally punished in hell. And God is faithful. He is faithful to that plan too because He's faithful in everything. And so I would, I would entreat you, turn from your wicked

ways. confess Jesus is Lord, believe in your heart that He raised Him from the dead and you will be saved. You will be saved. And if that's you, I would love to talk to you. I would love for you to come and talk to me. I would love to counsel you. If you're burdened hear this morning, and you need someone to talk to I would love to talk to you this morning. Don't leave here if, if this morning, you've heard the gospel and you're going, my life is not right currently, something is wrong, and I look around here and I see the joy of these people,

and I see the strength of these people. There's something about them, I'd like to tell you about that. Don't leave. Let's pray. Father, I thank you for the strength that you have given us. A thank you for the resolve that you have placed in us.

And Lord, it's not of ourselves. It couldn't possibly be. But we do know that it's sourced in Christ, Lord, we are joyful. We are joyful that you have saved us. It has become our delight. And it's become our desire to proclaim Christ crucified. To proclaim that to the world. And not only that, but that He was raised from the dead, three days later to defeat sin and death. And we too know that when we die, we will enter into eternal life as a result of what Christ has done for us. And we praise you God for that, we exalt you for that redemptive plan. Father, thank You for Philippians one, we pray for these churches that need to open we pray for these churches that need to return to the gospel. I pray that they would. Father I pray that you would place on the hearts of church leaders across this nation to realize that they need to return to what the Bible says. They need to stop preaching themselves and start preaching Christ. He is our only hope, and that they cannot have divided loyalties. Father, I pray that they would, that they would desire that today. And that we would stand together strong, standing firm in one spirit, that we would be striving together with one mind that we would be able to not be frightened of whatever would come against us. And certainly that we would believe and be able to endure the suffering as a result of that gracious gift that you've given us. Father, thank You for these words. We pray that you would help us to even this week, conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of this great gospel, this gospel of Christ, and it's in His name we pray. Amen.