



PHILIPPIANS: STANDING STRONG TOGETHER

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Tim Patton

Philippians 1:27-30

Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God. For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

Hi Doxa family. Tim Patton here, one of your elders and serve on the staff team. I'm excited for us to get to continue in the book of Philippians. We're looking at the gain of loss. Let me pray for us and then we're going to jump right into the word together. Jesus, thank you for the chance to meet this way. Thank you, Lord, for technology and the servants that make this possible. Thank you for your word, Lord, that can continue to change and transform our lives wherever we find ourselves. And I pray, Lord, today that we together as a church, would struggle with this idea of the gain of loss. That we would wrestle with the gifts of faith and suffering that you offer us today and that we would by your Spirit follow you faithfully in the week God. Jesus, it's in your name that we pray. Amen.

Alright, he says, Let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ. Or another translation would say, Citizens, behave in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.

Now citizenship meant everything to the Philippians. As anyone who's had to earn a citizenship would know that it's, it takes time, effort and energy, and it's a privilege. I remember my friend in college, he was working his way towards US citizenship, and I'm watching him as a friend on the sidelines and realizing, to my shame, how little I actually understood about our government, about our states, about how it all actually works. And the reality is that despite the best efforts of my US government teacher, um, I knew very little about things that some have strived for and others have even died for, right? And so if you, the real truth is that non-native US citizens and anyone again who's had to work to earn their citizenship anywhere, they know a little bit more about what it means to be that citizen, cause they don't take it for granted.

And we can laugh at this, I don't know if you remember the old skits from Jay Leno where he'd go jaywalking in Universal Studios, asking pretty basic questions about the United States and things that you would think that we would all know. And yet across the board, right? Educators, business leaders, moms, dads, young, old, we'd get things wrong. And it was, it's hilarious. Those skits are funny to watch if you haven't seen him before. And we can laugh at that and realize, laugh at ourselves and realize how little we actually do understand. But I do think that this is framing up a deeper truth that the Word is going to invite us into today.

So I want to, I want you to follow with me on these layered arguments. The harder the work, the greater we value the prize. The greater we value of the prize, the more that prize gets entangled in our identity. And if that prize is Christ, which is named today as faith and suffering, then the deeper our identity gets rooted as being citizens of heaven. And the deeper our identity gets ruined as being citizens of heaven, the further the advancement of the gospel in us and through us and therefore our joy in the faith. But, if the prizes of this world, if then our identity gets rooted and being citizens of this world, and the deeper our identity gets rooted in being citizens of the world, the less faith we have, and the more quickly we avoid suffering, in fact, comfort becomes the goal. The less faith we have and the more we avoid suffering, the less advancement of the gospel in us and through us. And therefore, the less joy in our lives. And my hope today is that we will receive what Paul says are gifts from God, faith and suffering graciously given to us for ultimate good.

And we need this message today. We need to hear this, because we're in our own modern-day version of imprisonment, right? We're in this quarantine and those two gifts, those are going to be our way out. The path of Christ is taking up the identity as a citizen of heaven. That we've been saved by the sufferings of Christ on the cross,

that he has graciously given us the faith to believe in him and we've been called in a common way to suffer on his behalf for his sake. And for this generation, has there ever been a more common call? Citizens stay home, right? Citizens stay home.

Let's play with that phrase a little bit the way that Paul did for the church in Philippi. Because we too, we share a tension of dual citizenship. As a Roman colony, Philippi could take pride in being part of the greatest world power. In their culture, honor and shame, that was the, that was of most value. More than tangible things, more than material wealth. Honor and shame, those things meant the most. And so it was a prized honor and prestige to be a Roman citizen. They also enjoy tangible benefits, like freedom from certain taxation and the right to own land. And so socially and politically, they felt the pressure and experienced the privilege of being a good Roman citizen.

As citizens of the United States, and I would argue even more so here in the Northwest, we have great tangible benefits to our citizenship. Everything from the freedoms that the US Constitution provides, to the benefits that we have here in the Northwest. Think about the economic buffer that we have with our diverse tech, and maritime, and aerospace, and health industries coming together. We have, and live, in a privileged and blessed placed. What a grace of God to us in that.

At the same time for the church in Philippi, they yoked themselves to Christ. Becoming faithful partners, as Paul said earlier, from the first day until now, right? And yet think about the contrast that they had to live with. Christ was executed by Roman crucifixion, right? Seemingly one master has dominated the other. And how true that was, but what we know is in the inverse, right? That it was our Cosmic Master Christ, who conquered our worldly masters of Satan, sin and death.

Paul reminds them that their allegiance to Caesar can bring a tangible benefit in this life, but their allegiance to Christ is going to bring a intangible benefit for eternity. So he says, citizens, and we're saying citizens stay home, stay living in the kingdom of Christ. Doxa we too, we've yoked ourselves to Christ. His grace by his grace, we too can be faithful partners in the gospel. And yet same and similarly, we too should have no misconceptions that Christ kingdom and our government are not the same. Right, at this point, the vision, values and missions of those two, they're opposed.

D.A. Carson comments on this text. He says, "It's not at all impossible, if present trends continue in the West, that opposition here to the gospel will extend beyond

just family disapproval, the trouble at work, condescension from intellectual colleagues, and it will formulate into concrete persecution."

Now, I don't say that to scare us. That's not the point, but to sober us. And we've got to admit that while many of our foundations were laid by followers of Jesus, which is awesome, what was created was ultimately of this life, it was of this world. It is not the same. At some level it was, it was an experiment, right? It was the grand Experiment, social, political, religious experiment. One I'm grateful to be part of, but it does not last the way Christ's kingdom will, and it does not offer what Christ's kingdom does. So you're a citizen of the state of Washington. In the United States of America. But if you've put your faith in Jesus Christ, you're more than that. You're a citizen of heaven! Citizens stay home. Stay living in the kingdom of Christ. So in the midst of this identity crisis, Paul says, Behave as a citizen worthy of the gospel.

So what does that mean? Paul is going to call for three things. First, consistency. Whether I'm with you or I'm absent. Next collaboration, standing firm in one spirit with one mind. And third, courage. Strive together side by side without fear. So let's go through each of those things and take a look at them.

Consistency, whether I'm in person or I'm absent. You know, this quarantine has created a pretty interesting dynamic. On the one hand, it's never been more easier to hide. And on the other hand, you've maybe never been more seen, right? On the, on the one end, it's more easy to hide because your life is what you choose to present in a tile, on a Zoom call, right? We're like, we're like metaphorical mullets, business in the front party in the back. Right? And on the other hand, it's also been a time where we're all seen in more intimate ways. Because whatever that sin or that idol was that you left running in the background, you can't ignore it anymore. Your family, your roommates, they're seeing it now. You can't ignore it. You can't get around it. And even if you live alone, it's staring at you in the mirror every morning. And so we're not able to hide and we are being seen in new ways now.

You know, it's been said that nothing really changed about what was in our cups. It's just that we all got knocked together and they all splashed together on each other. And now we've splashed on each other and it's messy. So, why do we hide and why is it hard to be fully seen? I'm gonna argue that that's because ultimately we give people more power than we should and we let them be bigger to us than God.

Ed Welch and his very helpful book on this whole topic called, "When People Are Big and God is Small", he says, "We hide and struggle to be known because we fear other people." And he gives three basic reasons from the scriptures. He says, we fear people because they can expose or humiliate us. They reject ridicule or despise us. They attack, oppress, or threaten us, right? It's the physical, emotional, relational pain that we can cause each other. Which of those resonate with you?

It's impossible to make it through this life without some stories of being rejected, humiliated, or attacked. It's, that's what life is like. And so at some level, our fear is an understandable, maybe even reasonable response. It's a learned behavior. It's even there at some level to protect us. So then the question becomes, what are we going to do with that fear? Will we posture ourselves and, and just present our very best self, keeping everyone else at an arms distance? Or when things are seen about us, are we going to excuse and manipulate and argue our way through so that it's not actually what it is? Well, there's good news that there's a different way forward for us.

And I love the way Ed Welch talks about this. He says, "The story, the gospel, is the story of God covering his naked enemies, bringing them into the wedding feast, and marrying them instead of crushing them." Right? That's the story of God. Though we were enemies of him. We should be naked and ashamed alone in the garden. Instead he comes, he covers us, brings us in, makes us his own, loves us, marries us, and celebrates us. What a good news story. And it's in light of that good news that Paul is going to call the church to consistency.

Whether I come and I see you or I'm absent, I want to hear these things about you. I want these types of things to be true about the church. So Paul is charging us to live the same way on and off the Zoom call. And that's possible, not because we're going to clean up our acts and be good, whatever. But because Jesus has in his one act cleansed us. So now there's a level playing field. It's not about who can present what to each other, it's the fact that we are all on the same field and that Jesus alone is above us. And now he makes possible a depth of relationship, a quality of relationship, that would not otherwise be there. And he invites us into that. And in that dynamic, it's what Welch talks about, and I love this, "of needing people less to love people more" and isn't that the whole call the people of God? To love God and love people.

Doxa we do this through our DNA groups. That's where we got three or four men or women getting together to discover the truths of God's word, to nurture them into

each other's hearts and to help each other act and be accountable to obey the word of God together. It's a place where you can be known. You don't have to hide, you can let yourself be seen and when you are seeing, you're accepted and you're welcomed. It's a place where you can be consistent, so that you can consistently follow Jesus.

I know me personally, I am very grateful for my DNA group. Those are men that know my story, they love me, they pray for me, I text them all throughout the week now just giving them updates and asking for prayer at different moments. And they're faithful to remind me of the gospel, to spur me on in faith in Jesus. They're willing to ask tough questions, and they'll stand by me when I have rough answers. And those are the kinds of relationships that I know I enjoy and we want your elders, your staff, your church leaders want you all to get to enjoy. So if you're not in a DNA group, I wanna encourage you and offer and ask you even to consider doing that. Have those types of relationships in your life. And you can do that even right now, you can take a step towards that. You can use our chat panel here in this online platform. Gives us a chance to interact in a very different way. Reach out to a host and say, "I would like a relationship like that. I'd like to hear more about a DNA group" and we'll help get you connected. Or there's the prayer request feature. Maybe jump in there and ask a elder, a staff member to pray for you that your relationships could look like this and you could have that kind of relationship in your life. Again, we want that for you.

Secondly, Paul says and describes his hope for them, that they would be standing firm in one spirit with one mind. And for Paul, this is deeper than like just liking somebody's post on social media being on the same page. This is be of one "pneuma", be of one soul. It's deep, it's oneness, it's unity.

Let me ask us, has global humanity in any generation ever experienced a more common thing than this pandemic? I don't know that it has. Across history and time, globalization, we're all in this moment together. And yet, could our responses be more different? And isn't that just like us? You know your elders feel the tension. We have that even at Doxa, half the flock wants to go blaze a new trail, not sure why we're letting the government tell us what to do. The other half is saying, you know, let's get a thicker gate around this pen and could you wear a mask while you pray for me? Right? You know, so whether you are planning your least risky social disobedience to go be face to face with someone or whether you are still sterilizing quarantining your Amazon packages for 72 hours before they come to the house, right?

You can be on either end of this spectrum and that's not the point. Paul's going to call us today to be of one soul together. Well, how can we do that? We've got to start by embracing our identity as citizens of heaven. And then we're going to pray that nation's anthem, right? Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven, right? We want to pray Jesus, what's true about our real eternal home, make that real here, make that true here, God. And then we can begin, when we've prayed that truth to anchor ourselves further into the truth of who God is. We got to embody. In other words, not just say, but believe and live out a truth that agrees with what the Psalmist says. He says in Psalm 62, Power belongs to God and to you, Oh Lord belong steadfast love.

So if we can stand together and say, Oh Lord, you are strong and you're good, right? Then we're on the side of power and love, strength and goodness, justice and mercy. And that puts us on the winning side. And we know that this is true of God's character when we look at the cross. That's where God's power and his love are on the most perfect display. Justice in the condemnation for all of sin for all of time, and yet mercy. And then he took it on himself and that he gave us what he, earned righteousness before God. It's with this posture that you'll be able to actually acknowledge how hard this is and have a genuine hope to get through it. And that's the greatest witness that we can give right now. That yes, this is hard, full-stop. And, our God uses hard things for good.

Do you know him? Do you know him? That's our witness. That's our testimony right now. The prophet Nahum says, His way is in the whirlwind and the storm. I love that imagery. That's what this pandemic feels like. Whirlwind and storm. Our God uses difficult things, things like this to bring about his purposes in the world. Purposes for our own ultimate good and for the glory of Christ. And that's what Paul is calling the Philippians to see. That we're called to believe and suffer, that they're both gracious gifts of God. And it's in that dynamic that we're going to begin to see the gain of loss. So, we don't run away. We don't stop pressing in. We've got to keep moving forward. Even if we can't physically leave our homes, we keep moving forward spiritually in our partnership with God. That's what he wants us to do in this pandemic.

So practically, spice up those Zoom meetings. Keep meeting together. Keep cracking your Bible every single day. Stay in prayer constantly. Invite Jesus into the hardship of the moment. Cherish the relationships that you do have around you, the family that you may live with, whether that's in person or virtually. Don't isolate, don't shrink back.

You may feel lonely, but you are not alone. The Spirit of Christ is with you and your church family is with you. We stand together as one soul.

That brings us to Paul's last charge, to strive together side by side, right? Strive together side by side and for us 6 feet apart, right? We've got, we have to create some distance right now. That's our life. That's our call right now. We can't be together in person. But think about Paul's circumstances. He's miles away from the church in Philippi. He's in chains in prison and yet he still feels what he would call partnership with them in the gospel. Paul certainly felt like he was striving together with them, and he was even further away with even more restrictions than most of us are experiencing. And so likewise, we've got to be called, and are called, to strive together too. And to do that without fear, because fear is constant in this season, always knocking at the door, inviting us to give in. Fear of lost income, lost vacation, lost graduation, lost influence, lost everything. We've all lost and continue to lose at different moments in this season.

And yet citizens embody the values of the kingdom that they belong to. Our work together needs to be a picture of heaven on earth. So what's true of heaven, we claim to be true here. In heaven, we're brothers and sisters. We're the family of God through Jesus Christ. So here we call each other family. We call each other brothers and sisters of Christ. And so, as a family, we want no family need to go unmet. That's why we've created the Doxa Needs Facebook page. That's a place where you can post a need if you have it, or post that you can meet a need, that can be for prayer too, but Doxa we want no family need to go unmet, because we are family. He has made us family.

Second, in the kingdom of heaven, everything we've been given is a blessing for us to enjoy and to share with others. We've been blessed to be a blessing. So here on earth we take in that same mentality and we've been sharing our resources and feeding families in need in our community. Partnering with Jubilee Reach, you've heard us talk about this already. Feeding over 592 families each week. Doxa you're a part of that, as you continue to give and support that worthy cause. Third, we have new relationships in the heavenlies. In the kingdom of God, Jesus is our big brother. He has saved us and brought us into the family of God. And so we're going to pursue right relationships. We pursue our relationships here through our missional communities, through DNA, through Sunday gatherings, through prayer meetings and there are opportunities to do all of that still even in the midst of this pandemic. And we invite you to join us even for prayer. Not many of join us for prayer, but after

our gatherings we have prayer. You can get that invite in the weekly email. And that's what striving looks like right now.

You know, Jeff has said this a number of times, I want to just bring it back for us. It's not a coincidence that God led the elders to be about spiritual formation in 2020. It's no coincidence that for the first 3 months of the year it was about learning how to be quiet and alone. Hello quarantine! Right? So now we've got some level of experience with it, some level of discipline for it, and we're in the thick of it. Well, it's no coincidence that now the next 3 months is about prayer. Prayer is going to be our primary way of striving together. Prayer is God's invitation to partnership with him. It's his chosen vehicle for bringing what is true about heaven to earth. It's mysterious and glorious and right at our fingertips. How great it is for us to know that we have a God who hears us and sees us and responds to our prayers. Don't discount the work, right? The obstacle in front of us is a historic, global pandemic there. It's easy to say there's no shortage of prayer that is needed. Well, I want to end with the beginning in mind.

If you're a Christian, one word that I read early on, it's gotta just jump off the page to you. Worthy. Worthy. Live in a manner worthy of the gospel. If you're a Christian, like worthy, really? I thought the whole thing that made it good news is that I'm not worthy. Like I'm receiving something I was not worthy for. So is Paul making some big theological shift here? Absolutely not. Not the case at all. Paul is emphatic every time he speaks in all of his writings, it's about what Jesus has done, not about what we've done. He says that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, that no one is righteous, not even one.

So what does this mean? D.A. Carson comments on this, and he summarizes it up in saying that, "Conduct worthy of the gospel is above all conduct that promotes the gospel." So in other words, don't think of yourself as needing to be worthy, but here Paul calling you to a worthy response, to a gift you are unworthy to receive. And if we have that posture, what's going to happen? Well, we are going to be more thankful for the gift and we're going to be in more off the giver.

Our family has had a pretty significant event happened in the last couple of weeks. My mother-in-law was coming to stay with us during the quarantine. And while she was packing she fell and injured herself. We didn't know. We knew she had gotten hurt. We didn't know how bad. Picked her up from the airport on a Thursday night, we got her home, we realized this is, this is not good, we need to go to urgent care

the next day. Come to find out she had completely broken her humerus off of her shoulder socket. Right? So if you don't know anatomy, it's like the bat and the ball and it was bat and ball. It was bad. And so her whole body is surging with trying to help and send fluid and blood and all of this to try to heal that, and she needed surgery, and it's going to be a long road of recovery, but she's got a swelling. We had a post-op appointment later the following week, and the doctor said the amount of internal bleeding that she had, it's a miracle that she's alive. It's a miracle that she's alive.

And so we praise God as her family for that gift. That is a miracle. That is an absolute amazing thing, Jesus saved her life! Because as you can imagine, this is not the best time to have a medical emergency. And yet for us, for our family, her situation has put front and center for us. How God uses pain to bring about, even offers us pain, to bring about ultimate good. If she'd ignored that pain, she'd have just tried to press through and pretend like it didn't happen, she might not be with us today. And I know you don't know her, but for me and our family, that's a, that's a devastating thought. And so we thank God and praise him for the gift of suffering. And now she is on a long road to healing. She's with her family. She's getting the care that she needs.

Paul says, It's been granted to you for the sake of Christ, that you should not only believe in him, but also suffer for his sake. And I want to argue that both faith and suffering are difficult guests to receive. Faith turns the world's wisdom upside down, right? It can be irrational at time and difficult to handle. And suffering by definition is uncomfortable. Who would welcome it? So we need to wrestle then with Paul's mentality, it's easier to explain away the supernatural and to medicate the painful. But Paul says that both suffering and faith are a gift graciously given by God.

So, citizens, stay home, stay living in the kingdom of Christ. Live a consistent life. Stand firm in one spirit. Strive side by side for the faith in the gospel. Receive both faith and suffering as a gift graciously given to you by God. And all of this is going to be a clear sign of your salvation, and that too from God. Let's pray.

Jesus, thank you for your word. Thank you for the timeliness of your word. Thank you for the way that it calls us and forms us and charges us even in these cultural moments, it's such a timely word. Lord, we need faith and we need to accept suffering. We need to see those things as gifts from you. We want to invite you into the places where we need faith and where we're struggling to suffer. And we pray

that you would use our suffering, redeem it for your glory. We know in that we will find our good Jesus. We pray these things in your good name. Amen.

Well, Doxa now we want to take a time to respond. While we still meet online, we still have the chance to respond together in this moment. And so we want to give. Again, what's true in heaven, we want it to be true here. Everything we've been given is a gift from God. And so we're going to steward that for his glory. So I invite you to give as an act of worship and continue to give online. And there's ways to do that. As you can see in the notes section. Also, we're gonna invite you to take communion. This is a chance to do this at home. There's a very helpful, uh, in-home communion guide in the notes section of this online platform. I want to encourage you to check that out and take communion together as a household.

When you go to take communion, I want to give you two questions to wrestle with as we think about what we've heard today from God's word. And these questions are, Where is God offering you the gift of faith? And your clue for that is to ask yourself, where am I experiencing some fear? The other question I want you to ask is, Where is God inviting me to suffer for his sake? And your clue for that one is, who or how could I serve another person? Cause Jesus said that, whoever, whatever you do unto the least of these you do for me. And that's going to be Jesus's invitation to suffer on his behalf. Family, love you very much. Enjoy this time of communion, and time of prayer, time of giving, time of worship.

