

Philippians 1:19-2:4

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Preacher: Graham Weeks

[0 : 00] So let us read from Paul's letter to the Philippians, starting at chapter 1, and that's the end of verse 18.

Yes, and I will rejoice, for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, this will turn out for my deliverance. Remember, he's writing from prison in Rome.

As it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage, now as always, Christ will be honoured in my body, whether by life or by death.

For me to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labour for me. Yet which I shall choose, I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two.

My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith, so that in me you may have ample cause to rejoice in Christ Jesus because of my coming to you again.

[1 : 07] 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, engage in the same conflict that you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.

So, if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.

Let us pray. Our Heavenly Father, we thank you that you are our one true God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. As we come before you now, we come into the presence of the Living God, who has spoken by his word, by his Son.

[2 : 43] And we thank you, Heavenly Father, you have left us in the dark concerning salvation, but you have given us your word, your gospel, your truth, your good news of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And you have given us instruction in the faith. And we thank you now, we can study together this letter of Paul, written nearly 2,000 years ago to the church at Philippi.

This man who writes in chains, yet speaks of the freedom that we have in our Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ.

And as his words encouraged and strengthened and united the church at Philippi, may his words today speak to us. We would bring before you today, Heavenly Father, Chris, who has been doing these talks for some years now.

He's now studying at London Theological Seminary. We pray for him and for Emma, that they will be blessed in their stay there. And Chris will be taught your word and taught to handle your truth for a future of ministering your word.

[3 : 47] We now pray with thanksgiving in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. So, back to Philippians, ending chapter 1, beginning chapter 2.

You know, there are ceremonies that take place in this town hall that didn't used to take place here. And I'm not referring to strange marriages. I am referring to citizenship ceremonies. Where people who haven't had the blessing of being born British receive welcome as British citizens.

And are able to get their British passports. And the passage that we are learning about today is about, is addressed to citizens.

We see this right at the beginning in the alternate reading on verse 19.

I don't know if you can see it down there at the bottom. Somewhere in there it says it refers to citizenship.

[4 : 58] I don't know if I can actually see it here. But I certainly saw it in the ESV that I was using.

Anyway citizenship. There's one clear reference to it that is there and that's in 320.

Chapter 3 and verse 20. Our citizenship is in heaven. Our citizenship is in heaven.

Sorry, yes, I have found it. I was looking at the bottom of the wrong page. It's the next page.

Footnote 1 down the bottom there. Says behave as citizens worthy.

So let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ. Could be translated as behave as citizens worthy of Christ.

[6 : 00] Christ. And the idea of citizenship was a big thing in Philippi. Why? Because in 31 BC that's 60 or more years before Paul wrote Philippi the city was regarded from that date as a Roman colony.

and there were some blessings from being a Roman colony. Some of you looking back to days of British Empire may not think that it bestowed very many blessings but in fact I think you'll find that if you're a citizen in a British colony or a subject you've got a British passport and the rights that went with it to travel etc.

No longer the case I'm afraid because residents here have been divorced from overseas citizenship. But the Philippians would have been very proud of their citizenship that they were they might have been Greeks in Philippi but they were Romans and being a Roman it had advantages. Paul sometimes used it to his advantage when he was thrown in jail and he could say should you be treating a Roman citizen like this? Well the Philippians when Paul writes to them and he says only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ he's saying behave as citizens worthy of Christ.

Paul has now finished writing to them about his own situation in prison and their partnership with him in the gospel and now he's addressing them as to the way he wants them to behave to walk to walk as citizens merely of Philippi but citizens of heaven their citizenship is in heaven and this is not in doubt as it was not in doubt that they were Romans it's not in doubt that they are Christian citizens I've already quoted to you from 320 and 320 says our citizenship is in heaven and from it we await a saviour the Lord Jesus Christ who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself their citizenship was not in doubt they are now

[8 : 36] Christians citizens they are now citizens of heaven he's not telling them to make an effort live a good life do what you can believe what I'm telling you and you will become Christians get eternal life he's saying no now you are citizens if you've repented from your sins you've believed on the Lord Jesus Christ you are now a citizen of heaven though you'll be sitting here in Ealing and the majority of us well we used to be called British subjects but now we're called EU citizens most of us will fall into that category but the citizenship is not in doubt look on your passport read what it says and citizenship in heaven is not in doubt if you have trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ it is assured you are now a citizen of heaven and we just wait the coming again of our great and glorious Saviour when he first came the days of his humiliation when he comes again every eye will see and every knee will bow and every tongue confess that Jesus

Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father so citizenship was assured and citizenship as I have said was understood in Philippi because they were Roman citizens they were free to travel to trade they took pride in their citizenship and Paul is saying walk as Christians as Christian citizens take pride in this status that you have been given the world may despise you they didn't despise Roman citizens the world may despise you as citizens of heaven but understand this is the new status you have it's interesting elsewhere when Paul refers to a new status he says to the Ephesians that we are seated in the heavenly places with Christ Jesus this is eternal reality we may not see it but it's an unseen and spiritual thing but it's there and we should understand we are now a new people citizens of heaven and he wants the Philippians to behave as citizens of heaven walking in the Lord Jesus Christ walking worthy of the gospel of Christ and he wants this citizenship to be a corporate thing of being together that's what it means about being citizens you are united you are united together with a common bond the government at the moment is struggling it seems to define Britishness or whatever and to know what will cement together a disparate multi-ethnic multicultural society but Paul he hasn't got that problem he just comes and tells them it's through the gospel of

Christ you are going to be able to walk together and of course this whole passage is about unity so Paul says when I come and see you oh and you know that desire was going to be frustrated because he wasn't going to get to see them oh

I'm absent and I may hear of you and we presume that the message got back to him in Rome as to how the Philippians are doing what he wants to hear from them what he wants them to do is to stand firm in one spirit with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel here's his positives what he wants them to do stand firm in one spirit one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel this is their their corporate life together the new testament knows nothing of individual isolated Christians it only knows as Christians brothers and sisters together in the body of Christ together corporately seeking to honour their saviour and here when he says stand with one mind he says be single minded stand firm don't let anything rock you and he says don't be frightened in anything by your opponents it's interesting

I understand that word frightened it's the only occurrence in the new testament and it is the word for of all things an uncontrollable stampede of startled horses it's a strange word to use no I'm not a Greek scholar I just read commentaries now do not be frightened stand firm not startled and running away stand firm and if you can stand firm like this despite all the opposition around you in pagan Roman Philippi this will be a sign to the opposition a sign to your persecutors of their destruction but of your salvation it will be a sign from God and he goes on to tell the Philippians it has been granted to you 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

[14:30] I had and now here that I still have when Paul had been in Philippi it hadn't been an easy ride there indeed had been conflict when he went there he was blessed we read in Acts 16 11 and following with the conversion of Lydia a seller of purple a trading woman and the Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul read that in Philippians 16 14 we often hear evangelists say open your heart to Christ well actually it's God who opens our hearts so we may repent and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and Lydia did and she was baptized and her whole household too all her family and she would have servants and them too and she wanted

Paul to stay to stay at her house and she prevailed upon him and so he did but as they were going to a place of prayer that's where the Jews would have met if they didn't actually have a synagogue building they were met in Philippi by a slave girl who had a spirit of divination fortune telling if she had been here at Ealing she would have been on one of these psychic fairs you know I never understand the psychic fairs in the town hall why do they have to advertise them don't people know they're going to happen apparently not well this girl had a spirit of divination and it was profitable she was a slave girl it was profitable for her owners and she cried out these men are servants of the most high God who proclaim to you the way of salvation and she kept on doing it day after day and Paul was annoyed he didn't really want the devil witnessing to what he was doing and so he commanded the spirit in the girl to come out in the name of the

Lord Jesus Christ and the spirit came out that very hour but that had economic consequences it may have been that the girl was settled in her right mind but her owner lost his hope of gain it says in verse 19 so having been hit in their pockets by Paul's gospel Paul and Silas were dragged into the marketplace before the rulers brought before the magistrates accused of being Jews who were disturbing the city of Philippi accused of advocating customs that it wasn't lawful for Romans to accept or practice no we're Roman citizens we're not going to do this Christian thing and the crowd joins in attacking Paul and Silas and the magistrates he didn't stop to find out who Paul and Silas really were they stripped them and gave orders for them to be beaten with rods many blows and then they threw them into prison ordering the jailer to keep them and he put them in the inner prison fastening their feet in the stocks now you know the next bit you know what happened they were singing hymns to God wonderful picture isn't it there they are bruised and beaten chained locked in the stocks and they're singing hymns to God and God sends his angel to rescue them and the Philippian jailer thinks his life will be lost because his prisoners will escape Paul says no we're all here and the jailer believes and his household they believe they're baptised and it's now reported to the magistrates and when they hear that Paul and Silas are Roman citizens they're afraid and they apologise to them they ask them out but they tell them they really want them to leave the city so out of the prison they visit Lydia and the brothers in Christ the church encouraged them and departed now that was Paul in Philippi so when he speaks to them it's 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

they knew what he was talking about they knew there was a cost of following the Lord Jesus Christ and he says this is what you've been called to do it's been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him you've done that but also suffer for his sake the servant is not above his master if they have hated the master they will hate the servant don't be surprised he tells them if you are persecuted now we have lived for centuries in a society where you were not persecuted for being a Christian Christian we've lived in a different sort of society those of us who have been here in England well there were times you were persecuted if you weren't a member of a particular church we won't go into that but now we have Christian liberty and liberty in society to proclaim the gospel but still we are beginning to see in our society some Christians even in this country having to count the cost of following

[20 : 37] Christ we know there is a cost in Middle East we hear the terrible things that ISIS is doing to Christians in Syria and Iraq we hear the horrible news from north eastern Nigeria of Boko Haram taking girls into slavery killing many people we hear that day by day on the news but there is for us increasing it seems in our society some antipathy to standing for the gospel and there may indeed be a cost to standing for the gospel we are in a town hall where they do civil marriages and then it moved on to civil partnerships and then the government redefined what marriage was now there have been there was first of all a registrar in Islington when this happened the first part of civil partnerships who said

I wasn't hired to do this as a registrar please don't make me do it and Islington council refused and she lost her job there's been a second one I'm not quite certain where and I think she may have been a bit more successful in avoiding having to conduct marriages that are not between one man and one woman but there has been a cost I had literature when I came back from my holiday from the Society for the Protection of Unknown Children to Christian Midwives in Glasgow the hospital where they were changed the performing of abortions from the gynae ward to the labour ward and they were midwives and they said no no in all conscience we can't do this we can't take part in abortions and I think they've been in danger of losing their jobs and the court

I think they were dismissed and then a court found against them and they appealed and they won the appeal and now the hospital is going to the Supreme Court in Scotland there's a cost for standing firm today increasingly so for Christian truth and he says here strive content to go side by side for the faith of the gospel going on together together standing for the Lord Jesus Christ Lydia might have faced such problems she might have faced such problems when perhaps there was a purple cellars guild and they had dinner and there would be an offering to the emperor well she wouldn't drink that toast make that offering as a Christian there would have been a cost for following and Paul says stand together stand firm it's granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake

I believe this is going to increase in this country with increasing secularisation and going away from Christian standards in the public life of our nation so briefly we go on to Paul in a way is a bit of a repetition at the start of chapter two that so at the beginning of chapter two could be translated therefore he's saying in the light of what I've just told you he says if you get encouragement from being in the Lord Jesus Christ if you have comfort from his love the love of one another if you participate together in the Holy Spirit if you share together with common emotions affection and sympathy do you want to know how to make me happy in my chains do you want to know Philippians what's going to make me happy and complete my joy it's you being united together in the same mind agreeing together love for one another in full accord not fighting among yourselves no rivalry conceit humbly counting!

others more significant than yourselves not me first but fellow Christians first concerned not just for your own interests but also for the interests and needs of others Paul wants to see a united church in Philippi he said that you should live as citizens he said I want to hear you standing firm one spirit one mind striving side by side to the faith of the gospel and here again he says if you're in the Lord Jesus Christ and you are you are Christians you are Christian citizens he says make me happy complete my joy let me hear that you are standing together that you are standing together participating and the Holy Spirit with affection and sympathy one mind together the same love in full accord no rivalry and conceit humbly counting others more significant than yourselves caring for one another's interests not just your own the Christian church is diverse one of its wonders is that it calls us together from such different backgrounds different races nationalities social groupings intellectual and academic abilities and makes us into one body the body of the

[26 : 45] Lord Jesus Christ we are called from our disparity to be united together as Christians members of the body of Christ citizens of heaven itself and being one doesn't mean that we have to be uniform far be it from me that everybody in our church was like me or the ladies would look funny anyway but we are different people but we are to be working together in unity the psalmist says how sweet and pleasant it is when brethren dwell together in unity I have twice known cases where the opposite happened one was brothers in law led to a split in a congregation and one was brothers again led to a split in a congregation and not good when we don't dwell together in unity but when we do and here is all the reasons why we should we are together in Christ we participate in one spirit together the holy spirit we have one lord one faith one baptism that unites us we have our diversity but we have a glorious unity in the lord jesus christ let us maintain and strive for that unity now if you are in a church though where the gospel isn't really being preached

I don't think you are under any obligation to maintain a unity there Paul is talking about a unity in the gospel a gospel unity in fact I would suggest you have a serious obligation to consider should you not be with the people who truly believe and truly preach the gospel of the lord jesus christ I'm not trying to port you away from one church and to join another what I'm saying is can you really be united if the gospel isn't being preached I would suggest there is only true unity if it is gospel unity in the lord jesus christ let us pray a