

Gracious God and most Holy Heavenly Father, you are indeed great and greatly to be praised. We lift high your name this evening and we ask that you would send forth your spirit, that he would accompany the reading and preaching of your word, that he might draw us near to Christ. that Christ might be lifted high in our eyes this evening. And as he is, we would bow before him in worship and adoration. And we would go forth as those rejoicing in the good news of the gospel and longing to live our lives for your glory. We pray it all in Christ's name. Amen. Please be seated. Our text tonight comes to us from Philippians 1, verses 27 through 30. We're in our third week of this 10-week flyover of this wonderful letter from Paul in a Roman prison to this church that he loves deeply, the church at Philippi. And we pick up here and begin to transition from Paul's encouragements and his prayers for this group of people to now the issues that he's beginning to delve into that they might be challenged with one here of standing firm for Christ and then transitioning into unity and humility in Christ. Let's go to the word and pick up in verse 27. Hear the word of the Lord. 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're 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 that I had, and now hear that I still have. Thanks be to God for his holy and errant and therefore authoritative word. Imagine with me for just a moment a scene It's an older man, maybe in his 80s, and he's walking through a cemetery. There's white crosses everywhere. His family's behind him at not too far of a distance, but as he walks through this cemetery, he's overwhelmed by emotion. He falls on his knees, trembling and weeping, and the scene ends. It's the beginning, some of you will know, of the greatest military movie ever made, Saving Private Ryan. And the scene shifts from there into the story of the rescue of Private Ryan. It was a loosely based true story on a policy that the U.S. Army had that was the lone survivor policy. That if brothers went to war and all of them but one died, the U.S. Army would rescue the last one and bring him home. so as not to devastate the entire family. Well, in this scenario, Private Ryan was the last remaining brother of four brothers. His other three brothers had died, and the U.S. Army sends a band of brothers from the 2nd Ranger Battalion, led by Captain Jack Miller, who's played by Tom Hanks, to go behind enemy lines and rescue this man that they'd never met before, this man, Private Ryan. And they go through some of the most incredible and heinous experiences one could imagine. They lose members of their group, and they finally come across Private Ryan in a small town. They rescue him, but before they're able to get out of the small town, there's a German assault. and virtually every one of them lose their lives. Jack Miller, the leader of the group, is wounded fatally, and before he dies, he grabs a hold of Captain Ryan, and he says to him, looking in his eyes, earn this, earn it. The movie ends, going back to the cemetery. Ryan now has found Captain Miller's grave, and he's speaking to Captain Miller, and he says to him, I've not forgotten the words that you've said. Every day I've tried to live out those words, and he breaks down again. and his wife runs to him and he hugs her and in her ears he says to her, tell me that I've lived a good life. Tell me that I'm a good man. And we watch a scene like that and on the one hand we weep because there's something about it that taps into our souls, that at the end of life we want someone to tell us that we've

been good people, that we've lived good lives. And on the other hand, we weep because we're burdened for what Captain Private Ryan lived through his entire life, carrying the weight of another man's death for his. Having to live a life that was worthy of that death, a life no one could live, having to earn that death or burden for him. And we come to a text like this and we think, is this not what Paul's telling us? Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ? Are we not hearing read over us, earn this gospel, live as if you've earned this gospel and we wanna be found worthy. So what does it mean to live a life worthy of the gospel of Christ? One point tonight, don't get ahead of yourself, three sub points that are really main points. I want us to think about what it means to live as citizens, living as citizens here in verse 27. And then we're gonna break that down into sub points that teach us what that means as we go throughout our sermon. Are we to earn this gospel or are we to respond to a gift that's been given to us? And religion rises and falls on this question, doesn't it? Every other religion says to us that we need to do something in our lives to be found acceptable before God, that if we can do enough, if we can be kind enough, if we can be moral enough, if we can be helpful enough, if we can do justice enough, then at the end, we will have earned it. And God will say, come on in, I accept you. But if God is holy, and any God worth his salt is holy, then that's not an acceptable answer. If God's not holy, then he's just like you and me, and if you've looked in the mirror recently, you have to admit that you are not holy. If you've looked in your life, you have to admit that you are flawed, that you've sinned, that you've fallen short of the perfect standards, that is, unless you're playing dress-up like a child. But you know that won't hold in the end. God is holy and that presents us with a problem because we're sinful. We have sinned against God. We've missed the perfect mark. We've not lived up to the glory of God. We've been unholy. We've been treasonous. We have said to God, I wanna be king. You're not my king. We've been blasphemous. We've said to God, I am God. You're not my God. And so we are in a precarious situation. Holy God, sinful man. And if we're depending on earning it, the game is over. Let me go further with Dr. Irvin's s'mores illustration this morning. I too love a good s'more. And he mentioned as you go near the fire, heat causes you to move away from it, doesn't it? But sometimes you're more stubborn and you push through to get that s'more. And when you come away, you realize that all the hairs on your finger have disappeared. Because fire consumes. And our God is a consuming fire. And when he comes in contact with sin, he can do nothing but destroy it. And the scripture tells us he will not only destroy it at once, but there'll be an eternal conscious experience of his destruction of sin in a place called hell. For all those who have not had their sin dealt with. If earn it is your worldview, then hell is your future. What a wonderful hope though that we have in the gospel of Christ. It's not one among many. It's not that all roads lead to the same place. It's a complete reversal. It's 180. It's completely opposite of this other worldview because the gospel is the good news that God by his grace for our sake made him to be sin who knew no sin so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. The great exchange. that in his active righteousness, that is in his perfect life on earth, his perfect obedience to the law of God, he was holy and he perfectly upheld the holiness of God and his passive righteousness, that is that he went to the cross and took on our shame and took on our sins and took on the wrath of God. He now gives us his righteousness and forgiveness of sins and he takes on our sins. It's the most glorious, wonderful news that we could ever hear. And if you've not yet come to believe this good news, the question for you tonight

right out of the gate is what are you waiting for? Better news? There is no better news. It's not possible to have better news. The only option you have is to suppress the truth that you hear tonight in unrighteousness and exchange the creature for the creation. And when you realize that doesn't work, the only experience you have is despair. And you can push it down and push it down and push it down, but that's your reality this side of eternity, and your reality on the other side is eternal conscious wrath. Or you can flee to Christ. And what he will do is wrap you in his righteous robes like a fireman covering a child and running them through the flame to the other side to safety. Christ will wrap you in his righteous robes and bring you into the presence of his father so that what you'll experience from him will no longer be wrath but only blessing and grace and favor forevermore. What are you waiting for? So what is Paul getting at here then when he says, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ? Well, if we could read it in the Greek, it would literally read something like only worthily of gospel of Christ live. Only worthily of gospel of Christ live. And that adverb worthily is modifying the verb live. And that verb live means to conduct oneself in a certain manner, but it can also mean to live as a citizen. to live as a citizen of a certain locale. Paul will say later on in chapter three, verse 20, that our citizenship is in heaven. He'll use the same word. He's not saying that we're to be those who purchase our citizenship. No, he's saying that we're to be those who have our citizenship purchased for us in Christ Jesus, and as our citizenship is purchased for us in Christ Jesus, then we must live like citizens of another realm. And we're no longer citizens per se only of this world, we're citizens of a new world with a new identity and a new king and it demands us to then live a certain way. What he's saying is, because you are a citizen of heaven in Christ, live like it. Live it out. And citizenship was a massive deal for the church at Philippi. Philippi was known as mini Rome, little Rome. And so most of the people there were citizens, they were Roman citizens, and to be a Roman citizen was to have the core identity in your life. It was hard to be a Roman citizen. Not everybody was a Roman citizen, but for many Rome, that's where they put their stock. That's where they found their worth. It was the core identity of their lives. In fact, Paul, when he's arrested for proclaiming the gospel and for casting out a demon of a young lady and then prohibiting the finances to her slave owners, when he gets out of prison after the earthquake and the jailer and his family come to Christ, the officials send word to him and say, okay, let him go. Get out of the city, but go. And he says, wait now, one second. You treated me improperly. You didn't give me a trial and I'm a Roman citizen. And they think, uh-oh. Roman citizens get a fair trial. And so the officials are forced to go to Paul kind of tucking tail and apologizing and then escorting him out of the city. It was everything to be a Roman citizen. It's where they found their worth and their pride and their identity. Sort of like being a South Carolinian. When I moved here from Tennessee, I thought I was from the South. It's not that far north of here, and it's very south of the Mason-Dixon line, but when I got here, I realized I'm not really a Southerner, at least not in the eyes of South Carolinians, true South Carolinians. And the best I can do is be a Gentile proselyte and hitch my wagons to these South Carolinians and hope they accept me. Christians in Philippi have a new identity, though. It's not that now they are simply Roman citizens, as important as that was, but they are citizens of Christ, citizens of heaven in Christ. It's actually why they're being persecuted. Because as heavenly citizens, they refuse to worship the emperor as Lord. They have a different Lord. And so

they're seen as atheists, that they don't worship the emperor, instead they worship the king. And those who find their core identity in being Romans and worshiping the emperor, hate them, including their brothers and sisters. And so they shun them and they kick them away and they're persecuting them. That's actually what they're going through. They're not just going through suffering of being in this fallen world. They're going through persecution because they refuse to identify mainly with being a Roman citizen. They're identifying with Christ. They're not worshiping the emperor. They're worshiping Christ. And so they're being persecuted. And Paul says, Christ earned your salvation. and you have a new citizenship that's for you. Now live as a citizen who owes him all allegiance and worship him only as king. That's what it means to live a life worthy of the gospel of Christ. It's to recognize that our citizenship is in heaven in Christ and then live as if that's true. Not because we've earned it, but because he earned it for us and brought us into his kingdom as new people in Christ, living as citizens. Well, let's think about how we then live as citizens. And that's where we're gonna go to our three sub points. Living as citizens firstly means standing firm. means standing firm. Says in verse 27, so that whether I come to you or not, 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. To be a citizen of one nation is to understand that if another nation attacks yours, you must defend it. To be a citizen of one nation with certain values means that if the world is at bay, if the world is about to fall to a evil worldview, you must stand up and fight against that evil regime. And Paul understands that as citizens of Christ, we're at war. There is no peacetime. Yes, we're at peace with the Father. Yes, we're at peace with our brothers and sisters in Christ, but we're at war for the rest of our days until Christ returns. We are at war with the world. The world with its worldviews that shift all the time but are wrapped in the ideals of hatred of God and love for self, of love for pleasure at all costs, of living for the lust of my flesh and hating you if you stand against that because you're prohibiting me from maximizing my pleasure. And it wraps it in all kinds of different ways. But Paul knows that we're at war with the world because the world hates God and anyone associated with him. But we're also at war with Satan. Satan is the one who has been plotting our demise from the beginning. He has a PhD in anthropology. He understands mankind. He's been watching for thousands of years. He's been watching you. He understands who you're like and what you're like. He knows your prides and your weaknesses. He knows how to attack you at the right and opportune time and plan your demise. I was at Synod this week and Dr. Stewart and I and Nate Seske and Josh Fleming were sitting on the porch sort of decompressing and debriefing And somehow this topic came up and Dr. Stewart said, if you knew that an enemy had planned your destruction, wouldn't your head be on a swivel? Everywhere you go, you'd be paranoid thinking, is the assassin here? Has he slipped something in? Is he coming to get me? Where is he? And yet Satan prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour, Peter says. Even our own flesh is against us. Loving sin, yearning for pleasure, setting itself against the spirit. And Paul says, we must be ready. We must stand firm. It's a defensive posture, entrenched, unwilling to move. It reminds me of another great movie. You get two movies for the price of one tonight, Braveheart. there we go okay and that great scene towards the end of the movie that the English are trying to overrun the Scots and take over their their land and the Scots have earned their freedom but now they must continue to fight for what that freedom means and they've they've built a front line and the the English are sending in their cavalry and

it's overwhelming horses are and they're galloping towards this front line, and there's no infantry, and there's no cavalry for the Scots. They're just a band of men on a front line, and if they break out of fear, it's over. The whole front line crumbles. And William Wallace is at the front of that line, and he knows that these horses are coming steadily. They're coming ferociously. The men are scared, and he yells, steady, hold, hold. And the men are galloping, and they're coming towards them ferociously, about to burst through the line, and he yells, hold, hold. And they're getting closer, and right at the last minute, Wallace yells, now! And they pick up spears, and the horses bring those Englishmen right to their death. It's a defensive posture. They're standing firm, unwilling to move. As if if they do, the whole thing is lost. The day is lost. And Paul says, if we're gonna stand against the enemies that plot our destruction, we too must stand firm. Firm on the truth of the scripture. Firm on the good news of the gospel. Firm on the convictions that we believe from the scripture. And he says, we don't do it alone. We stand in one spirit with one mind. And he's probably talking here about the Holy Spirit. The spirit that not only saves us, but the spirit that enables us and strengthens us to stand against our enemy, the same spirit that raised Christ from the dead and gives us strength to stand firm against the advances of our enemies. But we also stand with the body of Christ in one mind, in unity with each other. So often in the battle, we think that it's in here. And we fight with one another and we jockey for position. Remember that's happening in the church at Philippi. Taking advantage of Paul being in prison and they're jockeying for position. Or in Rome where they're preaching the gospel and doing that to him. We fight with one another, we gossip, we slander, we bicker with one another, but Paul is saying, no, the enemies are out there and we stand together side by side, striving for the faith of the gospel. That is, striving for the truth of the gospel, the advancement of the gospel to the world. We're in unity in Christ, striving side by side for the faith of the gospel. And here's a body we seek not to defeat one another but to stand firm against the forces of evil outside of us. The Philippian church is starting to crumble a bit. They're dealing actually with conflict, we'll see more later on as we move through this book. And they're dealing with pride, we'll see next week. And they're dealing with disunity, we'll see next week. And they need to know that they have the Spirit's help and the help of brothers and sisters to stand firm. in the midst of the battle. Living as citizens means standing firm. Secondly, living as citizens means being unintimidated. Look at verse 28. And not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation and that from God. It hurts to be rejected, doesn't it? Young people in this room, perhaps that's the deepest hurt you think you can possibly experience on this earth, is to be rejected. that the worst thing that can happen to you is you're scrolling through social media and you're seeing that everyone's gathered somewhere and you didn't get invited. But Paul says, no, it can get a lot worse. You can be slandered. You can be shunned. You can be persecuted for standing up for Christ. You can be thrown in prison and killed for standing up for Christ. Paul says, yes, all of that can happen, but still, you need to not be like a chameleon who fits in at all costs. But if you're gonna stand firm, you must be unintimidated by what the world can throw at you. Because the world, with all its boast and pomp, with all its arrogance, with all its folly and foolishness, with all its pleasure, with all of its intimidating posture, at the end of the day can only prove two points to you. One, their own destruction and two, your own salvation. It's all they can actually do. Even if they kill you, they

prove only to you, they will be destroyed and you will be saved. What good news, Paul says that is. They prove their destruction because their attacks prove that they hate Christ and their hatred of Christ will prove that he will make them his footstool one day. They may stand in the congregation of the wicked now, but they'll be like chaff blown away in the end. And they prove your salvation. Because as you stand firm in Christ, unintimidated, and the word literally has a picture of horses being frightened into a stampede, and the world can kind of do that to us, can't it? It tries to scare us into a panic. But as you stand firm, unintimidated by the world, you prove your love for Christ. And as you prove your love for Christ, he proves his salvation of you. That's both now and forevermore. So don't be afraid. Take courage and recognize this, that your worst case scenario, no matter what they do to your body, your worst case scenario is future glory. Isn't that great news? Your worst case scenario is that you will be with Christ in future glory. And so let that be like titanium in your spine and lift you up and strengthen you that you might stand unintimidated. If you're gonna live as a citizen of the gospel of Christ, you must stand firm, unintimidated. Finally, living as a citizen means suffering. Living as a citizen means suffering. I'm not much of a gift giver. It's probably because I'm self-centered. I don't think about people enough. I don't have time to be thinking about gifts. A friend said to me Friday night, I'm not a gift giver either. I don't have time for all that. I do love gifts though. And if you're a father of daughters here today, Happy Father's Day, you've received love and gifts. If you're a father of sons, you're waiting on that. trusting the Lord will provide by midnight, someday, somehow. But we love gifts, don't we? Gifts bless us. They encourage us. They lift us up. And Paul says here that God has blessed us. He has granted to you. He has graced you. It's the word that he grabs ahold of there, the word for grace. Graced you. He's favored you. He's blessed you. He's granted you with two gifts in this life. One is one that would be obvious to us. He says, for it's been granted to you that for the sake of Christ, and I think he's about to say what he's gonna say at the end, but he shifts and says that not only you believe in him, one is that he's graced us with the gift of belief. Yes, we must put our faith in Christ, but it's he that sends Christ for us and through the power of his Holy Spirit regenerates us so that we may believe. Such a gift of grace to us. But the second, It's more challenging to hear. He's also granted you that you suffer for His sake. When's the last time you thought of suffering as a grace from the Lord, a gift, a blessing to His people? If there's anything that we shrink back from, we're Americans, we're entitled to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, not suffering. Nothing's supposed to be hard for us. We get to have anything we want and be happy all the time. I live to maximize my pleasure and minimize my pain. In fact, we shrink back from those who are suffering because we're worried that we're gonna catch it like a snake by being around them. Paul says, no, I'm suffering. The Philippian church is suffering. In fact, it's a grace from the Lord when you suffer. And here, there's a specific kind of suffering. Again, it's not just the suffering of the fallen world, though that's part of it. It's persecution for loving Christ. They're suffering specific persecution for loving Christ. And Paul says, what do you do when you suffer for Christ? His response is, you're welcome. You thank God and you say, what a gift. And we say, what? I don't think I'll ever get there. Maybe an example will help from one of our heroes, John Calvin, hero of the Reformed faith in the 16th century, mid-16th century, knew something about suffering. He suffered from the loss of his only child shortly after he was born.

His wife died shortly after that. He dealt with all kinds of physical malformities and issues. He had migraines his whole life. But not only so, he was persecuted by his own flock. They came to his door and dragged him out of his house, at least on two occasions, took him to the city square and threatened to kill him. And then they banished him. And then they called him back. And he came. and picked up in the same sermon that he had finished, same sermon series that he'd left off when he left. He knew something about suffering, didn't he? And he has the ability to then speak on that topic, and in his great work, the Institutes of the Christian Religion, he talks about suffering, but he tucks it in a really interesting place. He tucks it right in the section on sanctification. And for Calvin, his view was that if we wanna become more like Christ, which is our desire as believers to be more like Christ our King, if we wanna become more like Christ, then we need to grow in sanctification. If we're to grow in sanctification, there's three steps to some extent. We need to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and meditate upon the future life. That's what Calvin said will help us grow in Christ. We deny ourselves, we take up our cross, we suffer, we take up suffering, and his point was that suffering, he said, weans us from brutish love of this world. It has that kind of effect on us. It lifts our eyes to cry out to God and say, Lord, how long? I want to be with you. I long to be with you. It's actually what Paul has already just said, that to live is Christ, to die is gain. It'd be far better to go be with Christ, but for the progress and joy of the church, he's kept me here. that suffering causes us to look to Christ, that God by his grace uses, he says, the fittest means to draw us back and shake off our sluggishness lest we cleave too tenaciously to that love of the world. In fact, he says, no one has made progress in the school of Christ who does not joyfully await the day of death and final resurrection. That's fascinating, isn't it? Powerful from a man who understood suffering. It's part and parcel of being a Christian, and it fixes our eyes on Christ and causes us to long for heaven. Or maybe let's bring it closer to home. Words of Dr. Ferguson in his commentary on Philippians says, suffering is the friction which polishes our graces. Suffering is the friction which polishes our graces. He goes on, apparently God is prepared to go to any lengths to make us more like his son, And the cross proves that. We can be sure he will stop at nothing to change us. Suffering is but one of his instruments. Painful instrument. But an instrument no less in drawing us more and more to the love of God and the image of Christ. That's why Paul can say in Romans, not only that but we rejoice in our sufferings knowing that suffering produces, produces something, endurance. And endurance produces character and character produces hope and hope does not put us to shame because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit whom he has given to us. Maybe you're struggling with that tonight. You're struggling with suffering this side of heaven. And many of you are struggling with all kinds of forms of suffering that I could never understand or explain. Maybe you're struggling with persecution. You've been rejected for your faith. If you take that stand, you might even be fired. Perhaps not thrown into prison or executed yet, but other areas of persecution that feel painful, no less. Maybe you're struggling with staying strong and standing firm in the conflict. Or maybe you're struggling with receiving from the Lord the gift of suffering. as a gift, or maybe you're crumbling under the weight of an earn it mentality, giving into culture, or afraid of rejection. And the word of God says to you and to me tonight that there's hope and a better way. There's hope in a better way in the good news of Christ, who earned our salvation for us, who stood firm against his and our

enemies, who refused to be intimidated and afraid and scattered away from his obedience in a panic of what Satan might do to him upon that cross, who suffered all the way to death for us, so that we might be citizens of his kingdom. and I'm empowered then by His Holy Spirit to live as citizens and to stand firm, un-intimidated, willing to receive suffering for His sake so that we might become more like Him and bring Him great glory until He returns for us to make us just like His Son. Praise be to God for the hope of the gospel of Christ. Let's pray. Gracious God and most holy Heavenly Father, we do praise you for the gospel of Christ. We confess the ways that we have thought that we must earn your favor, confess the ways that we have given in to the culture at large out of fear or out of acceptance, and we ask that your spirit would enable us to appreciate the gift that you've given us of your son, the Lord Jesus, who has made us citizens of heaven, and then strengthen us through the power of your Holy Spirit to stand firm, to not panic, and to be willing to suffer as we endure the same kind of conflict that Paul endured, the church at Philippi endured, that believers throughout history have endured, until Christ returns for us, and in return he will, and makes us like himself. We pray it all for his glory in Christ's name, amen.