

# “Walk Worthy...”

Philippians 1:15-30

by Pastor Tim Dodson  
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**Philippians 1:15-30** *Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from good will:*

*16 The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; 17 but the latter out of love,*

*knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel. 18 What then? Only [that] in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice. 19 For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, 20 according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. 21 For to me, to live [is] Christ, and to die [is] gain. 22 But if [I] live on in the flesh, this [will mean] fruit from [my] labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. 23 For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, [which is] far better. 24 Nevertheless to remain in the flesh [is] more needful for you. 25 And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith, 26 that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again. 27 Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel, 28 and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God. 29 For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, 30 having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear [is] in me.*

1:15-18

Verse 15 is a rather sad yet stark reality in our greater church world. There can be a lot of different motivations behind our service to God and kingdom, whether you are a pastor or not. Paul’s words herein clearly tell us that such has been a reality from the birth of the church until today. It’s a sad admission, but there are people out there who will do about anything to get a warm body into a pew, or to gain perceived power and prestige through position. Such has nothing to do with building the Kingdom (CAPITAL K) and much to do with building one man’s kingdom (small k).

It seems we are still victims of the American competitive ideal, even in the church. The manifest of this is legion. Some will attempt to water down the gospel into a ‘Jesus light’ version...catering to the fleshly desires of men. This includes issues such as the prosperity doctrine, sexual identity issues, hyper-Calvinism, and modern legalism. Some will go so far as to simply negate scripture and its clear meaning in order to please the listener.

There are even those who will go so far as to lie, slander, and ignore sin and disbelief in order to gain numbers in their churches. In practice, it looks like classic tribal turf wars. But such competition has no place in the church.



So often churches...especially new church plants, are built on the “steal from Peter to give to Paul” methodology...attempting to lure people away from their current church to another with worldly and fleshly aspects, instead of leading the lost to Christ. That method is slower and less attractive to those who are desiring to be the biggest and shiniest. It’s “building on another man’s foundation” which Paul warns us about in Romans 15:20. It’s the same old “power and money” motivation that controls the secular world that we live in today. I know of one church that rebranded themselves as “Adventure Church.” Ya...its an “adventure” alright, but hardly of the stripe that they are painting! Can you imagine selling that concept to Jesus in His gospel travels, or Paul in the establishment of the early church? Maybe we could shout over the yelling of the masses as they attempted to stone him to death... *“Hey Paul! Isn’t this an adventure!”*

Inevitably the results of such endeavors are made manifest in time. James 3:16 reminds us that “wherever there is jealousy and selfish ambition, there you will find disorder and evil of every kind.” This is one of the “dirty little secrets” of the greater church, and a stark reminder that the hearts of men are evil.

Thankfully, there are indeed those who preach the gospel out of ‘good-will’ and a pure heart. The love of Christ and their brethren is their motivator, and God blesses those efforts. The bottom line is that all must be done with the single motivator of love: 1 Corinthians 13:1-5 *“If I could speak all the languages of earth and of angels, but didn’t love others, I would only be a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I understood all of God’s secret plans and possessed all knowledge, and if I had such faith that I could move mountains, but didn’t love others, I would be nothing. If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it; but if I didn’t love others, I would have gained nothing. Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged.”*

Paul the Apostle certainly did not choose the pulpit as a career move. He says he was “appointed” unto such a duty. In 1 Corinthians 9:16-17 Paul says he was “compelled” ...or “under compulsion,” to preach the gospel. So many righteous pastors will effectively tell you that while the common vernacular is “called” into the ministry, they feel they were effectively “dragged.” That doesn’t mean they are now there reluctantly or without passion. It means that there was no belief that the ministry was going to be an “adventure,” or that they will garner power and position by doing so. God clearly states that He “shares His glory with no man.” (Isaiah 42:8)

1:19-20

Paul said “I **know**...” He clearly knew that his current situation...that of incarceration, would not last. He knew he would be delivered from this one way or another...through his release from jail or through the release via death. However, getting out of the situation alive seemed to be less of a priority than finishing well and glorifying God no matter what.

Clearly Paul just wanted to be bold in the faith. He was “all in.” Bringing glory to God was more important than anything else...more than any earthly plans, career, family, possessions, or status. He trusted that the believers in Philippi were praying for him, and he knew that such was not merely an exercise in religious piety, but rather a true release of the power of God in His situation. He understood that even though they were far from him, they were beside him via prayer and the overt presence of the Holy Spirit. He also was able to look back and know that God had truly never failed him or abandoned him. God **would** be faithful! Not necessarily to handle the situation as we personally think things ought to play out, but Paul trusted God...more than he even trusted himself. Paul was ready for whatever God had planned for him.

We must make note in this matter, that Paul is not some super hero. He was just a man...and if history is correct, a slight one at that. He did not count himself as different than us or special in his strength manifest or faith expression. Yet despite any worldly excuses, Paul...and Christ, actually expected *us* all to live with this same sold-out commitment!

What made Paul so sold-out? How come he lived in such a manner and few have followed? There can really be few explanations! Paul clearly never forgot his salvation and what he was redeemed from. He never let go of a thankful heart and spirit. Not only for his salvation, but for those he called his brothers and sisters in this battle. Certainly there were opportunities for him to just “retire” to a warm beach somewhere...someplace not so hard and that offered an easier lifestyle. But it is clear that that was never a consideration in Paul’s life. In Acts 9:6...after meeting Christ on the Damascus road, he said “what do you want me to *do* Lord?” Christ responded and Paul never looked back. For Paul, there was never any retirement plans. That memory kept alive a love for Christ and his church that far superseded anything else. When we fail to walk in same manner, it is because we have forgotten or perhaps never truly appreciated the magnitude of the cross and its ramifications.

The late Jim Elliott took upon himself a venture that many saw as a suicide mission, by going to Ecuador to take the gospel to an often violent tribe called the Waodanis. We all know that he lost his life in the attempt. Yet who can forget his famous quote “*He is no fool who gives what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.*” Some will say he was crazy, yet today one of the men who killed Jim Elliot works to spread the gospel himself, and as a result of Jim’s death there was a massive response in funding and missionary operations around the world. How many are believers today because of Jim Elliot? How many because of Paul? Can there be anything more important?

1:21

For Paul, it was more than a case where his life began and ended with Christ. He was saying that his life *was* Christ! All of it. Every priority, every passion, and every decision. Everything was decided in the light of Christ and kingdom. Christ was the center of all directional pursuits, all decisions, all loves and all passions. Christ was not a *part* of His life, His life was all Jesus! He was wrapped up in Christ and kingdom.

Again, was this just a unique roll in Paul? Or is he and Christ himself expecting the same of us? Is this not in fact true Christianity? Jim Elliot understood what Paul understood, and that is that all of our stuff is just future yard sale merchandise, and every relationship...every earthly desire, interest, hobby, and pleasure will be left behind. For everyone. Why do most of us feel we are excused from this level of faith? Maybe because we erroneously believe that there *are* “levels of faith?”

How would you finish the sentence: “*For me to live is....?*” The honest answer to that correctly establishes whether we have “any other god’s before us,” and whether we truly love Him supremely. For many of us it is “*to live is to get married...to have children...to have a good job that pays well...to know pleasure, comfort, fun, etc.*” We forget that “to seek first the kingdom of God” means a life of greater blessing and joy than we could ever achieve on our own. And yes...it means that I often cannot have everything I want when it comes to life in this world. The sad fact is so many of us simply unwilling to commit to that degree.

1:22-24

Please note that Paul didn’t have a “death wish.” He was not suicidal, though some may find his life rather reckless! But he knew what really mattered and moreover what was waiting on the ‘other side.’ Thus he lived in the light of it.

We don't talk too much about heaven these days. It seems almost child-like and even cliché in our modern world. But we should! It is there we can know complete rest...it is there and then that we will finally be what we were in the garden before the fall. 1Corinthians 13:12 tells us that *"Now we see things imperfectly as in a cloudy mirror, but then we will see everything with perfect clarity. All that I know now is partial and incomplete, but then I will know everything completely, just as God now knows me completely."*

Paul also understood that his "check-out" date was pre-determined. All the bran in the world is not going to change that! So for Paul, he wanted his brief time here...*and it is so brief*, to count for more than just trophies and comfort! While he was on this earth, he wanted to have Godly "fruit" ...and as John put it, "fruit that remains" after he was gone. And again, only lives redeemed will make it through the years and excesses of man. And only that which is "sent ahead" will last...where the moths and rust of time do not destroy! (Matt 6:20)

Indeed, there was a part of Paul that was anxious to "get on with the show." To see what was on the 'other side.' I have no doubt that at times he was undoubtedly tired. I for one can relate. But he also was compelled by his love for a mankind that was wholly lost without the gospel! He wanted to "grab a few more" before he went home. He also loved his spiritual family...they meant a lot to him and he wanted to be there for them too.

1:25-26

How Paul knew this we can't say for sure. But one would strongly suspect...through all we know of Paul, that he simply was given such a reassurance through the present Holy Spirit. Psalms 25:14 reminds us that *"The secret of the Lord is with those who fear Him."* Oddly enough, there seems to be very little "sigh of relief" from Paul, but rather his concern seems to be more for the believers in Philippi that they wouldn't be all bummed out at his death!

1:27

Verses 27-29 is a powerful statement with far reaching ramifications. In the original, these verses are one long sentence. Paul wants the believers in Philippi to live out their lives physically in the gospel of Christ. This is more than "I love Jesus in my heart." This is "I love Him supremely and I'll manifest that love through a changed and committed lifestyle."

We often we seek to operate our Christianity in the realm of the emotion...we say "in the heart." And such a premise has great merit. But we often then fail to connect that "heart" love to a physical manifest. We want to think we can continue to chase the same rainbows as the world and still call ourselves Christian. But for me to accept that as a feasible reality, I would have to emasculate the cross, rendering it powerless to change a person's life.

It's not really a matter of choice, but it is rather an innate aspect of salvation: **saved people change**. That is an absolute fact. More than just being good moral individuals, but rather becoming passionate sold-out bond-slaves of the one who now owns them. Satan's greatest coup is to convince people that faith is merely feelings and tacit church attendance, but that is clearly a lie and many will fail to find eternity with Christ because they adhere to such a premise.

Paul desired to "hear of their affairs." Meaning he desired that their faith would be known out on the streets as well as in the 'proverbial pew.' They should be renowned for their unity, adherence to scripture, as well as their consistent living in Christ. Their parenting, marriages, dating, finances, time priorities...all the aspects of life on this planet.

We all can put on the Jesus mask on Sunday mornings and talk the talk. But does our lives say “Jesus is my everything?” For the “gospel of Jesus Christ” says that I have joined Christ in His death, as well as His resurrection, and I am truly a ‘new creature.’ Does my life say I am a new person? Or am I simply the same old vehicle with a new wax job? Because seldom will handing your neighbor a ‘4-spiritual laws’ track have a deep and lasting effect. 2 Corinthians 3:2 reminds us that “You are our letter, written in our hearts, known and read by all men.” The best literature in the world is no substitute for your own life!

Paul dispelled any ideas that we can just sit back and such will mysteriously happen. We have the strength and ability through the Holy Spirit...this is true, but we are reminded the reality of the faith dictates an effort on our part! A “striving” for the faith. A “breaking a sweat” because we love Jesus. This word is where we get our word “athlete.” This is not done alone, but in the unity of a faith community...a “striving together.”

1:28-30

Fearlessness in the face of those who stand against you and the true gospel is a testimony against them. If you are bold in your stand upon God’s grace and His gospel transformation, it is also proof of your true salvation. However...such does not promise a pain free life! We *must* get rid of this pop religious idea that walking with Christ is barrier against difficulty and trials! We live in a fallen world with disease and pain. Christ says we will “walk through the valleys of shadow and death, but *He will walk with us*” And moreover, just because you are in the right, does not mean that these enemies of the cross cannot hurt you. Paul suffered for his testimony, just as you and I will if we are truly ‘out there’ and not hiding our light under a basket!

Paul knew conflict. Christian...*so will you!* It is ours to share in both the glory and blessings of Christ, *as well as His pain*. The disciples embraced this concept and literally felt they were not worthy of sharing such! For them it was a ‘badge of honor.’

Some of us need to “fill up” with the Spirit, and “man up” in the faith! We need to embrace all the “armor of the faith” listed in Ephesians 6, and get into the battle. Remember...your exit is predetermined! Until then, you are indestructible! We are on the same field of battle, so stand with your brothers and sisters, as they will stand with you! Paul knew that God and the believers in Philippi were with Him. For Paul, he was “all in.” Paul intended to do his very best to “walk worthy of the gospel...”