

Three attributes our lives need to build the kingdom of God.

SCRIPTURE TEXT: PHILIPPIANS 1:27-30 (ESV)

²⁷ *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,* 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.* ²⁹ *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,* ³⁰ *engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.*

“Let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ”

I want to point out two words as we begin this message. Manner and worthy. Manner means, “how you live in relation to other people.” Worthy means, “of comparable value.”

A worthy manner of life is one that adds comparable value to others in our community.

In the Roman empire, a person’s manner of life (or conduct) pointed to their citizenship. A good citizen brought honor to the political body or group it belonged. A good citizen willingly submitted skills, talents, energy and efforts to the empire and it was never forced.

Philippi had such high regard for the Roman Empire that it dictated clothing, names and the common language they spoke. In other words, their manner of life was transformed because they identified with Rome.

In our text, Paul urged the church to transfer what they knew as Roman citizen into their identity as followers of Jesus. Paul encouraged them to live like they were a valuable citizen of the kingdom of God. To function outside our kingdom value is to weaken the credibility of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Here’s what that means. Integrity matters. Morality matters. Reverence for God matters. Uncompromising biblical truth matters. Loving people to the cross of Jesus Christ matters. The rest of our text describes four attributes of the person who lives with kingdom value.

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#1 - Stand firm

Philippi had Roman soldiers walking through their city on patrol. They understood the military parallels of standing firm and holding one's ground.

A few years ago, we spent about a week in Washington DC. One of our stops brought us to *The Tomb of the Unknown Soldier*. The tomb has been guarded every minute of the past 80 years. The soldiers who guard the tomb have very clear responsibilities. They don't stop guarding the tomb when the weather is poor. They spend 8 hours getting their uniform ready for the next patrol. The soldiers prioritize their manner of life to honoring the soldiers this tomb represents.

Our challenge is to prioritize our lives to function as a valuable citizen of the kingdom of God. To be something different than a valuable citizen makes us one of two things, either we are not a citizen of God's kingdom or we are trapped in our own sin and need to repent.

How do we prioritize our lives to stand firm?

1. **Cling to clear biblical teaching without compromise.** Did you know that 53% of Christians do not read their Bibles? Did you know 18% of evangelicals believe the Bible is not 100% true. In the same group, 19% believe there are multiple ways to get to heaven.
2. **Lovingly hold your ground in matters of biblical truth and holiness.**
3. **Avoid teaching personal convictions as doctrine.**
4. **Extend grace to those who do not yet know Jesus as Savior and Lord.**

A guard at the Tomb goes through extensive training to guarantee he/she performs the right procedures while on duty. That guard can repeat the same task over and over until they know it will be performed correctly every time.

Our walk with Jesus isn't that predictable. Even though we know the right thing to do, we find ourselves doing the wrong thing. Paul admitted his guilt in this area, and we should also. **SAY "I'M GUILTY"** The only way a believer can stand firm in our manner of life is through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 6:10-13 says, *"Be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly*

places. Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm.”

I hope you realize that unless you intentionally stand firm, you will fall. If you don't expect the enemy to attack you and push you down, you will become lazy in your stand and fall on your own.

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#2 – Maintain the proper attitude

When we discover our value within the kingdom of God, our priorities begin to change. When we stand firm on biblical truths, we have the responsibility to maintain the proper attitude.

Inside the church, it means unity and harmony. Do your best to go in the same direction according to the Bible. It amazes me how quickly churches can lose momentum because one or two people break unity.

Outside the church, it means we ought to avoid becoming spiritually arrogant and extend grace and love to those around us. Often, Christians expect others to conform to our thought patterns and our routines long before they know who Jesus is.

#3 – Be a team player

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Striving side by side translates “to compete in a contest”.

One of my favorite movies is *Miracle*, the story of the 1980 US hockey team. After the first day of team workouts, the coach announced his team. When questioned about his logic, he said "I don't need the best players, I just need the right players."

In a church context, the right players are the ones who have correctly identified the opponent and have engaged in the competition.

Application points

- Does your manner of life weaken or strengthen the gospel of Jesus Christ?
- Do you understand your value within the kingdom of God?
- What adjustments do you need to make so you can be a better player on God's team?