

Philippians 1:27-30

Our Call to a Gospel Centered Life

Our Ultimate Priority – Live the Gospel!

“But this is the ONE main thing I want to convey to you.” That’s what Paul says in Philippians 1:27. ONE main thing; the most important thing: “truly live the Gospel”. There is nothing more pressing than this. There is no greater priority.

Here is how it reads in the ESV Bible: “Only let your manner of life be worthy of Gospel of Christ (ESV). The NIV puts it like this: “Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ.” “Whatever happens” means “no matter what”; which means “this is priority number one for your life.”

But how can we ever be worthy of the Gospel? Isn’t the Gospel about how we are all “unworthy”; yet still loved, forgiven and accepted by God’s grace? So, right away, we need to clear up some confusion about this verse. Then we can feel its full power.

Paul uses a very important word in Philippians 1:27. It is a special word that means: “citizen”. More precisely it means “the life of a free man or woman in a free Roman colony.” This is an unexpected twist, and difficult to translate into the English – especially because Paul takes this word and pairs it with the word “Gospel.” There is no doubt that Paul used this word intentionally to get their attention – for Philippi was a proud city whose residents had special status as citizens of Rome. Even though they lived far away from Rome, their city was a special colony of Rome. For the Philippians, this was huge. It was what gave them their sense of identity. It shaped their thinking and behavior. It shaped their sense of community with one another. At Philippi they made a really big deal about living as good citizens of Rome!

Paul captures all of that in this verse, but then turns it – by applying it to the Gospel of Christ. The Philippians certainly knew what Paul was getting at. Now, Paul implies, everything has changed! Now you must live from a new identity – your life is no longer to be defined by being a citizen of Rome. Instead, your life is to be defined by the amazing truth of the Gospel of Jesus Christ! Now, you have a new identity – a Gospel shaped identity. This literally changes your life. This must now give shape to all your thinking, your relationships and your mission in this life. This is priority number one for your life. Now, above all else, we must live the Gospel!

Building a Gospel Centered Life.

God is calling us to a Gospel centered life. This is what it means to live the Gospel. But to do this, first we must each be strong in the message of the Gospel. When Paul tells them to stand strong for the “faith of the Gospel,” he is referring to the message of the Gospel; the “content” of the Gospel message. This is the center of everything in Christian life and ministry. The Gospel is above all a message – an announcement about what God has done (and is doing) in Christ. The only way we can ever “live” the Gospel, is to deeply learn the message of the Gospel and how it is to shape our lives.

Those whose have come into relationship with Christ through the Gospel share something profound and powerful with one another. We are each partners in the grace of God (Phil. 1:7). This is what we call the “fellowship of the Gospel” (Phil 1:5), and it is something that is far deeper than what we usually mean by the word “community.” It is our shared salvation and shared life in Christ. So, living a Gospel centered life also means growing deeper in this fellowship of the gospel. This is why Paul asks the Philippians to stand together in unity as one. This is the fellowship of the Gospel. This is another key part of what it means to live in line with the truth of the Gospel in our world.

There is one other aspect of a Gospel centered life, which is highlighted in other verses of Philippians – this is the “hands on” work of the Gospel (1:12; 2:22; 4:3). To live the Gospel also means that we must work, in hands on practical ways, to impact our world for Christ’s truth and Kingdom.

The Three Core Commitments of River West Church

So, now you know why priority number one at River West Church is to live the Gospel. And we do this by developing Gospel centered life and ministry. This is why we are asking every member of River West Church to join us in living out these three core commitments of Gospel centered life and ministry:

- 1) We will learn, live, and share the message of the Gospel
- 2) We will grow deeper in our fellowship with Christ and with fellow believers in Christ – this is the fellowship of the Gospel
- 3) We will do the “hands on” work of the Gospel in our broken world

We will live out these three core commitments of Gospel centered life and ministry. We will do this both as individual followers of Christ, and together in relationship with one another, as we stand united in Christ, and join together in ministry for the message, the fellowship, and the work of the Gospel in our broken world.

At River West, we believe it is time to build. We don’t mean build a building – we mean build gospel centered lives and ministry. This is priority number one. As this happens, we will change, and by the grace of Christ, we will change the world.