

“Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.”  
Philippians 1:27

# The Unseen Watcher

## A Study of Philippians: Philippians 1:27-30

I sometimes enjoy not being seen.

I think every parent is like that sometimes. There have been times when I have just watched my son interacting with others or even playing by himself. It is revealing because we as parents are able to see what our children do when we are not around.

My wife and I have tried to encourage our son to be much in prayer, but I was not really sure how much was sinking in until recently. He is only six and we were all at home. He had gone back into his room and was playing. I heard him talking so I quietly crept back there and realized that he was praying. Let's just say I got a little emotional.

Have you ever had someone surprise you in a good way with what they did when they thought you were not looking? How did it impact you?

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Why does it bring up such “heart-warming” feelings when someone does this? What does it say about the person?

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You are who you are when no one else is around. Many people have a good presentation. They are able to stand strong in the crowd and others seek to emulate their character, thinking that they have it all together. Some of those people are great when others are looking, but fall to pieces when they are alone. It may be because of sin, heartache, stress, frustration, and a host of other things, but they are different in the dark.

Some are just hypocrites, while others are truly hurting.

Have you known someone to be strong when people are looking, but you knew they were hurting? Why do we put on a mask like that?

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As Paul writes to the Philippians, he comes to the end of chapter one with this very thing in mind. He does not want them to be a church that is putting on a show when others are looking. He wants them to be who they are no matter who is looking.

Read chapter 1:27-30.

This passage is stacked full with imperatives or commands. He even starts off with a command for the Philippians to “conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.” We have come to realize that Paul is very picky with his words and this passage is no different.

“Conduct” carries with it the idea of living as a citizen or free man. What is interesting is that the city of Philippi is proud of the citizenship to Rome. Being a citizen of Rome allows for privileges and opportunities that other folk do not get.

*"For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ."  
Philippians 3:20*

It is like having a membership to a country club. Membership really does have its privileges.

They were a proud city and here Paul plays off their pride in this word. Paul wants them live as citizens in Philippi and as freemen, but also to remember they have a citizenship in heaven as he mentions later in 3:20. Paul desires for them to live out their "membership" to Rome in such a way that it reflects their dual "membership" of heaven.

How can a Christian live out his citizenship here as well as in heaven? What would it look like?

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Voting is one way, but there are many other ways. Paul gives a condition to this conduct. He essentially says, "Live the gospel of Christ no matter who is watching." It is the whole idea of being who you are even though no one is taking notice.

Why do we like people to take notice of us?

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Paul does not stop here. He throws out several other commands.

Stand Firm - Paul calls this church to stand firm or join together into one unit. Stand side by side so that you can stand against the enemy. This is a picture of the Roman guard standing side by side ready for battle. It is a military term which conveys cohesiveness.

Strive Together – Paul here turns to the athletic arena. He used a term which denotes teamwork and getting sweaty together for the work for the gospel, working as a team to accomplish the goal.

What principles can be learned from Paul's use of this military term and this athletic term?

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Much could be learned from this, but one thing is true. Inherent in both the athletic setting and the military setting is accountability. If I am standing next to a soldier and he begins to grow lax, I am going to call him out because it is not just his life that will be affected. In athletics, if something is done well, we applaud and give encouragement. Paul is all about community and teamwork when it comes to spreading the gospel.

We saw that earlier when he was rejoicing that the gospel was being spread even though people were doing it out of false motives.

Paul then gives them encouragement – I think.

Take a look at verses 28-30. Paul tells them that people will have issues when they stand up for what is right. People will consider them foolish because they will be persecuted and "destroyed," but Paul explains that the church's testimony will proclaim their salvation. Here is what Paul is saying:

"Don't be intimidated by the world. They think you are fools and your faith will bring persecution, but I am telling you that your faith brings salvation. That's a promise of God!"

“...in no way alarmed by your opponents--which is a sign of destruction for them, but of salvation for you, and that too, from God. For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me .”

Philippians 1:28-30

Maybe Paul was remembering Jesus' words on the mount. "Blessed are those who are persecuted. Rejoice, for your reward is in heaven."

Why is it good to keep our focus on heaven's reward even when no one is looking?

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We can easily lose heart and Paul knows this as he continues. He tells the church that they have been granted not just to believe, but also to suffer. We see the word "granted" and think happy thoughts till we see the word "suffer." "Granted" sounds like we are getting something good, but suffering is not a good thing in most minds.

Jesus thinks differently. Jesus reminds us that our reward is in heaven and we are in good company with the saints when we are persecuted. In fact, I can see Paul getting excited at this point in his writing. It is almost as if he cannot contain himself and is overjoyed that he has the privilege to suffer because he ends off with a reminder of his suffering. It is almost as if he is saying:

"I can't wait till you get to experience the stuff that I have been through, it is so great and I am excited about what God has in store. This suffering stuff is hard work, but if I can do it, you can."

Can you?

There is a key to this. Maybe you picked up on it. Paul is not writing to a person, but a church. The "you's" in this passage are not singular. They are plural. This Christian life was not meant to be lived in solitude. It's a community thing. Paul wants this church to come together for Christ.

We are in this together no matter who is looking.

It will take locking arms with fellow believers and marching out to proclaim the gospel.

I am glad I do not have to do it alone. Aren't you?

What do you need to do in response to this lesson?

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