

March 8/9, 2008 - Due to a family medical emergency, Pastor Mark Kremer was unable to preach this weekend. A video of Bryan Clark's January 25/26, 2003 message was played during the worship service. This is the transcript from that message.

January 25/26, 2003

*Experiencing Joy: A Study in Philippians*

## **Live Worthy of the Gospel**

**Philippians 1:27-30**

Pastor Bryan Clark

Several years ago I had a phone call from a telemarketer who was telling me about this great investment opportunity. He went on and on about how if I put this much money in, this is what would happen, and how several people had become millionaires. It all sounded quite impressive. I asked him some questions and basically it was just a sure thing—it was almost guaranteed. So I asked him what I thought was a logical question. I said, “If this is true, why are you still a telemarketer and not a millionaire?” He just hung up—didn’t even answer my question.

But we understand that to be a logical question. I mean, if what a person says isn’t backed up by how a person lives, something is not working here. I received a resume this week from someone interested in one of our positions. It had a cover letter with it, and I was reading the cover letter. This person used to be a senior pastor somewhere, and the church had so many problems that he just couldn’t solve them. He and his family got hurt, so he left the ministry. They went back to the marketplace for awhile, and now they’re wanting to get back into ministry. I looked at the resume and under “Strengths” it listed “strong communicator, creative problem-solver.” I thought, *Something’s not lining up here*. The whole reason he got out of the ministry is because he couldn’t solve the problems. I’m not sure that’s a strength.

Think about what we’re about as a church. In how we live, there has to be some evidence to line up with what we say is true. Think about the message that we proclaim. We proclaim the message of the gospel—that God became flesh, died on a cross for the sins of the world, was buried, rose again, and offers eternal life to those who place their trust in Him.

But when we say eternal life we’re not just talking about a little makeover. We’re not talking about some sort of self-help. We’re talking about an absolutely radical change. It’s so radical that Jesus said it means to be *born again*—that’s as radical as it gets. Paul, when writing to the Corinthians, says, “You become a new creation in Christ.” So radical that the old nature is eradicated and the very nature of Christ comes within us. That’s now the core of who we are. So radical that the very Spirit of God, the God of the universe, comes and lives inside of us.

Now that’s a pretty radical message. The only way for that message to have credibility is if our lives line up with what we say is true. If we’re going to say, “This is true” and we have been that radically changed, then we ought to live pretty radically-changed lives. Or what we say just simply doesn’t line up with how we live.

Can you imagine going to someone at school, or out in the marketplace or in your neighborhood, and saying to them, “Wouldn’t you like to be like me? Wouldn’t you like to have my attitude? Wouldn’t you like to have my joy? Wouldn’t you like to have what I have?” I mean, that is what we’re doing, isn’t it? As messengers of the gospel, that’s what

we're saying. We're saying, "This is what I have. This is how I've been radically changed. Wouldn't you be interested?" It's a little sobering.

When Paul wrote to the Corinthians in his second letter, in essence he was saying, "You are a *letter* sent from God. The truth is written on your heart. And before most people will ever read this book, they'll read you. They'll read you and they'll want to know: Is this real? Is this true? Is this something I really might want? They'll read you long before they read this."

That's exactly what Paul talks about in the last section of Philippians 1. Just a quick review of the chapter so far. Paul opened by calling himself a slave of Jesus Christ, and we're learning what that really means. In verses 3-11, Paul celebrated the life-changing power of Jesus Christ. His heart was filled with joy because he was looking at these Philippian believers and realizing that they had truly believed and their lives had radically changed. There was evidence of that and it just reconfirmed in his heart, *This is real; this is true!* And he reminded us that if God started this work in us, He's going to be faithful to complete it.

In verses 12-26 he went on, then, to say that because of the power of the gospel, that's his mission in life. That's what he lives for; that's what matters to him. He's really not living for his own agenda or his own convenience or ease or comfort. Whatever he experiences—whatever life throws his way—he processes it all through this grid of advancing the gospel. And as long as the gospel goes forward, that's what matters to him.

In the last section of chapter 1, verses 27-30, he's going to ask of the Philippian believers (and of us today) that we would be willing to commit ourselves to that same mission. He says in verse 27: "Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ." The word "only" may seem like a fairly ordinary word in English, and we might skip right by it. But it's a very important word. It's in the emphatic part of the sentence, which just means it is the focal point. It means it is very important. The word "only" means "of most importance; above all else." So the sentence actually opens very strongly, where Paul is saying, "Most importantly, above all else, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel." In other words, if we are saying this is true, then we'd better live like it is true. Gandhi once said, "Show me redeemed lives and I might be inclined to believe your redeemer." That's fair. That's the same thing Paul is saying.

The word "conduct" is an interesting Greek word that shows up twice in the New Testament—once here and once in the book of Acts. It literally means to be a citizen. You remember, Philippi was a colony of Rome. What that meant was that the people of Philippi were considered to be Roman citizens, which gave them all the benefits of being a citizen of Rome. It affected their ability to buy and sell property. It affected their tax status and their legal rights. Think about when Paul was arrested and thrown in prison in Acts chapter 16. As soon as they found out he was a Roman citizen they immediately released him, because Roman citizens had certain rights that other people didn't have.

Because this was true, there was a saying in Philippi that the citizens would say to one another. It was: "Live worthy." What they meant was: because we are citizens of Rome, let's live like it. Let's live worthy of that citizenship. Well, Paul is taking that phrase and he's attaching it here when he says, "live like a citizen" (only not of Rome, but a citizen of heaven). In other words, conduct ourselves in a way that lines up with what we say is true. The word "worthy" is a word that literally means weigh. Imagine an old fashioned scale, and on one side you have the weight of the gospel, which really means the truth of what we say

the gospel is all about; and on the other side is our life, which should balance out with that. Our lives should be as radical as our message for our message to have any credibility.

Think about Paul and Silas. When they went to Philippi, because they were proclaiming this life-changing message, they were beaten and thrown in prison. While in prison, they praised God and sang hymns. Whatever was going on there, it so impacted the rest of the prison mates, that when this earthquake came and the doors of the prison flew open so they could all escape, none of them did! These weren't exactly the model citizens—these were people in prison—but not one of them escaped. And when the Philippian jailer came back and realized nobody had escaped, what did he say? He said, “What must I do to be saved?” In other words, he was saying, “Whatever you have...that's what I want.” Because he saw conduct that was worthy of the gospel.

Several years ago we had a family in our Welcome Center, and one of the questions people typically get asked is, “What brought you to Lincoln Berean?” This wife told an interesting little story. I don't remember if she was a volunteer in the classroom or if she was a para educator, but she was in the classroom of one of our middle schools here in town on a fairly regular basis. She began to watch the students and she noticed there was a group of young people who were radically different from the others. She said one day she went home and told her husband, “I don't know where those young people go to church, but that's where *we're* going to go.” And it was here. She told us that story herself. These were middle school students conducting themselves in a manner worthy of the gospel—teaching us a lesson. That is what Paul means.

“Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.” You know, it *does* matter how we live. It matters how we live at school. It matters how we live in the neighborhood. It matters how we live in the marketplace. Because people are watching. I realize with a church this size, that I probably rarely go into a store or a restaurant or a gas station where somebody isn't checking me out. They're checking me out, wanting to know: does he practice what he preaches? That's fair. But what that does to me is remind me that wherever I go, whatever I do, that I need to be careful how I live. Because I need to live worthy of the message that I proclaim.

But that isn't just true of me. It's true of you. I'll guarantee you people are watching. People are checking you out. People are reading “your letter” and they're wanting to know: Is this real? Is this authentic? Is this something I might want? So we conduct ourselves worthy of the gospel. It does matter how you behave out in that parking lot, because people are checking you out. It matters how you act out in that hallway. It matters how you treat the people you're sitting next to. It matters how you act at school and in the marketplace. Wherever it is, it matters... because people are watching. We have a very powerful message and our lives better live up to what we say is true.

Well, Paul gets a little bit more specific about what he means by this. He says, “...so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm.” I think when he says “standing firm” he's meaning that you are conducting yourself in a manner worthy of the gospel. It means you are not compromising; you're holding ground.

“In one spirit” is a statement of unity. I think he's talking there about the Holy Spirit. If you look at Philippians 4 verse 1, he makes almost the exact same statement, and clearly it's in reference there to the Holy Spirit. What he's saying is the same thing that he says in

Ephesians 4:1: that all those who trust Jesus as Savior have one spirit. Our theology says that when you trust Jesus as Savior, the Spirit of God comes and dwells in you. The same spirit that dwells in you is the same spirit that dwells in me.

Therefore, our theology *demand*s unity. It makes no sense that God's Spirit can't get along with God's Spirit. He's not schizophrenic—He doesn't have that problem. He clearly gets along with Himself. Therefore, if there is any disunity or conflict between brothers and sisters in Christ, there is only one explanation. It is because someone is walking according to the flesh and not walking by the Spirit. Don't give me "personality conflicts"—that's just a bunch of baloney. It boils down to the fact that if we have the Spirit of God within us, then we should be united together with others who have that same spirit. Any conflict between us as brothers and sisters in Christ is totally unacceptable. It is not conduct worthy of the gospel. It is living inconsistent with what we say we believe is true.

The reality is, if you can think of one person—*one person*—where you know there is conflict between you and that person, it is your responsibility to do everything within your power to reconcile that relationship. That means you probably will have to die to yourself. That means you probably will have to be willing to be treated unfairly. That means you probably will have to take your own pride and ego and stuff it under the table for the cause of the gospel. That's what he's saying—that you are willing to do whatever is necessary. If you're unwilling to do that, then what you're saying is, "My own selfishness is more important than the message of the gospel." Conduct yourself worthy of the gospel.

The second thing he says is that it's not only in one spirit, but with "one mind." That's the Greek word for psychic—where we get our word psychology. It includes our thinking, but it also includes our emotions and our will. I think what we would say in our culture is that it means everybody's on the same page or everybody's reading out of the same play book—everybody's going the same direction. To have one mind really means that everybody is headed toward the same goal for the same reason.

When it says "one mind," whose mind do you think it's talking about? Well, of course, it's the mind of the pastor. No, it's not my mind; it's not your mind. It's the mind of Christ. Whatever is in the mind of Christ is what should be in our mind. Whatever is His agenda should be our agenda. So stop and think about this for a minute. What do you suppose, right now this very minute, is in the mind of Christ? Do you suppose it's your convenience? Your comfort? Your ease? Your own personal preferences? Your opinions? Probably not. Within the mind of Christ today is advancing the gospel. That's what He gave His life for. Therefore, that's what should be foremost in our minds. That's what matters. We need to quit getting sidetracked by all kinds of little personal stuff and get our eyes fixed on the goal.

Today is the Super Bowl and even though each player has a different role, they all understand they've got to be running the same play at the same time for the same goal or they aren't going to win.

We had a beautiful example of that in this church in the example of Ernest Lott. Ernest grew old more gracefully than any person I've ever known. If I could grow old half as gracefully as he did, I would be thrilled. Many times I sat down with Ernest and we chatted. A lot of things changed over Ernest's years—a *lot* of things changed. Ernest wasn't real crazy about some of the music and about some of the other changes. But do you know what he was passionate about? He was passionate about the gospel. What he saw was more and more people coming to faith in Christ and he was 100% supportive of the ministry of the church.

He used to go upstairs to the College Worship Hour and just take it all in, and he'd come down with a big smile on his face. Not because he loved the music, because frankly he didn't. He'd go downstairs to the Jr. High and the High School classes. Every once in awhile I'd see him coming up those stairs with a big smile on his face. Not because he was thrilled with the music. He wasn't going to dash to the Christian bookstore and buy that CD. But what he saw was that the gospel was being advanced and lives were being changed. That is the mission of the church. And that's what mattered to Ernest.

That's what Paul is talking about. He says "with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel." "Striving together" is a Greek word from which we get our English word "athlete." It's a compound word which means not just athlete, which is competition, but athlete *together*—in other words: team. It means that we together as a team are competing or striving together for what? For the faith of the gospel.

We are a team. How you conduct yourself out there dramatically affects how people think of us. When you go to a restaurant and you get very poor service, you don't say, "I'm never going to have that waiter again." You say, "I'm never going to that restaurant again." When you go to a store and you get treated very poorly, you don't say, "I'm never going to go to that cashier again." You say, "I'm never going to that store again." Well, the same thing is true here. How you conduct yourself, how I conduct myself, dramatically affects how we together as a team accomplish the mission.

Lou Holtz, the former football coach at Notre Dame, once said, "The freedom to do your own thing ends when you have obligations and responsibilities. If you want to fail yourself, you can. But you cannot do your own thing if you have responsibilities to team members." He's right about that. We *are* a team. And how people respond to what we have to offer is dramatically affected by how every one of us lives our lives on a day-to-day basis.

Paul goes on in verse 28 defining more what he means to conduct ourselves worthy of the gospel. He says, "...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." That word "alarm" is an interesting word. This is the only place it shows up in the New Testament. It's a Greek word that was used to describe a horse stampeding away. A horse is a flight animal. It's a prey animal, which means the very first instinct of a horse is to run. That's the word used here. When we conduct ourselves worthy of the gospel, it is going to bring the opponent to the surface. That's a fact. And our first instinct is to flee—to run—to pull back and compromise. Sometimes that means just going back to being like everybody else so they leave us alone. Sometimes it means pulling back into our little cocoon or our little fortress so that nobody upsets us.

But it's pretty hard to accomplish the mission of the gospel if we're pulled back into our fortress. So he says, "You know, it's going to happen. The opposition is going to rear its ugly head. Don't turn and run. Stand there." He says in verse 28 that that's a sign. In other words, he's saying that it separates (points the finger) at those who truly are Christians, from those who are headed for destruction.

One of the big problems we have in our country is that everybody thinks they're a Christian. Probably 90% of the people in our country consider themselves to be Christians. The problem is, an overwhelming majority of those don't really represent the truth of the gospel. But the people out there don't know that. So they often look at those who call themselves Christians and they say, "Well, I don't want that." So what needs to happen is

that there needs to be a separation from those who are authentic and those who are just pretending. And typically that's going to happen in opposition; it's going to happen when we struggle. That's going to start to separate out the real from the pretend. And that's exactly what he says. That's necessary. But for that to happen, we have to stay on the front lines. We have to stand there.

You say, "I don't think I can do that." You're right—you can't. That's why the end of the verse says, "...and that too, from God." Grammatically, that goes back to the beginning of the sentence, which means it's God who's going to give you what you need to stand and turn and flee. God's going to give you that strength. What's going to demonstrate the difference between those who have God and those who don't is what God can do to help you conduct yourself in a manner worthy of the gospel.

I realize it's hard out there in the trenches. And our tendency is to pull away—to pull back with people who are Christians. But we can't accomplish the mission doing that. Can you name three non-believers you are intentionally building a relationship with in order to lead them to Christ? I'm not asking about three unbelievers that you *know*. But three that you are actually targeting to build a relationship with in order to lead to Christ. Can you name three? Two? One? Most Christians can't even name one. We're just kind of out there duking it out and then we pull back into our little cocoon. That's what Paul is talking about when he says, "You've got to stay out there. You've got to stay out there and conduct yourself worthy of the gospel."

Verse 29: "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." That word "granted" is a form of the word "grace." The grace of God is that we believe. In addition to that, not only do we believe, but we're called to suffer for His sake.

Jesus was very clear about this. When Jesus walked this earth he was perfect in every way—perfect in His love, perfect in His compassion, perfect in His goodness, perfect in His kindness. And what did they do to Him? They despised Him; they rejected Him; they crucified Him. And Jesus said in Matthew chapter 5, "If you're going to be like Me, they're going to persecute you because they persecuted Me. They're going to reject you because they rejected Me." He said, "You're the light of the world; but men prefer darkness rather than light—they aren't going to like it."

We have to understand that part of our calling is not only to believe, but it's to suffer—to stand in the trenches. It's to represent Christ to a lost and dying world. This goes back to our imagery last week: If I think I'm on a cruise ship, then I'm going to wonder, *Why are people shooting at me? I'm just out for a cruise here.* But if I understand I'm on a battleship, I expect to get shot at. I expect it and I'm prepared for it. Paul says to expect it, "Just the way I suffered when I was with you in Philippi" and the way he's suffering now in Rome.

We have a powerful message—absolutely life changing. But the only way for that message to be credible is if we have lives that give evidence of that radical change. There has to be something radically different *in us* that can only be explained by God.

We are a *letter*. Most of the people out there aren't going to read the Bible until they "read" us. It matters very much how we live.

And we are a *team*. If you go out and do not conduct yourself in a manner worthy of the gospel, it affects us all and our ability to accomplish the mission. We've got to work together. That's why we have to be of one spirit. If there is one person you have conflict with, that's unacceptable. You need to do everything in your power to deal with it, no matter what that means.

We need to be of *one mind*. We really need to be focused together on what this is about. It's not about me. It's not about you. It's not about our opinions and preferences. It's about advancing the gospel.

If you want a church where you're just going to be left alone, where you can come and hide, where you can sit in the pew and feel comfortable and warm and fuzzy and then go home, you need to know this isn't the place for you. Because we're going to come after you. We're going to push. We're going to squeeze. We're going to do everything we can to help you to become what God has called you to be. We're going to ask you to sacrifice. We're going to ask you to change. We're going to ask you to be inconvenienced. All for one reason—for the sake of the gospel—that we are of one mind. That's why we're here.

We need to stay out on the front lines and not pull back. We cannot run and hide. We have to understand we've been called not only to believe, but to suffer for His sake. That's what we're about; that's our calling. He suffered for us; now we're going to suffer for Him.

That's what it means to conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel.

*Father, we are thankful that your Word is true. We're thankful that Jesus came and died on a cross that we might have life. Lord, we recognize that not only are we privileged to believe, but we are called to conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of that message. But our words have no credibility if our lives don't match what we say we believe. Lord, help us to understand what that means. If there is one person who has a conflict with a fellow believer, may that be reconciled before the sun sets yet this day. Lord, help us to have one mind. Help us to die to ourselves and live for that which matters to you. Help us to stand on the front lines and to pay the price to represent you to the world. In Jesus' name, Amen.*



**Study Questions**  
*Experiencing Joy: A Study in Philippians*  
**Live Worthy of the Gospel**  
**Philippians 1:27-30**  
Pastor Bryan Clark

**Opening Discussion**

1. When someone is trying to convince you of something, what gives him/her credibility and what causes him/her to lose credibility?
2. What is necessary for Christians to have credibility in the eyes of unbelievers in our culture, and what causes Christians to lose credibility? What are the areas we need to improve on to be credible with the unbelievers around us?
3. How effective will we be in accomplishing the mission if our message doesn't ring true because our lives don't line up with our message?

**Bible Study**

1. Read Philippians 1:1-26. Review the highlights of what you've learned so far in Philippians.
2. The word "only" in 1:27 means of first importance or above all. What is of first importance?

How has Paul modeled this according to 1:12-26?

How does this fit with his description of himself as a "slave of Christ"?

3. The word "conduct" in 1:27 is a word that means to be a citizen. The people of Philippi had a saying: "live worthy." This was in reference to living worthy as a colony of Rome. What does it mean to live worthy as a citizen of heaven?

What behavior would you consider to be unworthy of the gospel? Why?

4. In what ways will you have to die to your own preferences, desires, comforts and opinions to live worthy of the gospel?

What is the difference between expecting life to be fair and living worthy of the gospel?

5. What does it mean for all Christians to be "of one mind, striving together"? The term translated "striving together" is the word from which we get our word "athlete." In other words, we're teammates in the mission of advancing the gospel. Does this just mean people in our local church? Does this just mean people we agree with?

What is the implication of the statement "of one mind, striving together" concerning our relationship to all other Christians?

6. As a general rule, is the church in our community (all believers) characterized by “being of one mind, striving together”? Why or why not?

What must each of us do to “conduct ourselves worthy of the gospel of Jesus Christ”?

What about our local church here at LBC?

7. What should we expect as believers according to 1:29,30?

How does this line up with Peter’s words in I Peter 1:6,7?

8. Go back and review how Paul and Silas modeled this attitude in Philippi from Acts 16. What might they have done differently if their motives were to avoid suffering?

What things are we guilty of doing to avoid suffering for the gospel at times?

Does suffering sound like it is something optional for those conducting themselves worthy of the gospel? Why or why not?

## **Application**

1. Is there anything in your life that is not “worthy of the gospel” that needs to change? What can you do to change that behavior? Share this area with your group and ask them to hold you accountable for the necessary change.
2. What practical things can you do to promote unity in the local church as well as the church in our community?
3. Are there things you are doing to avoid suffering for Christ’s sake? To conduct yourself worthy of the gospel, you must accept that such conduct includes suffering. What does this mean to you? Where do you expect to suffer?
4. Pray for one another that we might each truly conduct ourselves worthy of the gospel.