

Walk Worthy of the Gospel

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[0 : 00] So yeah, for the Independence weekend, we got July 4th coming up this, what is it, Friday, Thursday? Friday, and we're going to have a celebration of our own or a cookout.

This won't be on Friday though, so keep that in mind, even though we're calling it an Independence weekend, Independence Day. It'll be on Sunday, Sunday night, so if you'd like to join us, if you would just, there's a sign-up sheet on the bulletin board, just let us know you're coming, and that way we can properly prepare.

But we'd love to see you there. The family discipleship, so we are having the Turner family come in next week, or I think they'll probably arrive sometime this coming week.

And so we put a few things on the calendar to do with them on Monday night, so not this coming Monday, but Monday a week from this coming Monday.

on the 7th, we're going to have a night to focus on family discipleship. And what that will look like, they're going to talk about having a vision for your family.

[1 : 07] And talk a little bit about it, but then it'll be somewhat interactive, in which we'll take the opportunity for families to craft at least a first draft of a family vision for your family.

And then we'll talk about implementing that. And it's important when you are leading any kind of group, right?

Think about a business or a church. You need to have a plan and a vision for all the details, right? A big-picture vision for how all the details will be accomplished. And so it's no different when it comes to leading a family.

So we'd love to see you there, especially if you're in the throes of raising a family right now. And then the next night, we're going to leverage the Turner family's musical expertise.

And we're going to just have a night of praise here, open to everybody. If you'd like to come and just sing, and then just enjoy singing to the Lord.

[2 : 17] And then there will be opportunities for just sharing about what God has done in your life. And hopefully that will be an encouragement to all of us. Let's see.

Another thing, we've done in the past, we've done an outreach at the fair, both the Clark County Fair and the Champaign County Fair.

We don't have plans to do that this year. But I heard from another pastor that there's opportunities through Child Evangelism Fellowship.

Has anybody heard of that group? They've been around for quite a while. And they have a tent. I think it's more than a booth, a whole tent that they do at different fairs around our area, including at the Clark County Fair.

Now, I found the website with a little bit of details, but not a lot, and a phone number to call. And I'd like to see if there was anybody in our church who would be willing to kind of lead that up, call them up and say, hey, how could our church be involved?

[3 : 23] And then see what it looks like, and then maybe arrange for our church to have a day where we help them volunteer at their tent, or something like that.

And so if anybody would be willing to kind of head that up, take lead on that, please come see me and let me know, and we'll see if we can make that as something that we make available to everybody here at the church.

Let's see. A few other things. Okay, so I want to pitch a few things from our church library. I've seen some people check some things out.

I'm excited about that. I want to make sure that our library gets used. But one of the books that is both available to check out, but also to purchase, or if it's your birthday this month, to take as a gift, is this one called The Mystery.

This is by actually a man that I just got to know over the last few years, Joel Fink, out in South Dakota, pastor for many years. And he wrote this book about the mystery. What in the world is the

mystery? It sounds what? Mysterious, right?

[4 : 28] The Bible talks about, or Paul specifically in several of his letters, mentions the mystery, and specifically the mystery of Christ.

And so he gets into what that is all about and how what God has given to us in this, what we call age of grace, is different from what was given to the Jews under the law, but also different kind of in a future sense, because the Jews under the law were given a whole bunch of prophets who foretold things that were to come for the nation of Israel.

But as we read in Paul's letters, he talks about the work that God has done in us, for us, was a mystery. A mystery.

Don't apply to us. So this topic of understanding the mystery, I think, can be really helpful. Another book we have here is a children's book. Looks really nice, right? And this is called Zoe's Hiding Place.

It says, and this is part of a series called Good News for Little Hearts. Zoe's Hiding Place. When you are anxious. And so these are just books that, and we have a ton of kids' books, that are related to, you know, how to be a Christian as a little kid.

[6 : 19] How to, you know, things about virtue and character. But also, what do you do when you're anxious? And speaking to that topic for little kids.

I'm actually going to take this. We've got some little kids up here. They can, you guys can borrow that. Or read it during the service, whatever.

Because I might not be interesting enough. The other thing we have over at the library, in the library, is we have a bunch of tracts, gospel tracts. And gospel tracts are just a great way to get the gospel out, the gospel message.

And so this is one that I've had for a long time. I don't even know if they make these anymore, but I have a bunch that I bought years ago. And the picture on the front of this tract is a picture of some bulking bully smacking a Christian in the face.

And the title is, God Loves You and Has a Wonderful Plan for Your Life. And the idea is that, you know what, when you become a Christian, that doesn't mean that your life is going to be full of, without any conflict.

[7 : 37] In fact, that's going to be part of our message this morning, which is why I brought this one up. Being a Christian doesn't mean that your life is easier in every way.

But it does have a meaning in salvation when we look to eternal things. Our salvation as Christians is more looking towards eternity.

And so when you choose to become a Christian, it's not because it's going to make your life all completely better. But it does, but choosing to become a Christian does get you what?

What matters most, and that's eternal life. So you can find tracks of all kinds of topics, from creation science and apologetics, to just straight gospel message about how to gain eternal life.

And grab some of those, and feel free to pass them out, or leave them in different places around town. Any other announcements?

[8 : 33] I think that's all I've got before we take a quick break, and send the kids off to their class. Anything else that I'm forgetting? Okay.

Well, everybody, go ahead and stand up on your feet, say hi to your neighbor, meet somebody new that you might see, and then we'll get started here in just a couple minutes. Kids, you can head out to your class.

You look like a man with a mission when you came in through the door.

Yeah, I can't remember what I had. I had some kind of mission. Okay. Okay. Dad to pay attention.

Let me know. Thank you.

Thank you.

[10 : 16] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Is it coming through? Is it coming through? All right. All right, everybody. Have a seat.

[12 : 30] I know, it's my fault. I give you an inch and you take a mile. It's good. It's good.

We got plenty of time. You know, I keep forgetting to assign somebody to read the scripture passage.

Maybe I can get a volunteer. Maybe I can get a volunteer. I can get a volunteer. I can get a volunteer. I can get a volunteer. I can get a volunteer. You want to do it? Okay, wow. Volunteer. All right, Shiloh, come on up. I got a volunteer. Thank you. We'll go ahead and turn the pulpit mic on to, I got a volunteer here to read our passage this morning. But we're in Philippians chapter 1, for those of you who are visiting. And so you can open up your Bibles to Philippians chapter 1, and Shiloh's going to read that passage for us. [13:37] By the way, sorry. Oh, you've got it from the bulletin. You know exactly what you're doing. I don't even have to tell you. And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith.

That your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again. 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.

All right.

Thank you, Shiloh. So we are, again, in the book of Philippians, reading this letter written by the Apostle Paul from, not a jail cell, but from imprisonment, from chains.

Not even necessarily that he's in chains. It could be. I think some have said that it's possible he could have been chained to someone else. But it's, at least metaphorically, he is in a, under house arrest is actually what we find in other places and other parts of the scripture.

[15:09] That he was living in a home, but his freedom was limited because he was waiting on a trial. Because of the accusations that had come against him from the Jews.

This morning, what we're going to look at, this passage kind of looks at a few different things. But what we have been looking at the last couple of weeks is Paul has been describing his desire to be released.

But that that's a, even though that's a possibility, it's not a foregone conclusion. That he may not make it out of here. He may never be released. He may ultimately end up being put to death because of the accusations against him.

But he said, as we talked about last week, whether I'm released to live is Christ. If I'm released, I'm going to live for Christ. And if I die, that is gain for me.

But what is better, he says, is that if I was released, I could come to you and I could continue to bear fruit in my ministry. And so, as he transitions from this subject, he's going to get into talking about the fruit that he's looking for.

[16:26] What his expectations are from the Philippians. And also, looking at this subject of persecution. You know, he's being persecuted for his faith.

But it's not just Paul the Apostle that is persecuted. It's many, if not most, of the Christians at that time, including the Philippians.

And so, he's going to address that. The first thing I want to look at in this first verse here, in verse 25, he says, And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of the faith.

That your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again. He's saying, I'm confident. I really know, he says.

That's fairly confident language. I know that I shall remain, and I think he means remain on the earth. He's not going to die in this condition.

[17:30] And he's going to be able to continue his ministry with the Philippians and with others. Like we talked about last week, it's not totally clear whether he saw the Philippians again. But evidence seems to point that after his two years of imprisonment, it looks like he was released for a time, probably about five years.

And traveled around some and had some more ministry before he was finally arrested again for the last and final time. Before, according to early church history, was put to death in that last imprisonment.

But I want to ask this question. Why is he so confident that he's going to get out? And the question is, does he know something? Did the Lord reveal something to him? Well, it doesn't seem that that's the case, right?

Because he's saying, this whole time he's been saying, well, I may get out, I may not. Either way, you know, I can rejoice because if I die, I'm going to be with the Lord.

If I don't, I get to bear more fruit to you. But I'm pretty confident that I'll get out of here and I'll be able to bear more fruit because that's better for you. And so where does his optimism come from?

[18 : 47] I don't think it is from any kind of special revelation that he had. He was just confident in the Lord and really looking to the Lord's eternal work in his life.

The things that he knew for sure, for sure. And we see this throughout all of Paul's life. You kind of get the, you might get the impression because Paul did receive revelation from the Lord.

He did miracles on behalf of the Lord. It seemed like he was super tight with God, right? And you might imagine that he had this daily conversation with the Lord on what he's going to do today, what he's going to do tomorrow and how things are going to work out.

But, you know, if you read carefully through the scriptures and Paul's journeys and all the things that happened, that actually is not the case. Paul did receive certain instruction from the Lord. He received visions and dreams and revelation. And he did have a big picture mission, right, to take the gospel to the Gentiles. And there were points in his ministry, for example, I think of he was traveling on his second missionary journey.

[19 : 58] And he was headed in the direction of Asia. I can't remember where specifically. But he received a dream. And there was a man from Macedonia and said, hey, come to preach to us. And he took that as direction from the Lord to change the trajectory of his missionary journey to go to Macedonia.

Which, by the way, is where the Philippians are. They're in the region of Macedonia. But Paul wasn't getting this constant revelation from the Lord. He was making good judgments about what he was going to do based on a big picture mission.

And I think we can kind of take some comfort in that. And that, you know, I think a lot of times Christians are looking for what they're going to do in their lives. Big decisions maybe that they need to make.

And are looking for that very specific instruction from the Lord. But a lot of times all we're working with is just the big picture of what God wants for our lives. The principles that he looks for us to follow.

And really the details are up to us. And we can take comfort that God has the big picture handled, right? And we're just going to live faithful lives making good decisions based on that kind of big picture framework.

[21 : 20] So he's pretty confident that he's going to get out. And this is what he's looking forward to. This is verse 25 again. He says, And continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith.

There's two things that he's looking forward to in being able to minister again to the Philippians. And to other churches, I'm sure. And that was their progress in the faith.

And I think about that as growth in Christian maturity. And the other is joy of faith. And this speaks again to the theme of Philippians.

You see that word, joy, rejoice, joyful, all throughout Philippians. Because this is a foundational aspect of the Christian life.

Is rejoicing in the Lord. Not getting our joy through the things that we do, through the things that we accomplish for the Lord.

[22 : 26] But getting our joy in the things and the primary thing that God did for us. And that's really the grounding, the foundation upon which we grow in spiritual maturity.

It's the foundation of taking joy in what God has accomplished for us. Then he gets into the next verse.

Where he talks about a little bit of the specifics of what he's looking for from these Philippians. You know, in many of Paul's letters, you find kind of two halves almost.

The first half, he talks about what we call Christian doctrine. Truths about what Christ accomplished for us as the church, the body of Christ.

And then the second half, he gets into more practical matters. How we ought to live the Christian life practically. In this letter, we see the same thing. But there's not quite the clear delineation between the first half of the letter and the second half.

[23 : 40] We see him talking about what Christ has done. And then how we ought to live kind of meandering throughout the entire letter. And so in verse 27 here, he gets into some of the practical outworkings of the Christian life.

And he says this. He uses that word only.

And, you know, it's maybe not a word that we would always use in this context. But the word only really means, we could probably translate it regardless.

Or whatever happens. So he just talked about, hey, I expect to get out and come to you. But regardless, whatever happens, whether that happens or it doesn't happen, these are the things that I would love to see from you.

The fruit that I would like to see. And here's what he says. That your conduct would be worthy of the gospel of Christ.

[25 : 03] Now, to some people, here's what that phrase sounds like. It sounds like there are things that you need to do, things that you need to do to conduct yourself in order to make yourself worthy of being a Christian.

That's how some people might read this. And that is wrong. That's not what Paul is saying. And there's actually a few kind of Greek words that we'll look at that will make it even more abundantly clear that that's not what he's getting at.

That word worthy, first we'll look at that, is actually a word that means suitable or appropriate. And so only let your conduct be appropriate or suitable of the gospel of Christ.

The other word is that word conduct. Some translations say manner of life. I'm trying to think of, oh, I've got it written down here.

Your conversation is the King James, which sounds just like your speech. But in Old English, conversation had to do with not just your speech, but also your behavior.

[26 : 23] And then in some translations, it will use that term behavior. And so, but that word conduct is not just about behavior.

The Greek word, and let me see if I'm going to try to pronounce this, and I might fail, but that doesn't matter, right? Is politi, oh boy, politioumi, politioumi.

And so sometimes when you read Greek words, it doesn't mean anything to you. But sometimes you can recognize, right, words or parts of the word that sound familiar.

And so with that word, politioumi, what's a word that kind of sounds familiar to us? Political, politics. And it's a word that actually relates to the state or a city.

And what this word actually means, in a very literal sense, is to be a citizen. Or to behave as a citizen.

[27 : 26] Or to act like a citizen. This would have been a familiar term to the Philippians. Because they actually, the city of Philippi, was a city as part of, an official part of the Roman Empire.

So all the citizens of Philippi were citizens of Rome. Now, Rome had conquered many parts of Asia. And some of them were, they were part of Rome.

They were under the auspices of Rome. But they, the people of those cities did not have Roman citizenship. Even just because you were part of the Roman Empire, didn't mean that you were an official Roman city.

But Philippi was one of those cities. And so if you were a Roman, this term would have been used to say, Hey, if you are a Roman, act like one.

Act like a Roman citizen. And that, I believe, is what Paul is getting at here with the Philippians.

[28 : 30] Our conduct, our behavior as Christians, ought to suit, ought to be appropriate to our station in life.

It ought to suit our creed. The creed of what? What is our creed? It is the gospel of Jesus Christ. That Jesus Christ died for our sins.

And then the gospel goes on also to talk about all the benefits that Jesus bled and died for our benefit. So it's the station that we have as believers and the privileges that come with it.

If I were to paraphrase this based on kind of these unique Greek words, I would paraphrase this sentence or this phrase in this way. Let your behavior as a citizen of heaven be suitable to match the creed that you entrusted yourself to.

And, you know, that idea of living a life based on your citizenship is actually something Paul speaks to later on in this letter.

[29 : 47] If you just flip your page over, one or two pages, you'll see in Philippians 3.20, Paul's talking about how Christians ought to live. And he makes mention. He says, you know what?

Our citizenship is where? It's in heaven. We are citizens of heaven. And we ought to live as if that's the case.

Not that our Christianity, not that our citizenship is based on how we live. Our citizenship of heaven, our position with God is based on our faith.

We have what we might call a birthright because we were born again to a new life with God. And so think about a, you might think about a prince, right?

We still, you know, there's not as much monarchy today, but we still have some monarchy in the world today. But you have someone who is a prince by privilege of what?

[30 : 56] Their birth, right? And you are a prince. His station as a prince is not determined by how he conducts himself, right?

It is his birthright. It was assigned to him. But he ought to conduct himself as a prince because of the station in his life.

It actually makes me think of some drama that we have seen over the years when it comes to the British monarchy, right? And so we have today, today we have King Charles, right?

King Charles, what is it, the third? King Charles, what is it, the third?

He's a prince. He's a prince. Whereas his brother has been in the news over the years because of his rejection of the expected conduct and duties that is expected of him as a prince.

[32 : 24] And so as Christians, we're given this station. We're given this position that we have in Christ. Through faith alone, we have that birthright.

And we are expected, as citizens of heaven, as children of God, as those who are seated with the King of Kings in heavenly places. That's how the Bible describes us as believers.

We are seated with him in heavenly places. We are part of the royal family. And so we ought to live that out.

We ought to live according to our station. We ought to conduct ourselves as dearly loved children of God ought to live. To act like those who are seated with Christ in heavenly places.

To honor our Savior and our King in all that we do. And even to emulate, right, our King in both the way that we think and in the way that we conduct ourselves.

[33 : 27] In fact, chapter 2 of Philippians is going to be all about emulating our King. He continues on in this verse 27.

And he talks about some specifics regarding conduct. And some specifics of what he wants to see from the Philippians. He says, I want you to stand.

Stand for the faith. And does he want them to stand alone? Each individually. Well, that's important, right?

We ought to stand alone if there's nobody else. In fact, we just sang the song. I've decided to follow Jesus. What if nobody comes with me? Am I going to turn back because nobody's coming with me? No, if I have to walk the path alone, I will. But what Paul's looking for is he wants a unity of the faith among believers. Unity of the Spirit being of one mind.

[34 : 35] Striving not alone, but together for the faith. To share the gospel abroad and not just to share it, but also to live it out in how we conduct our lives.

To encourage one another. To live for the Lord day in and day out. Verse 28, he says, He starts to transition to talking about adversaries.

And who is he talking about? Well, I think it becomes clear as we get to the end of this chapter that he's talking about persecution and suffering for the sake of the gospel.

So adversaries are those who are opposing Christians. And he's saying, Hey, don't be terrified.

That's a word that means frightened. It might be a word used to describe how a horse is startled or frightened by a noise.

And really, I think what he's getting at is about remaining calm and peaceful. And he says that your response, how a Christian responds to being persecuted for the sake of the gospel, is actually a means of evidence.

[36 : 03] He uses my version here to the New King James, uses the word proof. And he says it's proof in two ways. He says, Which to them, he's talking about unbelievers, to the world, to the wicked, which is to them a proof of perdition.

Perdition is just a word that means destruction. But to you of salvation, and that is from God. And so when Christians are persecuted, maligned, mocked, ridiculed, subjugated, caused to suffer in whatever way because of their faith, and they don't react like many in the world might, we see this among, I actually think about what happened back in 2020.

There was some, at least perceived, injustice. This whole Black Lives Matter movement, right? And what was the response? Was it peaceful?

No, there was rioting in the streets, setting buildings and cars on fire. Violence against individuals. Destroying businesses. Is that the kind of thing that God would expect Christians to do if you are maligned, if you are cheated?

Even if you are tortured and killed, Christians are tortured and killed. Does God expect Christians to react by rioting in the streets? No.

[37 : 44] Not at all. In fact, we'll get in just a second to what God's expectations are. But when Christians are persecuted and they respond in a way of peace and maintaining their integrity and keeping order when it comes to the government and the justice system, that is evidence that there's something going on here.

One, it's evidence he speaks to of perdition. The wicked will be destroyed. And that that destruction will be totally deserved.

And that it's evidence, when it comes to the Christian, that they will be saved from their destruction. And that that salvation will be made, it will be worthwhile, right?

Because Christians are what? Looking, we're not focused on the here and now as much. Though we have responsibilities in the here and now. We have things that we must accomplish.

But our primary focus is on eternal things. Looking towards the heavens. Looking to our future with God. And so, now, because of the language here, some people might take this wrong and apply it wrongly.

[39 : 12] And look at how they respond to persecution. And say, well, if I respond to persecution wrongly, if I respond without the kind of peace and order and goodwill that the Bible indicates that we ought to, then maybe that's proof that I'm not really a Christian.

Right? Because here it talks about proof of your salvation. But that's not what this is, that's not what this was saying. This is not saying you need to look at your response to persecution and use that as a means of evidence for your salvation.

What is the evidence for our salvation? With one, that Jesus died for us. He shed his blood for us.

And two, we just mix our faith with that. And that's it. That's it. And so, there is no required evidence beyond that.

But I think one of the ways that we could read this that might make this a little bit clearer is, he says, Don't be terrified by your adversaries, which, when it comes to them, your adversaries, is a proof of perdition.

[40 : 26] But when it comes to you, it is a proof of salvation. And that, from God. You know, there is coming a day of perdition, of destruction, in which God will judge all men.

And like any court, there will be evidence submitted, whether you are innocent or guilty.

And I think about Paul's day and the generations that came after. And there will be Romans, those who were guilty of collecting these Christians, rounding them up for the Colosseum or whatever other way of persecuting them.

And why did they round up these Christians? Is it because they were rioting in the streets? No. Was it because the Christians were verbally abusing the Roman soldiers constantly?

No, that wasn't the reason. Was it because the Christians were committed to an uprising, committing acts of violence to try to thwart the Roman Empire?

[41 : 39] No. That didn't really happen either. The primary reason that the Christians were persecuted by the Romans was because the Christians refused to worship their gods.

They had one god that they would worship and him alone. And they weren't willing to bow down to do all these different rituals regarding the false gods of the Romans.

It's also because the Christians rejected many of the sinful practices of the Romans, the temple prostitution and other sinful things that were just part of a way of life of the Gentiles, just like it is today, right?

Those who are not Christians, who don't have a commitment to the Lord, they don't have a commitment to what is right and good and true. And so when somebody stands up and refuses to do the wrong things, refuses to worship the false gods, it can annoy people, right?

They don't like that. Why are you so different? Is there something wrong? Are you saying that there's something wrong with what I'm doing? And people get mad. They get angry.

[42 : 58] And so it leads to persecution. I think of specific examples that we've seen over the last few years of when it comes to this whole thing of bakers and baking cakes for homosexual weddings or same-sex weddings.

And, you know, those people who had that same-sex wedding and asked a Christian baker to bake them a wedding cake. And the baker just politely refused, no, that undermines my faith, my convictions, and I'm not going to celebrate a wedding that I consider unnatural and unordered. And that couple or those people or maybe a group, a broader group, is going to sue that Christian for what purpose?

Well, in order to destroy their livelihood, to destroy their business, to get back at them as a way to get back at them. Instead of just what?

going and finding somebody else who might make a cake for them, right? And why are they persecuting them? It's because of their love for the truth, their commitment to purity, Christian purity.

[44 : 31] And so that action, right, that persecution will become evidence one day in that final judgment in that court. One among many evidences that, hey, someone who was committed to goodness and truth and purity, you know, you spent part of your life anyway persecuting them.

And so this is proof of your perdition and God's justice in your destruction. And what is the reason why Christians should be able to have peace anyway when we're being persecuted and to respond in a peaceful way?

Well, again, it's because our eyes are not focused solely on the things of this world, on the temporary, on just trying to find comfort and peace in this life.

But our eyes are on eternal things. And so though we may suffer a little bit and in the grand scheme of things, it is just a little.

God is the one who is the caretaker of our souls. And he has planned a great salvation for us. And not just a salvation, like a one-time thing, but an entire eternity, a blessing that we get to enjoy forever with him.

[46 : 00] In fact, a blessing so amazing, it says in 1 Corinthians 2, 9, that no eye has seen and no ear has heard, nor has it even entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love him.

And so, that hope that we have for the future can give us courage and also peace when people come against us. And so, this persecution that Paul has experienced, he's turning back to the Philippians and saying, hey, you maybe have already experienced this and will likely experience it in the future.

And so, in verse 29, he speaks to that and he says, for to you, it has been granted on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for his sake.

Having the same conflict which you saw in me and now here is in me. He said, you've seen my suffering, you've seen my persecution, you've heard it in my letters, I'm talking about it, and you know what?

It's not just for me, it's also for you. In fact, he uses this word, for to you, it has been granted. I forget what the Greek word is, but that word granted is this as if a gift.

[47 : 20] You've received this gift. Not only the gift of faith in Jesus Christ, but also the gift of suffering for him.

What a perspective. And you know, in some countries, the suffering, the persecution is intense. Many times, people's lives are on the line, even like it was back then.

In this country, usually our lives are not on the line. Sometimes, I remember a story back five years ago where some young men were sharing the gospel in a neighborhood, I think it was a pretty rough neighborhood, and I think that's where they grew up, in a rough neighborhood, sharing the gospel with people.

And somebody didn't like what they were saying and pulled out a weapon. I think they came back later and executed both of them because of their sharing of the gospel.

But, you know, we might suffer things, you might get passed up for a promotion at work because your boss isn't a Christian and he doesn't really like Christians and doesn't like the stand that you take for morality or whatever it might be.

[48 : 33] You might be mocked or ridiculed, cheated. You know, we use the word canceled today, canceled because you are a Christian. And usually, it happens all the more often, right, the bolder

you are to speak up, to be a witness for the gospel.

And so, it has been granted as a gift for us to believe on the name of Jesus, to believe in the gospel, and also comes with another gift, a gift to suffer for him.

So we shouldn't be surprised, right, when it happens. In fact, we might call it an occupational hazard being a Christian. Christian. It's just part of what it means to be a Christian.

Now, I want to address one thing because some have used this. It talks about being granted to believe on him.

And so, there are some out there who teach that, well, God has only, Jesus only died for some people, not everybody, and he only grants faith to believe to some people.

[49 : 41] And, is that what this is saying? Not at all. You know what the Bible teaches? Is that faith, the faith to believe, is granted to everyone.

The faith to believe is granted to everyone. Christianity is about a faith. And that faith offer is given and set before everyone. In fact, in Romans 10, verse 8, Paul speaks to this explicitly.

He says this about the righteousness that comes through faith. Right, this is the faith of Christianity. It's a righteousness that we receive by believing. Romans 10, 8 says this, but what does it, that's the righteousness of faith, say?

And here's what it says. The word is near you. It's in your mouth and it's in your heart. That is the word of faith that we preach.

That if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised him from the dead, you will be saved. There is a word of faith that's the gospel message that is made available to all.

[50 : 51] It's not something that's way up in the heavens that you have to go up and climb for. It's not something that's down in the abyss and this is what Paul speaks to in the same passage that you have to go down and journey to the center of the earth to find that faith.

The faith is right there. It's made available to everyone. It's not hidden from some people and revealed to others. It's made available to all and all you have to do is confess with your mouth.

Just with your mouth, confess the Lord Jesus. Put your faith and trust in him. The gospel is for all. And so, what should our response be when it comes to persecution?

And we'll end with this. You know, we actually have a very clear distinction when it comes to religions. Christianity and then Islam, I think about.

Christians are persecuted all over the world. In fact, if you try to add up the numbers, and I know it's probably hard to do, but most people would say there is more persecution of Christians across the whole world than there is of any other religion.

[51 : 57] And maybe that's because primarily there are more Christians than other religions. But there are persecutions of other types of religions as well.

But what is a common response when, for example, someone decides to offend a Muslim by, like, drawing a picture of Mohammed, right?

You've seen that in the news. What is a very common response? What can you expect? You can expect violence to break out on the streets. You can expect acts of terrorism.

You can expect angry mobs and violence when somebody offends a Christian in some kind of way, which, by the way, happens a lot.

In fact, I think it happens more to Christians. One, because people know they can get away with it. There's not the kind of fear, right? You don't want to offend a Muslim because they might go after you.

[53 : 01] But everybody pretty much knows, right, you can offend a Christian all day long and they're probably not going to do anything about it. That's what people know. And so they feel emboldened to do so.

And this is, here's some scriptures that speak to how a Christian should respond. Not like, not like many of the Muslims do.

And again, it's not all Muslims, we realize that, but it is something that is common enough that it does make people afraid. But we suffer a lot of times in silence, and it doesn't have to be completely quiet, but we model our Savior, right?

Who, like a sheep before his shears, the Bible says that, I think it's Isaiah, it says, was silent in the face of his suffering. But Romans 12, 14, Paul says this.

He says what? Bless those who persecute you. Bless and do not curse. When we are persecuted, we don't curse, we don't try to get vengeance on those people, not ourselves, anyway.

[54 : 15] We don't curse them, but we bless them. In 1 Corinthians 4, verse 12, Paul says this, hey, being reviled by others, what's our response?

We bless. Being persecuted, we endure. We just suffer long. We're patient in suffering. Being defamed, he says, we entreat.

And so, there's something that we can do. We can say, hey, you shouldn't do that. That's not fair. It's okay to protest against persecution, but we do it in an orderly manner and in a peaceful way. And then he finishes off that verse with this, we have been made as the filth of the world, the off-scouring of all things until now. People, some people really don't like Christianity because they see it as kind of weak.

It's like a weak sauce religion. And people like strength. And that's why, actually, a lot of people are drawn to Islam because they see it as a religion of strength because of the, because they don't allow people to offend them without some kind of retribution.

[55 : 30] But even our Savior, right, in the Gospels, said this, both in Matthew and I'll quote from Luke, Luke 6, 27. He said this, And so, how we respond to when people come against us as Christians makes a difference.

Not only in our lives, it's something that will grow us in a spiritual way. A thousand years from now, in heaven, we'll look back at the times that we were persecuted and we'll be grateful because of how it grew us, of what it did in us, of the work that it accomplished in us.

But also, the way we respond is evidence to the world, right, because they see there's something different about these Christians. Their hope is not in temporal things, in their comfort, in their safety now, but they put all of their hope and all their trust in things that are eternal.

Maybe I should consider looking into that myself. Amen? So, keep that in mind when things happen to us. People are watching.

Let's pray. And then I'd like to sing that song again, I Have Decided to Follow Jesus. Father, we love you. Thank you for your word and helping us to understand it.

[57 : 05] We ask that regardless of what happens in our lives, persecution or not, that we would be faithful in serving you, both sharing the gospel with those around us, but also just living the Christian life faithfully to honor you as members of your royal family, to live up to the kind of life that you intend for us to live, and also to be a witness to others in how we carry ourselves under persecution and suffering when people hate us, that they would see the light of Christ in us and maybe consider that gospel for themselves.

We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen.