

**Pursue:
Pursue Christ
Philippians 1:12-30**

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Text Introduction:

Philippians is sometimes called the “Book of Joy.” In the letter Paul challenged the Philippians to discover that joy is found in Christ in spite of the circumstances of life. Paul’s message is certainly refreshing in light of his circumstances as a prisoner. His testimony is a powerful one when we consider his circumstances. The question to raise is “Why, the joy?” Paul’s answer lies in his commitment to Christ. In the book of Philippians Paul challenges us with at least three commitments that should be part of every believer’s life. In essence, we need to understand that if we are going to have joy we need to be committed to the things of Christ. For Paul, that meant a commitment to **be like Christ**, to **know Christ**, and to **dwell on the things of Christ**.

We see in this letter a life-long pursuit to follow Christ. As we begin this New Year, that will be our focus—Pursue Christ.

Text: ¹² Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually advanced the gospel, ¹³ so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard, and to everyone else, that my imprisonment is because I am in Christ. ¹⁴ Most of the brothers have gained confidence in the Lord from my imprisonment and dare even more to speak the word fearlessly. ¹⁵ To be sure, some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of good will. ¹⁶ These preach out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel; ¹⁷ the others proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, thinking that they will cause me trouble in my imprisonment. ¹⁸ What does it matter? Only that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is proclaimed, and in this I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice ¹⁹ because I know this will lead to my salvation through your prayers and help from the Spirit of Jesus Christ. ²⁰ My eager expectation and hope is that I will not be ashamed about anything, but that now as always, with all courage, Christ will be highly honored in my body, whether by life or by death.

²¹ For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. ²² Now if I live on in the flesh, this means fruitful work for me; and I don’t know which one I should choose. ²³ I am torn between the two. I long to depart and be with Christ—which is far better— ²⁴ but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for your sake. ²⁵ Since I am persuaded of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, ²⁶ so that, because of my coming to you again, your boasting in Christ Jesus may abound.

²⁷ Just one thing: As citizens of heaven, live your life worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or am absent, I will hear about you that you are standing firm in one spirit, in one accord, contending together for the faith of the gospel, ²⁸ not being frightened in any way by your opponents. This is a sign of destruction for them, but of your salvation—and this is from God. ²⁹ For it has been granted to you on Christ’s behalf not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him, ³⁰ since you are engaged in the same struggle that you saw I had and now hear that I have.

Introduction: We all are pursuing something or someone? If you doubt that or don't know what you are pursuing, let me challenge you to think about two questions. Where do you spend your time? Where do you spend your money?

We have grown accustomed in the last year plus in praying, "This one thing." We will continue that. That's why my eyes were drawn to the first phrase of verse 27 where we read, "Just one thing." Other translations read, "Only." That's the idea. Above all else that you do, make sure you do this.

Just One Thing: Live your life worthy of the Gospel of Christ.

Why?

We are citizens of Heaven.

Eugene Peterson, author of *The Message*, wrote: "We are people who spend our lives going some place, going to God, and whose path for getting there is the way, Jesus Christ. We realize that 'this world is not our home' and set out for 'the Father's house.'"

So, we should live like that!

What?

What is it to "live worthy of the Gospel of Christ?"

- Reflected in Paul's prayer for them. (1: 9-11)
- Reflected in Paul's testimony (1:12-26)
- Reflected in Paul's expectations of them (1:27-28)

In summary, this is . . .

Personal.

A Priority.

To be done with Perseverance.

Just One More Thing:

Being citizens of Heaven and therefore living worthy of the Gospel will put you in conflict with the world.

Nik Ripken said, "Perhaps the question should not be: 'Why are others persecuted?' Perhaps the better question is 'Why are we not?'"

So What?

1. What steps will you take this year to "live worthy of the Gospel of Christ?"

- Pursue daily—His Word, Fellowship with Him in prayer, Fellowship, accountability, and teaching through His church

2. What needs to be eliminated from your life in order to “live worthy of the Gospel of Christ?”

Robert McFarlane was Ronald Reagan’s National Security Advisor and a twenty-year veteran of the Marine Corps. He was the architect of the Iran-Contra plan. When the plan failed, McFarlane resigned and entered a period of deep depression. Speaking at the National Prayer Breakfast some years later, McFarlane gave testimony that he had climbed “the ladder to success, but got to the top and there was nothing there.” He further said, “Only after I fell off that ladder did I discover that it was leaning against the wrong wall.” (From Jim Denison on December 28, 2018)

I have read so many other similar testimonies.

So, just one thing: Live your life worthy of the Gospel of Christ—today, for 2019, and for the rest of your life.