



# The Christian Mission and How to fulfill it

## Introduction

Philippians 1:27-30

Imagine that we are correspondents sent out to a dangerous battle zone. We expect to see battle-weary soldiers in combat fatigues, dirt on their faces, living in the most difficult conditions, carrying their weapons at all times. But, instead, at the battlefield we're surprised to find the soldiers dressed in civilian clothes, playing volleyball and ping pong, lying around swimming pools, sipping cold drinks, with no weapons anywhere in sight. If such an army was defending our country from a hostile enemy, we'd have good reason to be alarmed!

The problem is, that army has forgotten its mission. It thinks that its mission centers around its own comfort and having a good time. Having forgotten its mission, it would easily fall to a hostile enemy. If that enemy attacked, the members of the army might try to desert, claiming, "I didn't sign up for this! I signed up for all the benefits, but I had no idea I might get shot at!"

I believe the American church is a lot like the army I've just described. We have promoted the Christian life for all its benefits: "Come to Christ and He will give you peace and happiness. He will help you overcome your problems. He will give you a happy marriage and family. He will give you an abundant life." So the recruits sign up, thinking about sitting poolside and enjoying the good life with Jesus. Then, the bullets start ricocheting. Bombs start dropping, shrapnel flying everywhere. People are getting hurt and dying. And these laid-back recruits turn and run, thinking, "I didn't sign up for this!"

The Bible is clear that the Christian life is not a playground, but a battleground. God has not saved us so that we can live comfortably, happily, and self-centered in suburbia. He has conscript-ed us into His army. We have a mission given to us by our Commander-in-Chief, to take the message of His salvation and Lordship into enemy territory, to win captives from the forces of darkness. As in every war, our mission requires combat and struggle. If we forget our mission and get caught up with our own comfort, we will be quick to desert the cause when the enemy attacks.

**We must both focus on and fulfill the Christian mission.<sup>1</sup>**

<sup>1</sup> Sermon excerpt entitled "The Christian Mission And How to Fulfill It" by Steven Cole found @ <https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-9-christian-mission-and-how-fulfill-it-philippians-127-30>

## Open it

1. Who is a long distant friend of yours? How did the friendship begin? How do you keep up with them now?

## Read it

Philippians 1:27-30

## Explore it

2. What should our manner of life be worthy of?
3. What did Paul want to hear about the Philippians?
4. How were the Philippians to respond to their opponents?

# Apply it

## Stratego!!!

*The Christian life is not a playground; it is a battleground. We are sons in the family, enjoying the fellowship of the gospel (Phil. 1:1–11); we are servants sharing in the furtherance of the gospel (Phil. 1:12–26); but we are also soldiers defending the faith of the gospel. And the believer with the single mind can have the joy of the Holy Spirit even in the midst of battle. “The faith of the gospel” is that body of divine truth given to the church. Jude called it “the faith which was once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3).*

*Paul warned in 1 Timothy 4:1 that “in the latter times some shall depart from the faith.” God committed this spiritual treasure to Paul (1 Tim. 1:11), and he in turn committed it to others, like Timothy (1 Tim. 6:20), whose responsibility was to commit this deposit to still others (2 Tim. 2:2). This is why the church must engage in a teaching ministry, so that each new generation of believers will know, appreciate, and use the great heritage of the faith. But there is an enemy who is out to steal the treasure from God’s people.*

*Paul had met the enemy in Philippi, and he was now facing him in Rome. If Satan can only rob believers of their Christian faith, the doctrines that are distinctively theirs, then he can cripple and defeat the ministry of the gospel. It is sad to hear people say, “I don’t care what you believe, just so long as you live right.” What we believe determines how we behave, and wrong belief ultimately means a wrong life. Each local church is but one generation short of potential extinction. No wonder Satan attacks our young people in particular, seeking to get them away from the faith. How can a group of Christians fight this enemy?<sup>2</sup>*

**5. Paul describes a battle scene that he and his fellow believers find themselves engaged in. Are we in a similar battle today? If so, what are the similarities and differences with the battle Paul is speaking of?**

**6. In what ways or areas is Christianity finding victories over darkness and where might it be losing ground?**

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<sup>2</sup> Wiersbe, Warren W.. Be Joyful (Philippians): Even When Things Go Wrong, You Can Have Joy (The BE Series Commentary) (pp. 51-52). David C Cook. Kindle Edition.

7. How does a church prepare its people for the battles they face on a daily battle? Do you personally feel equipped to face the opposing forces?

### **The Game of Life!!!**

*"To live in a manner worthy of the gospel" is an expression which summarizes all that is required in Christian living. Included in this statement is every teaching and every command in the Bible relevant for New Testament believers. "Conduct yourselves" (politeuomai) means to live as a citizen of a country in a law-abiding manner.*

*As Fee points out: "Paul is here making a play on their 'dual citizenship'— of the empire by virtue of their being Philippians; of heaven by virtue of their faith in Christ and incorporation into the believing community." (Paul's Letter to the Philippians, page 161)<sup>3</sup>*

8. Paul begins verse 27 with the word "only." This word speaks of exclusiveness to all other manners of life. What are some other "manners of life" that compete with following Christ?

9. Christians today are prone to divide their lives in two separate sections. The sacred side (private and public religious activities and service) and the secular side being all other parts of their life (Work life, School life, Community life). Why is such an approach to life attractive to Christians and how can it fall short of what Paul is talking about here in the text?

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<sup>3</sup> Lawson, Steven. Philippians For You: Shine with joy as you live by faith (God's Word For You Book 18) (pp. 76-77). The Good Book Company. Kindle Edition.

*“Worthy” literally means “to even the beam.” It refers to balancing the scales so that both sides are even. To live “worthy” of the gospel means to live so that your life gives proper weight to all that God has done for you. Eugene Peterson (The Message) translates it this way: “Live in such a way that you are a credit to the message of Christ.”<sup>4</sup>*

**10. What does it look like “let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ?” Read Eph. 4:1-3, 1 Thess. 2:9-12, 2 Thess. 1:5, Col. 1:9-12. Can you say that your conduct is worthy of the Gospel? What needs to change in your life in order for this to become a reality?**

**11. Why is consistency so important when it comes to living life in this manner?**

### **Solitaire!!!**

*This principle is relevant for every believer today. No matter who is with us or not, we must maintain the same devotion to God in consistent obedience to his word. Whether you find yourself in the midst of Christian fellowship or removed from their watching eyes, we must keep the commandments of the Lord with equal resolution. Are you isolated from the observance of your spiritual leaders? Are you a traveling business person away from your circle of Christian friends? Are you removed from the proximity of a disciple or mentor? Are you providentially removed from Christian fellowship? Whatever your situation, an absence from others must never be allowed to be an excuse for becoming spiritually blasé toward keeping the word of God.*

*After all, the One whose verdict matters most is never absent. So when we do find ourselves alone or isolated, we must live consciously ‘Coram Deo’— that is, in the presence of God. The Lord is always with us in every place. More importantly, through the Holy Spirit, he lives inside of us with the full sufficiency of his grace. Even when we are separated from family or friends, he gives the divine enablement to keep his word.<sup>5</sup>*

**12. How does the principle of “Coram Deo” (see note above) challenge us in the private moments of our lives? How does being actively involved with other believers help us in living in a manner worthy of the gospel?**

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<sup>4</sup> Sermon excerpt entitled “Joy In The Trenches” by Ray Pritchard found @ <http://www.keepbelieving.com/sermon/1998-10-04-Joy-in-the-Trenches/>

<sup>5</sup> Lawson, Steven. *Philippians For You: Shine with joy as you live by faith* (God's Word For You Book 18) (p. 78). The Good Book Company. Kindle Edition.

### **Connect Four!!!**

*Paul continues with another analogy of an athletic team. "Contending" or "striving" is the translation of a Greek word used for athletic contests. In English, our words athlete and athletics come from it. Paul is referring to athletic contests where teams work together toward victory. He wants the believers to be unified in working toward a common goal: seeing Jesus glorified and the gospel preached.<sup>6</sup>*

**13. Paul is calling for believers to be unified. How does a church go about creating a spirit of unity? What things can hinder this from being a reality?**

**14. When is it right for evangelical Christians to strive or contend with those whom we have substantial theological disagreements?**

### **Trouble!!!**

*The "opponents" of the Philippian Christians are the false teachers who have infiltrated the church in Philippi with their corrupt teaching. These are the Judaizers who attempt to put the Philippians back under the Mosaic law of the old covenant. They are "the dogs," unclean and vicious—"evil workers" who teach a "false circumcision" (Philippians 3: 2). They are "enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction" (3: 18-19). These false teachers must be exposed and resisted, lest they pollute the body of believers in Philippi and misdirect their lives.<sup>7</sup>*

**15. While the Philippians had a specific opponent in their day, what or who are the opponents we face today? What about them can cause us to be frightened?**

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<sup>6</sup> Miller, Kathy Collard. Paul and the Prison Epistles (The Smart Guide to the Bible Series) (Kindle Locations 3014-3017). Thomas Nelson. Kindle Edition.

<sup>7</sup> Lawson, Steven. Philippians For You: Shine with joy as you live by faith (God's Word For You Book 18) (p. 82). The Good Book Company. Kindle Edition.

**16. Paul reminds the Philippians that these opponents will not be victorious? How can such a perspective prove helpful in our day?**

### **Chutes and Ladders!!!**

*Paul is giving another reason for not shrinking back from those that would oppose and persecute us. Suffering for Christ is our birthright. God has not only graciously allowed us to believe in the name of Christ, He has also graciously allowed us to suffer on behalf of Christ. Interesting that Paul uses "granted" here, showing that suffering for Christ is a privilege. And he was not the only one who was to be sharing in this privilege--so were the Philippians as well as us. When suffering for Christ is properly understood it is most certainly a privilege, a gracious grant. Because of these sufferings, eternity becomes a richer experience.<sup>8</sup>*

**17. If God says he loves us, why then does he allow his followers to experience such difficulty and pain? Can a suffering saint be a better advertisement to a watching world than a saint who has everything his way? How?**

**18. Are you suffering right now? How can this suffering draw you closer to Christ and how can it be used to show the gospel to a watching world while at the same time silencing your detractors?**

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<sup>8</sup> Quote by Dwight Evans found @ [https://www.preceptaustin.org/philippians\\_129-30#1:29](https://www.preceptaustin.org/philippians_129-30#1:29)

Note: This study was compiled and questions were written by Pastor Tim Badal, Village Bible Church. [www.villagebible.church/smallgroups](http://www.villagebible.church/smallgroups)