

Discover Hour
Philippians 1:27
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“Taliban workers said they killed Williams [Gayle Williams] because she was spreading Christianity. But SERVE Afganistan said she was following the organization’s policy against proselytizing. ... A 2008 UN report stated that there were more than 120 attacks targeting aid workers in the first seven months of 2008 alone” (Christianity Today, January 2009, p. 12)

“Six pastors killed, 40 churches razed in most recent violence. Murderous rioting reportedly sparked by Muslim attacks on Christians and their property in late November destroyed 40 churches and left six pastors and at least 500 others dead, according to Nigerian church leaders” (Christianity Today, February 2009, p. 11).

“International Christian Concern (ICC) has learned that on March 5, 2009 Iranian security forces detained two Christian women for practicing Christianity. Iranian officials allege that Marzieh Amairizadeh Esmaeilabad and Maryam Rustampoor are ‘anti-government activists.’ (Press Releases at www.persecutedchurch.org).

These examples remind us that Christians around the world are persecuted for their faith. As Paul writes in our passage this morning, “For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him ...” (1:29). But this also raises at least two important questions for American Christians today. First, what responsibility do we have to our brothers and sisters in Christ who are experiencing such dramatic persecution for their faith? Second, do American Christians experience persecution? If so, how? If not, how are we to understand verse 28?

A second important part of this passage is the command that guides not only this passage but also the letter through the first half of chapter 2, “Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ” (1:27). The word Paul uses that is translated in the NIV as “conduct yourselves,” is a very interesting one. The word, *politeuo*, means to live as a citizen or the act of conducting oneself as a citizen. Paul also uses a different version of this same word in chapter 3:20, noting that our citizenship is in heaven. In the first instance though, Paul is responding or making note of the strong attachment the believers had to their Roman citizenship, even living so far from Rome which was a thousand miles away.

“Roman citizenship carried with it several important privileges, including the right to vote, exemption from certain taxes and certain legal protections (although Rome did at times extend citizenship without voting rights to the residents of certain cities). Ancient legal codes did not strive, even in theory, to achieve equality before the law. For example, Roman citizens were not to be tortured and generally were not executed without a judicial process, while noncitizens (and especially slaves) were summarily tortured by authorities.” Archaeological Study Bible, p. 1930).

Remembering that Philippi was a proud Roman colony, we can see that in both places Paul is reminding the believers to take their heavenly citizenship much more seriously than their earthly one. Do you think a similar call is needed for American Christians today?

Grammar/ Syntax/ Word Study

-Two imperatives in this passage – conduct yourselves and stand firm

-politeesthe conduct self as a citizen

-struggle together. Like trying to rip a phone book. One page, wow, very easy. But whole book? Very difficult.

Paul here calls suffering for one's faith as a gift. In this letter, we can see several reasons for this being so in Paul's thoughts. First, because is a confirmation of our standing in Christ, our salvation (1:28). It is also a means by which we become identified with Christ (3:10). And, it is redemptive.