

Philippians 1:27-30

Preached by Greg Lundstedt at Vancouver Bible Fellowship Church on 5/27/2007

How are we to live in light of opposition?

Sermon

Well it's difficult in my flesh to prepare after going through such a wonderful passage last week, to live is Christ and to die is gain, and all that just reminded me of a passage we've been looking at in Romans, which is if anything thinks they are somebody when they are nobody they deceive themselves. That passage was so wonderful because God had revealed the truth through the apostle Paul, concerning the true Christian life and the true Christian walk.

Now unfortunately for many of us, unlike the apostle Paul we saw last week in scripture, our Christian experience, and I qualify that experience, is one of extremes. We'll follow the Lord, then we'll follow ourselves. We fear the Lord, then we forget the Lord. You know, and often the reason why we forsake the Lord so quickly in our minds is because following the Lord actually is difficult. When we follow Christ in every aspect of our lives we are going to experience difficulty. Paul told Timothy indeed those who desire to live Godly, he didn't say indeed those who are obnoxious about their faith, indeed those who desire to live Godly will be persecuted. There's going to be pressure put on.

Now certainly we look at persecution often as believers and think that's just the Christians in China, and certainly they are seeing physical persecution. But often we will suffer for Christ in the day to day relationships that we are involved in. Sometimes you may temporarily suffer in your marriage because you are doing the right thing in Christ. You may temporarily suffer with your children because you are doing by the Spirit's power the right thing with your children. You may suffer at work because you are doing your work unto the Lord, and doing the right thing. You may suffer because you come along aside a straying brother and share the truth of God in obedience to the Lord, and they may not respond in the right way. You may suffer because you warn a brother of the dangers concerning those out there who desire to pervert the Word of God and twist the truth, and they do so as Peter would say, to their own destruction.

Now unfortunately, when we suffer opposition on whatever level, often, we do not respond in the proper way, we respond with irritation, anger, conflict, those things in the flesh. But I think we're going to see today that Paul sharing from his experience of living as Christ, dying is gain, how the Philippians should live in light of the opposition that they are facing and will face. And I believe we will see today in our passage how we as heavenly citizens are to live in the midst of earthly opposition. Would you turn in your Bibles to Philippians. And we're still in chapter 1.

The apostle Paul is the author as we know. He is writing this letter while under house arrest, he is chained to a Roman guard 24/7, he is chained for preaching the gospel, he is chained for Christ. This is one of four prison epistles that he wrote, Colossians, Philippians, Ephesians and Philemon. It's most likely written around 62 A.D. Acts 16 describes the founding of the Philippian church as Paul shared the gospel with Lydia at the river, and the Lord opened her heart to understand. He shares the founding of the church when Paul and Silas were taken and beaten and thrown in jail because Paul cast out a demon

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from a demon-possessed girl. And how when the Lord brought an earthquake and freed them, the Philippian jailer thought that he would be killed by the Romans for failing in his duties, and he saw that they were all there, and he said “what must I do to be saved?” And Paul said, believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you and all your household. And then he says, they shared the Word with them.

We have the nucleus of the Philippian church, probably ten years earlier, 52 A.D. And we have Paul sharing Christ and we have these people coming to faith, and we know from this book that Paul was very dear to this church, and they were very dear to Him. They were the only church that had supported him financially during certain portions of the missions he had gone on. And we saw in the beginning of this book that Paul called himself, and Timothy, bondslaves of Christ, they were *doulos*'s. They were those who had given up their will to serve for the will of a master. Now they weren't slaves to sin, a harsh, terrible, deadly master, they were slaves to Christ, a wonderful, glorious master who gave himself for us.

We also saw that they were called saints. They were not Catholic saints, they were saints, they were set apart from sin to God. And that's what happens when you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, you are set apart from sin unto God, you are a saint. And Paul was so glad for God's past work in them. And he was confident that God would complete that work in them. And we saw that Paul prayed for their love to abound and continue within the guiding limitations of discernment and knowledge, so that they would live a holy life that glorifies God. And then we saw that Paul shared to the Philippians, who might have misunderstood his circumstances, that his circumstances had turned out for the greater progress of the gospel, the pioneering advance of the gospel, that the very thing they might have thought was hindering the ministry God was using to advance the ministry, that the whole praetorian guard, thousands of Roman elite soldiers had heard the gospel of Christ. And there were those in Caesar's household who greeted them now as believers. We saw that Paul rejoiced in that, that even his detractors were sharing Christ.

And last week we saw how we can experience joy in the midst of suffering. We looked at a wonderfully beautiful section of scripture in which we saw that Paul was joyful in the midst of suffering because he recognized that through everything God allowed, Christ would be magnified. And for Paul, to live is Christ, everything he did was for Christ, to die was gain. If you live for Christ and you die you gain everything because you gain Christ. If you live for anything else, you lose that when you die. To live is Christ, to die is gain. Paul on the precipice of possibly being executed, understood that going to be with Christ is much better than the suffering right now. But he also understood that to stay around was useful and needed for these Philippians for their faith and progress.

So Paul shared that he desired to be with Christ, but yet, he knew if he stayed around it would be fruitful ministry unto the Philippians. And it's at this point Paul transitions from his experience in Christ, to encourage the Philippians in their experience of suffering. And I believe we're going to see today, as I shared before, how we are to, as heavenly citizens, live in light in the midst of earthly opposition. So would you turn in your bibles to Philippians 1, and we're going to start with verse 27. Paul says,

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²⁷ Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ; so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; ²⁸ 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. 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, ³⁰ experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me. [Philippians 1:27-30]

Paul begins, only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. It's a command, you are to conduct yourselves, but he qualifies that, only, this is the only way you are to conduct yourselves, in a manner worthy of the gospel. That word "*monon*" limits it to one action, described by the word, "only" do it this way. And it's important to realize that this verb is a very important verb. Often in scripture we see the word conduct, or life, it's "*peripateo*" it means to walk around. Well in this passage the word is a totally different word, it is "*politeu*" and it's where we get our word politics. It speaks of political. It actually refers to the duties required by a member of a certain body, or a citizen. It speaks of living as a citizen with all the associated responsibilities. Living as a citizen with all the associated responsibilities.

He says only conduct yourselves, and he brings up this word that implies citizenship, and responsibility. Why does he do that? Well if you're familiar with the Philippians, and you're familiar with the context, Philippi was a Roman colony. And if you were in Philippi you had Roman citizenship which carried great privileges. One author writes,

The city of Philippi was not just any ordinary city. It was granted special status by the Caesar after the defeat of Anthony during the civil war. After the battle of Actium which squelched the rebellion, a large number of soldiers retired to this city and so it was declared to be a Roman colony. This special status evoked a sense of pride by its inhabitants. It was Rome away from Rome. This pride is seen in Acts 16:20-21. They saw themselves as "Romans." Rome was their mother and they never forgot to whom they belonged. They spoke Latin, wore Roman dress, called the magistrates by their Latin titles. They were deeply into Roman citizenship and all it meant. [Unknown]

They were totally into their Roman citizenship. And Paul now evokes this same idea of citizenship, but he is pointing to the reality of their heavenly citizenship. He would say that later on in Philippians 3. Scoot over a little bit to Philippians 3:17,

¹⁷ Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us. (And then he's going to share a very sad statement about a lot of people) ¹⁸ For many (not a few, but many) walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, ¹⁹ whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things. ²⁰ For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; ²¹ who will transform the body of our

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humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself. [Philippians 3:17-21]

Paul reminds them that believer's citizenship is in heaven. Yes, they may be Roman citizens, but they are to conduct themselves as citizens of heaven. Conduct yourselves in accordance with your citizenship, "politeu", in a manner worthy of the gospel.

I think Paul wants them to recognize their responsibility as citizens of heaven. And now in our verse, I think we're going to see also that they are to live according to their high, heavenly, glorious calling. Verse 27 again, ²⁷ ***Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ...*** Only live this way all the time. If you're a believer, this is the only way to live. Only live this way, all the time, how so? In a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.

Now what does that mean, to live in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ? I think we need to understand first of all what the gospel is. The word, "euaggelion", came from a word in which we get the word "angel", "aggelos", which simply means messenger. And this word, "euaggelion", came to mean a message of gladness, good news, a message that brought joy. In the New Testament it is used extensively to speak of the message of the good news of the gospel of Christ. Remember in Luke 2 what the angel said to the shepherds, chapter 2, verse 10,

¹⁰ ***And the angel said to them, (this is the shepherds) "Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you (gospel) good news of a great joy which shall be for all the people; (what's that good news?) ¹¹ for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord. [Luke2:10-11]***

It is the good news concerning Christ the Savior, Christ Jesus the Lord. The gospel announces the good news concerning Jesus Christ, the only Savior of mankind. It is the good news that Paul would allude to later on in chapter 2, it is about Jesus Christ. God the Son taking in human flesh, fully God, fully man, humbling himself, being obedient to the point of death on the cross, dying for our sins according to the scriptures. Being buried and raised according to the scriptures, proving that he is Lord over all, the Christ, the Messiah. He is King of kings and Lord of lords, the sovereign Savior over all mankind.

And if we're wondering, still don't understand what the gospel is, there's a little portion in Colossians that can help us. You can flip just a little over to Colossians 1. Paul introduces his letter to the Colossians, and he shares about the gospel. Colossians 1:3,

³ ***We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you, ⁴ since we heard of your faith in Christ Jesus and the love which you have for all the saints; ⁵ because of the hope laid up for you in heaven, of which you previously heard in the word of truth, the gospel, ⁶ which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as it has been doing in you also since the day you heard of it and understood the grace of God in truth; ⁷ just as you learned***

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it from Epaphras, our beloved fellow bond-servant, who is a faithful servant of Christ on our behalf... [Colossians 1:3-7]

The gospel message is the word of truth, it is about the grace of God in truth, it is about God's grace in the person of Jesus Christ. The grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men. God's unmerited favor towards mankind who does not deserve salvation, but God came and brought His grace through Christ. It is the word of truth, it is as we see in this passage in Colossians, it is delivered, it is heard, it is learned, it is understood. And it bears fruit in people. He says in verse 6, ***which has come to you, just as in all the world also it is constantly bearing fruit and increasing, even as it has been doing in you...*** And what is that fruit of the gospel? Verse 4, faith in Christ Jesus and the love of which you have for the saints because of the hope laid up for you in heaven. The fruit of the gospel, faith is Christ and love for one another, an eternal hope in Jesus Christ.

The gospel is the good news concerning Jesus Christ, that He died for our sins according to the scriptures, that he was buried and He rose from the dead according to the scriptures, and that He appeared. It is the gospel of our salvation, it is the good news concerning Christ, that through faith in Him we go from death to life. Death between us and God, we are separated from God because of sin, to life, our sin is no longer the issue, we are cleansed, forgiven, and can now boldly come before the throne of grace. It is about Christ and the eternal hope we have in Him.

So what does it mean to live in a manner worthy of the gospel? Ultimately, it's living in a manner worthy of the purpose God has ordained for us through the gospel, which is for us to be His people, which is for us to proclaim His excellencies, which is for us to be like Christ, bringing Him glory and honor, which is for us to be redeemed and glorified. John says that our sins are forgiven for His name sake. Peter says we were made His people, His own possession so that we would proclaim the excellencies of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. The upward call of Christ Jesus, is becoming like Jesus, and we will ultimately be like Him when we see Him as He is. We are to live in a manner worthy of our great calling. Out of sin and darkness and into His marvelous light. We are being made like Christ and we will be like Him when we see Him, we are to always, only live in a manner worthy of this great calling, in light of our heavenly citizenship.

Now it's important to realize that, to live in a manner worthy of the gospel presupposes that you've come to faith in Christ, that you have believed in the Lord Jesus Christ. You've repented of your sins and believed in Jesus Christ. I want to ask you, are you a believer? Do you name the name of Christ? Is it your desire to be obedient to this command? Do you desire to live in a manner worthy of the gospel? Well unfortunately we are all familiar with the unworthy walk, right? We're all familiar that often when suffering comes, there is disunity, there is fear, there is complaining, there is arguing, there are those deeds of the flesh unworthy actions of the gospel.

Well not obviously an extensive problem in Philippi, it was large enough for Paul to exhort them to unity, to love, to humility, to stop fearing, to stop complaining and arguing, and to stop worrying. Folks we are tempted to live in a way contrary to the gospel every day. We are tempted to look at things through our

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own lenses, to look at this and analyze them through our own wisdom, just like someone who does not know Christ. We are tempted then to worry and fear, and conflict, and all those things that arise when we look at things through our own lenses. And he says, live as a citizen of heaven in a manner worthy of the gospel, always, always do that, always do that. This exhortation is similar to other exhortations that Paul has given. Ephesians 4:1, to walk in a manner worthy of our great calling. Colossians 1:10, walking in a manner worthy. 1 Thessalonians 2:12, walking in a manner worthy. Obviously God wants us to do this.

So now with this incredibly high calling, how can we do this? How can we conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel? Obviously we need to recognize that Paul has laid the foundation as he has shared the mindset of a believer trusting in Christ, to live is Christ and to die is gain. We can't do it, it is Christ who functions through us that allows us to live in a manner worthy of the gospel. It is submitting our lives completely to Christ, it is letting His Word dwell richly in us. It is when we abide in Christ and His Word abides in us that we will live in a manner worthy of the gospel. Let me illustrate that from 1 Thessalonians 2. Paul is sharing with this young church, in verse 9 he says,

⁹ For you recall, brethren, our labor and hardship, how working night and day so as not to be a burden to any of you, we proclaimed to you the gospel of God. ¹⁰ You are witnesses, and so is God, how devoutly and uprightly and blamelessly we behaved toward you believers; ¹¹ just as you know how we were exhorting and encouraging and imploring each one of you as a father would his own children, ¹² so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory. [1 Thessalonians 2:9-12]

Paul implored them, he urged them, he exhorted them. Well how did he do that? Did he just come along side and say "walk in a manner worthy", and shove them on the shoulder? How did Paul implore, and encourage, and exhort? Verse 13 of 1 Thessalonians 2,

¹³ And for this reason we also constantly thank God that when you received from us the word of God's message, you accepted it not as the word of men, but for what it really is, the word of God, which also performs its work in you who believe. [1 Thessalonians 2:13]

How do we live in a manner worthy of the gospel? We abide in Christ, we trust in Christ, we yield to Him, and we allow His Word to work in us. We listen to the imploring, the exhorting and the teaching of the Word of God and we respond in faith and believe what it says, and ultimately by His power do what it says. How can a young man keep his way pure? According to His Word! Thy Word is a lamp unto my feet and a light unto my path, it is the Word of God through the Spirit of God that focuses the believer in Christ on Christ, to be obedient. How do we walk in a manner worthy? We abide in Christ alone, His Word abides in us, and ultimately the fruit will be a worthy walk.

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Well at this time, that sounds really good, and we can take those truths and understand those truths, but Paul by God's grace gives us an example of what the worthy walk looks like with these Philippians. And I believe ultimately because he's speaking to the church at Philippi and not just individuals, that this is an evidence of a church that is walking worthily, and we're going to see three evidences of how a church walks worthily. And the first one we're going to see is the united stand in the truth against opposition. Verse 27 of Philippians,

²⁷ Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ; so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit... [Philippians 1:27]

Now our text, as we will see in a few minutes presupposes that the Philippians are facing opposition. Look down at verse 28, ²⁸ ***in no way alarmed by your opponents***. The word used in verse 28 means those standing against. It speaks of those who are hostile, it speaks of those who are contrary, it speaks of those in opposition, it speaks of those who are adversaries. Now certainly, Ephesians 6 reveals that our ultimate battle is not against flesh and blood, but it is against the powers and the forces, all that evil that is head by Satan himself. But Paul made it very clear in this letter and in other letters that our opposition does come in the form of people. And Paul warned in just about every single letter he wrote about those who would pervert the gospel, those false brethren, those who were a danger to the body of Christ and to believers. And he says here in no way alarmed by your opponents.

And then look in verse 29 and 30 of Philippians 1, we see,

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, ³⁰ experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me. [Philippians 1:29-30]

You see, Paul experienced conflict for the gospel. When he was with the Philippians, and now they hear about that as he is sitting in prison. Paul faced opposition, the same conflict. The word is "agon", agony, an agonizing fight. You're going to experience that same conflict Philippians. Well, who was this conflict from? Certainly the Romans were part of that, they had Paul chained up. But in scripture we don't see Paul warning us against the Romans, we don't see Jesus warning us against the Romans. He certainly warns us against the world and the way they're going to treat us, but the warnings that we see over and over and over again are through false brethren and evil workers.

Philippians 3:1, if you just turn a little bit here. Paul says,

¹ Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. (You've got to have the right attitude first) To write the same things again is no trouble to me, (he's reminding them, they've heard it before) and it is a safeguard for you. ² Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision; ³ for we are the true circumcision, (and he's giving a list of how you can identify the true from the false) who worship in the Spirit of God (I

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think as opposed to the flesh) and glory in Christ Jesus (I think as opposed to other people or self) **and put no confidence in the flesh... [Philippians 3:1-3]**

Those who trust in Christ alone, who recognize they are not adequate for anything as coming from themselves, but their adequacy is from God. That's the true, the false don't do that, beware, be on guard. He didn't say be on guard for the Romans there, he said be on guard for the evil workers, the false circumcision, those who pretend to be following Christ but are ultimately your enemies because they attack the truth of God as we will see.

2 Corinthians 11, Paul gives a discourse on those who were hindering him, and it's quite possible he even meant that they might have been the thorn in the flesh that He was allowing. We're not sure. 2 Corinthians 11:12,

¹² But what I am doing, (Paul's speaking about sharing Christ to these Corinthians) **I will continue to do, that I may cut off opportunity from those who desire an opportunity to be regarded just as we are in the matter about which they are boasting. ¹³ For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. ¹⁴ And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. ¹⁵ Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness;** (it's not surprising) **whose end shall be according to their deeds. [2 Corinthians 11:12]**

(And then he gives a whole list of things that identifies his apostleship through his suffering, and one of the last things he says is "dangers among false brethren". I think the opposition here was those who were false brethren. I think they were those who were opposing the truth ultimately. Paul was certainly chained for the gospel, and he was going to die for the gospel, but it's clear that Paul in context faced opposition from false brethren. And that is who he warns about in Acts 20, I'll read in verse 28 as he shares to the Ephesian elders his last words.

²⁸ "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood. (Very, very valuable church, purchased with the blood of Christ) ²⁹ "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; ³⁰ and from among your own selves men will arise, (and what are they going to do, they're going to be) **speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them. ³¹ "Therefore be on the alert, remembering that night and day for a period of three years I did not cease to admonish each one with tears. [Acts 20:28-31]**

Paul warned them for three years with tears that these false brethren would come, these savage wolves. And I believe that's where a lot of the conflict comes for us believers. So back to our text. So then how is this church to walk in a manner worthy concerning the opposition? Verse 27 of Philippians 1, only in this way, this way alone, conduct yourselves as a citizen of heaven in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ so that whether I come, that's if he's freed, to see you or remain absent, that is if he goes to be with the Lord, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit.

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Now this word, standing firm, is a Greek word, *steko*. I don't know if this is the case, but it sure sounds like a stake, but it sure represents the idea. It speaks of holding one's position. It was sometimes used of soldiers who refused to leave their post no matter how difficult the battle was, standing firm. Paul wants to hear if he comes that they're standing firm, or if he doesn't come before he's executed that they are standing firm. In light of their opposition, they are to be continually standing firm in one spirit. Now is that speaking of the Spirit of God? I don't think so. If you look at it it's in parallel with "in one mind or soul". And he gives a discourse in chapter 2 about unity. I believe he's speaking about unity. Standing firm, united with one mind, and we'll see what that means.

Paul is saying simply walk in a manner worthy, the only way you should walk. And that will result in the fact that you will be standing firm in one spirit against opposition. Now obviously, what brings unity within the body of Christ. We see in Philippians 4:1 we are to, same word, *steko*. Now this word is not the same word we have in Ephesians 6, stand firm in the strength of His might and putting on the armor of God, it's a different word. This word *steko* is used here in Philippians 4:1, we are to stand firm in the Lord, and notice, you can't stand firm apart from the Lord. But our standing from the Lord directly correlates with our faith in Christ, and I'll read this for you. 1 Thessalonians 3, again the usage of this word,

⁶ But now that Timothy has come to us from you, and has brought us good news of your faith and love, and that you always think kindly of us, longing to see us just as we also long to see you, ⁷ for this reason, brethren, in all our distress and affliction we were comforted about you through your faith; ⁸ for now we really live, if you stand firm in the Lord. [1 Thessalonians 3:6-8]

Stand firm in the Lord, it's their faith in Christ. 1 Corinthians 15:13, ***Be on the alert, stand firm*** (*steko*) ***in the faith, act like men, be strong.*** 2 Thessalonians 2, I think we see where ultimately how when the rubber meets the road, how we stand firm in the Lord. 2 Thessalonians 2:13,

¹³ But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. (There's a quick overview of salvation) ¹⁴ And it was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. ¹⁵ So then, brethren, (*steko*) stand firm and hold to the traditions which you were taught, whether by word of mouth or by letter from us. [2 Thessalonians 2:13]

He's speaking of the Word of God that they gave them. Hold firm, stand firm in the Lord to what God has said, the truth is in Jesus, renew your minds to the truth. Do not be conformed to the world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds. If you want to stand firm in the Lord you need to hold fast to what He has said by faith.

Now in our passage, Paul is saying they are to walk in a manner worthy, standing firm, united in that. And I believe they are to stand firm in the truth, they are to know, understand and believe what God says and stand firm in it. Are you standing firm? Are you standing firm? I'm not talking about going out

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and trying to battle everybody, I'm talking about standing firm in the truth, you can't walk in a manner worthy unless you're standing firm upon what God has said, you believe it, you trust in what God says, you wholeheartedly accept it.

So what's the first mark of a biblical church? They stand firm in the truth. Indeed, Paul would tell Timothy that the church of the living God is the pillar and support of the truth. They are to hold their ground against opposition in unity. Well what else? What other things do we see here, what other aspects of a biblical church do we see? Verse 27,

27 Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ; so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel... [Philippians 1:27]

The second thing, striving together for the faith of the gospel. With one mind, the word is "psuche", we get the word soul, we get our English word psychology from that. It speaks of basically your emotions, reason and will, it's your soul, it's the sphere of your soul. With one mind striving together. The word striving together is the word "sun-", which means "with" and "-athleo", athletics. It speaks of an athletic event, a competition, a reaching for the goal, a strenuous activity to reach the goal. A competing together with one mind as a body competing together, striving together. For what? The faith of the gospel. Standing firm in the truth, striving together for the faith of the gospel. One component of the worthy walk, that walk that we are only to walk in, is a coordinated effort for the faith of the gospel, striving together.

You know when it comes to sports, when a team that functions together is only as weak as its weakest link obviously. And that teamwork must abound for victory, and when it breaks down those teams lose. Striving together for the faith of the gospel. Folks, there's all sorts of people striving together against abortion. Striving together against the government. Striving together against all kinds of issues other than the faith of the gospel. But what does that mean? What does it mean, striving together for the faith of the gospel? I think we need to recognize in scripture that he doesn't say striving together for "your" faith in the gospel. Or "a" faith in the gospel, but he says "the" faith. And in scripture more than half the usages of the term "the faith" actually speaks of not the action of believing but the body of doctrine that is believed, the faith. The body of truth that God has revealed that is believed by true believers, the faith.

Galatians 1:23, Paul was preaching the faith which he once destroyed. 1 Timothy 4:6 we see the faith, clearly associated with the Word of God. Paul has shared all these bad guys who prohibit marriage and say you can only eat these kinds of foods and all this bad stuff, all these false guys, doctrines of demons. And he says to Timothy,

6 In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following. [1 Timothy 4:6]

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The body of doctrine that is believed, the faith. Certainly in Jude we see that Jude wanted to write about our common salvation, but he felt compelled by the Spirit of God to exhort them to contend earnestly for the faith. And our passage speaks about striving together for the faith of the gospel, you could literally say “the gospel faith”. We are like a team of athletes to be striving forward for the body of doctrine revealed in the Word, concerning Christ, the gospel.

The church that walks worthily strives together for the truth, stands firm in the truth, strives together for the truth. I want to ask you, what do you stand for? Are you on one of the many Christian band-wagons that people stand for all day long? Or do you stand firm for the truth of the gospel in the midst of all the opposition that comes your way from within and without. Do you stand firm for the truth of the Word of God in the midst of your marriage? I’m not talking about being arrogant, or ungodly, or ungentle, but standing firm in the truth. Do you stand firm for the truth as you raise your children, as you go to work, in whatever you do? There’s all kinds of error out there, the church that is walking in the worthy manner stands firm in the truth and it strives together for the truth.

What are you striving for? At this point we see a third aspect of the worthy walk for the body of Christ. I believe there is a united response to the opposition to the truth. Verse 27, I’ll start back here again,

27 Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ; so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; 28 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. [Philippians 1:27-28]

In the midst of the terrible opposition, we are to be in no way alarmed. He’s saying “I hope I hear of you Philippians, that you are not alarmed by your opposition”. Paul wasn’t alarmed by his opposition; Paul understood that God was using that opposition to glorify Christ. And he’s hoping that he will hear of this in them.

Now the NASB doesn’t show the first word in the sentence. In Greek it’s the word “*kai*”, it means “and”. This verse literally says “And in no way alarmed by those opposing...”. I think he’s giving three things, one, two, “and” the last one, “and”; three things. Remember this term opposing, or opposition speaks of those standing against, or contending with. Standing against, anti, they’re standing against you. And I believe there are those as Satan is the one who opposes the truth we see in John 8, ultimately those who oppose Christ oppose the truth. And our opposition comes from those who oppose the truth. Now it can be intimidating or alarming when someone claims to follow Christ and is your opponent. It can be intimidating and alarming when those who claim to follow Christ actually are your opponents, who oppose you and the truth revealed in the Word of God. The word alarmed speaks of being afraid, terrified or intimidated. And Paul is saying the worthy walk leaves no leeway for one to fear one’s opponents. There’s no leeway, if you’re walking in a worthy manner than you recognize that everything that comes against you is for God’s glory, that he will manifest Christ, and therefore in no way is there a

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reason to fear anything, from any direction. Do not be alarmed at those, I believe in context, opposing the truth.

Paul was not alarmed by his suffering, he recognized that God used it for the pioneering progress of the gospel, because in Paul, to live is Christ and to die is gain. Now if we are living for ourselves then our suffering is going to alarm us because we are at stake. But Paul said in Acts 20 that he didn't consider his life as dear to himself in any account, that he would finish the course. And if you recognize that God desires to be glorified through your life or through your death, then you will not be alarmed at opposition. And that is the worthy walk for the body of Christ.

You know, when we suffer as a child of God, when we face opposition we respond either in a Spirit led, worthy response or in a fleshly one that damages our witness and creates disunity and creates the very things Paul will address in the next few chapters, worry, anxiety, disunity, all those things that we can be tempted to do when we face opposition. And Paul is saying in no way be alarmed, in no way, let it not alarm you in any way, shape or form.

Now at this point we need to realize also that as we respond properly to our opposition, we thus allow God to demonstrate their destruction. In no way alarmed by your opponents, verse 28, which is a sign of destruction for them, that word is not sign from "signs and wonders" from other portions of scripture, it is the word that means and speaks of a demonstration or a proof. When you're not alarmed at your opposition God uses that to demonstrate or prove that they are on the path to destruction, they are on the way to destruction. And this is from God and not from us. When we respond appropriately to our opposition, recognizing God will be glorified through that opposition. And we're not alarmed, understanding the eternal picture. This is a demonstration also we will see to the fact that we are saved.

Verse 28,

²⁸ in no way alarmed by your opponents-- which is a sign (or a proof or a demonstration) of destruction for them, but of salvation for you, and that too, from God. [Philippians 1:27-28]

We want to prove that we're saved, we want to prove that we're saved at times, well God demonstrates our salvation when we respond in the right way to those who oppose the truth and that is from God. If you're truly saved, and you understand that Christ will be magnified through your response, you won't be fearful, you won't be scared, you'll be scared of the consequences, you won't be scared of the people. And this will demonstrate that you truly do have a relationship with the living God, and those who oppose you don't.

Well how can we respond in such a way? How can we respond not being terrified by such fierce opposition? I don't know if we've experienced it, but there is fierce opposition out there, and it comes from within the church. There is fierce opposition from churches now that preach a gospel of your felt needs, that preach a gospel that we should be doing things for you rather than ultimately submitting to Christ and preaching His Word and proclaiming His Word. It is the gospel about people rather than

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about Christ. And folks, there are people who will oppose you greatly if you share the truth to them concerning these types of churches that are all around us. And Paul says here is why it'll happen. Verse 29,

²⁹ For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, (not for your sake, for Christ's sake) not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake... [Philippians 1:29]

Folks, God sovereignly granted to you the ability to believe. It was granted to you, you believed, yes it's your faith, you trusted in Christ, you believed the gospel, but God granted that to you. And for those of you who do not know Christ I pray His Word is convicting you right now, and that He would grant to you faith in Jesus Christ. For to you it has been granted for Christ sake not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.

God chose in His graciousness to open the hearts and minds of those who believe. And likewise, he has granted to those who follow Him suffering in Christ's footsteps. That's what Peter would tell those in Asia Minor in 1 Peter 2 as he illustrates this in terms of suffering in the work place, basically you're in a slave-master relationship. There's no credit for suffering for sin. He says,

²⁰ For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? (There's no credit there, you sin and you endure it, there's no credit. God does not look down on you and think, great job for enduring your sin.) But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favor with God. ²¹ For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps... [1 Peter 2:20-21]

If you've come to faith in Jesus Christ, or if you are contemplating by the Spirit of God prompting you, you need to count the cost. You will lose everything in this life if you come to faith in Christ, and you will suffer, but you will gain everything. There's the suffering now, like Christ, for the glories to follow. Romans 8:16,

¹⁶ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, (and I believe He does that through the Word of God, 1st John) ¹⁷ and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed (here's the clause, if you're really a child of God this is the clause) we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him. ¹⁸ For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us. [Romans 8:16-18]

You suffer now, but it's not worthy to be compared. If you stand for the truth, you're going to suffer. If you abide in Christ, and His Word in you, you are going to suffer. But God will use that to glorify Himself, and He will manifest in eternity these wonderful glories we cannot understand. For right now it's producing an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, that's what Paul says in 2 Corinthians, for we don't look at the things that are seen because they're temporal, but we look at the things that are unseen.

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It is suffering for Christ's sake when you stand up in His Spirit, for His truth, and stand firm, it is for His sake. Paul says, verse 30, ³⁰ **experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me. [Philippians 1:30]**. This conflict, "agon", there were those on all sides attempting to attack Paul, and it was always against the truth. And he warned over and over again of those who would sneak in, the savage wolves, and those who would arise from within. And he says, you're going to experience the same conflict Philippians. And the church here, we're going to experience the same conflict, it's going to happen, you're going to suffer for the truth, it's been granted for Christ's sake.

Maybe you're suffering right now in your marriage relationship. Maybe you're suffering as you raise your kids. Maybe you're suffering at work. And again, I'm not saying for being an obnoxious jerky Christian. I'm saying for being someone who is abiding in Christ, women are graciously winning their husbands without a word. Husbands are loving their wives like Christ loved the church, being godly, the Word of God functioning in their lives, and suffering for that because the world hates Christ, the same conflict. But Paul understood as we saw last week that God uses that conflict to glorify Christ and the gospel was advanced. And Paul is exhorting these Philippians as well as us I believe, by the Spirit of God, to walk in a manner worthy of our heavenly citizenship.

I want to ask you, are you a believer? Do you name the name of Christ? Paul tells Timothy, abstain from wickedness. Walk in a manner worthy, stand firm in the truth, strive together for the truth and do not be afraid of the opposition to the truth because this is what God has called us to for this temporal time, the sufferings for the glories to follow. Oh brother and sister, are we walking in a worthy manner? Are we standing on the words of God, not wavering, not being tossed back and forth, and every little thing that comes our way, we go this way and that way, and we worry, and we fear. Are we standing on the Word of God? Oh brother and sister, are we striving together for the truth, are we striving to get out the gospel, the word of God for His glory? Brother and sister, are we striving together in a united response against opposition to the truth? Are we in unity in our response to opposition? It is granted to us not only to believe, but to suffer. But all these things will bring God glory.

Prayer

Father, thank you for Your Word. Thank You that you desire us also to stand firm in Your truth, to stand firm in Your Son, trusting in Him and everything that He has said. Father thank You that You desire us to be striving for the truth, the gospel. And Father, thank You so much that You desire us not to be afraid, not to be alarmed at our opposition, knowing what You are doing through these trials. Father, I pray as You look upon this body here, that we would be doing these things, that we would be walking in a manner worthy of our calling as citizens of heaven. I pray You would convict us where we haven't, that we'd confess it to You. And Father, we would be those found in You, walking in a manner worthy together. Father thank You for Your Word, and thank You for this time together. We pray this now in Jesus' name. Amen.

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