

Women's Bible Study, November 29, 2023

Philippians 1:27-30

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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, 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. For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me.

Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ...

This line almost speaks for itself. The word conduct is *politeuomai* in the Greek. It means “to behave as a citizen (figuratively)-let conversation be, live.” The King James Version uses the word conversation. Conversation here does not mean a talk back and forth between two or more people. It means in every way we should act as though we are citizens of the Kingdom of God. This is all encompassing. It includes our behavior toward the members of our biological family, our church family, all our neighbors, the governing authorities, and any other situation that arises. The King of the kingdom we are citizens of is our Lord Jesus Christ. Our behavior should imitate his behavior. When Jesus lived in this world, he did not demand his rights or even pursue his own comfort or personal happiness.

Philippians 2:5-6

Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped.

Matthew 5:3

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

It is not important, as citizens of Heaven, to fight for our rights. We can humbly accept what God brings into our life. There will be situations where we will have to put aside what we feel we are entitled to. It is so worth it when we think about who our leader is. He put aside the glory due him as the Son of God. Our greatest commandment is to love God with everything we have, and the second greatest commandment is to love people. This is the behavior

referred to here. We should be loving people in such a way that the world knows we are different.

Walking in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ was a common theme from the apostle Paul toward the churches he wrote to.

Ephesians 4:1

I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, entreat you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called.

Colossians 1:10

...so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.

1 Thessalonians 2:12

...so that you may walk in a manner worthy of the God who calls you into His own kingdom and glory.

...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.

Of course, God always sees our behavior. He also knows our thoughts and motives. But the world is also watching. We are told here to “stand firm”. This is the Greek word *steko* which means to be stationary. Paul’s urgency is clear in this. He knows that the Philippian believers are being threatened on all sides. From within and without. The Judaisers would like nothing better than to undermine the teaching of Paul that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone and that the Gentile believers were not required to keep the law. There is also the probability of persecution by the Romans. Then just the fact of human nature and the natural self-centeredness of people which can result in bickering cause Paul to urge them to resist the temptation to give up the fight. He longs for them to be united as they strive for the faith of the gospel. He is hoping that he will hear the good news that the Philippians are indeed standing firm.

From Matthew Henry’s Commentary:

The unity and unanimity of Christians become the gospel: Strive together, not strive one with another; all of you must strive against the common adversary. One spirit and one mind become the gospel; for there is one Lord, one faith, one baptism. There may be a oneness of heart and

affection among Christians, where there is diversity of judgment and apprehensions about many things.

Psalm 1:1-3

How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers! But his delight is in the law of the LORD, and in his law he meditates day and night. And he will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither, and in whatever he does, he prospers.

I love the picture of a tree firmly planted. Think of how firm the redwoods and sequoias seem. We need to be this way, but it is only possible if we are getting our sustenance meditating on the word of God and time with Him in prayer. We are helpless on our own. It would be like one of those trees trying to grow big and tall here in the desert. It makes me laugh to think about a huge redwood growing along the road going to Barstow because it is so impossible.

Ephesians 6:13-14

Therefore, take up the full armor of God, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm. Stand firm therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness.

1 Corinthians 15:58

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your toil is not in vain in the Lord.

Ephesians 4:14-15

As a result, we are not longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ.

We should be aware of the war being fought at all times within us and around us. Soldiers in an army do not get to have down days when the battle is raging. Can you imagine if the soldiers during battles were to say to their commanders, "I don't feel like fighting today. This is just too hard for me." There are consequences for us when we don't stand firm. The devil gains a foothold into our thinking. He causes us to doubt that God is doing what is best in our

life. We find ourselves complaining about our circumstances. We are impatient with the people we love.

Romans 12:2

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

- How can our minds be renewed?
- What are the battles we face in which we must “stand firm”?
- How do we look different in our “conversation” (not our talk but our walk) from the world?

Romans 6:12

Therefore, do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey its lusts.

The gospel is our common goal. The phrase “striving together” is the Greek word *sunathleo*. It is the idea of striving together as athletes. There are many sports teams that have great athletes, but the teams do not win the championship. This often has to do with the culture of the team. Do the players perform only for themselves or is there a higher goal that is selfless? The same is true in a family situation. When the members of the family are only thinking about their wants and needs and not serving the other family members there is a lack of harmony and peace in the family.

We can apply this idea to the church as well. There are some jobs that seem more honorable than others but if we are all striving together for the gospel then we will not be concerned about our own honor but the honor of Christ and the welfare of our brothers and sisters. I personally think that this group of ladies is very caring toward each other, and I am so thankful for this. We need to examine our hearts and pray for this serving and cooperative attitude. It is not natural and only comes from God.

- In one Spirit and with one mind – how can we apply this to our lives daily?

...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.

I wonder if the Philippians were surprised that they had opponents. They had seen Paul deal with opponents when he was in Philippi and seen that he did not back down but stood firm in the Lord. The same Lord that gave Paul strength lived in them and lives in us. We should not be surprised by conflict. Jesus told us we would experience difficulties. Our enemy will use all sorts of conflict. Even from those that we think should be our co-laborers. Satan sees any chink in the armor.

John 16:33

These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation, but take courage, I have overcome the world.

2 Timothy 3:12

And indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.

1 Peter 1:6-7

In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Matthew 10:34,38-39

Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. And he who does not take up his cross and follow me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life shall lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake shall find it.

The trials and conflicts we go through are evidence of the salvation granted to us by God!! This is the most exciting part of these experiences. We, of course, need to make sure that the difficulties are not caused by our own behavior. If we are treated badly by our neighbors because we let our pet use their flower beds as a bathroom or leave our stinky trash out for an unreasonable time is not persecution. We need to be known as good neighbors not bad neighbors. Self-inflicted trials caused by irresponsible behavior should not be our experience.

In our time here on earth as believers in the United States we probably won't have to endure persecution. But how do we endure the difficulties of life? Do we trust God? Do we continue to rejoice? Our God-honoring response to difficulties is only through continually remaining bowed before God and allowing the Holy Spirit to work in us. We all face our own unique

difficulties. Jesus lived on this earth and endured every kind of temptation. He is our advocate and has sent us the Spirit for our help.

1 Corinthians 10:12-13

Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it.

God has provided the means for joy even when our circumstances become difficult or even dire. We need to keep our eyes focused on Jesus and the gospel. This life is not eternity. The suffering will end. Let's be determined to bring glory to our great and glorious God no matter what we face. We can stand firm in this faith in one spirit and one mind.

Vs. 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.

The word granted in the Greek is *charizomai* which means to grant as a favor. So, the suffering that we experience is a gift!! I normally do not think of suffering as a gift. I sometimes find myself asking God why he is punishing me. According to this verse that is a wrong response. I need to be grateful for the opportunity that God is graciously giving me (and all of us) to learn to trust and to rejoice and glorify God even in difficulty. When we have the right response in the face of suffering is when the world sees us as something different. Giving God glory is not a normal response. Complaining is the normal response. God has given us so much. How can we complain? Yet we do to our shame.

Vs. 30 Experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me.

Paul is letting the Philippians know that the conflicts, external and internal, that we all experience are not only in us. All believers will experience trouble. We can read in the Bible about believers that God allowed to suffer greatly but they overcame and continued to "stand firm" and because of the faithfulness of God we now can be encouraged by their testimony and the words that were written down for us.

Romans 15:4

For whatever was written in earlier times was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of scriptures we might have hope.

Romans 15:5-6

Now may the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus; that with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.