

Valley Bible Church – Sermon Transcript

Conducting Ourselves in a Manner Worthy of the Gospel Philippians 1:27-30 Part 2

2 Tim. 3:12 says, “**And indeed, all who desire to live godly lives in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.**” The passage does not say maybe. The passage does not say might. It says “will.” There are a number of ways for those seeking to live godly lives in Christ Jesus to suffer persecution. They can be persecuted certainly within the church as they seek to speak the truth in love. Certainly this is common. But by far the greatest source of persecution for those seeking to live godly lives in Christ Jesus primarily will come from the world. Hopefully suffering would not come to professing Christians from the world as a result of our sinful behaviors as we are warned against in **1 Pet. 4:15**. Hopefully suffering would not come to professing Christians because we are trying to make immoral people moral. What is our calling?

Our calling is clear. Listen to Matthew 28:18-20 tell us, “**And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. (19) Go therefore and make** (immoral people moral, is this what it says? Of course not. What does it say?) “**Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and the Son and Holy Spirit.**” Someone might say, “Isn’t God concerned with us helping people live better lives?” And what is the answer to that question? Absolutely. Let us go on to read **V. 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.**” Our calling is not to make immoral and unsaved people moral. Our calling is to make disciples. If we lose our way on this very important point we will only stir up trouble for ourselves and the church of Christ. But worse than this, it will project to the world a wrong message. It will say to the world that the gospel of Christ is not a gospel of grace but a gospel of works. We must avoid this at all costs. If our suffering is not coming to us from the world because of our sinful behaviors, and if our suffering is not coming to us from the world because of misguided attempts to change the behavior of people before we change their heart, where will our suffering in the world come from?

The suffering that the church will experience in the world will primarily come as we actively and boldly proclaim the gospel of Christ.

And in light of the call that I gave you last week, I believe it is very important for you to be mindful of this. Do you remember what we talked about last week? We talked about the Christian’s emotional responses to the recent terrorist attacks and compared those responses to non-Christian’s emotional responses to the attacks. Hopefully you remember that though there are clear similarities between Christian Americans and non-Christian Americans which are drawing us closer together in the midst of our national crisis, there are also subtle but significant differences that separate us. The greatest difference difference is that unsaved Americans will want to help by giving money, by giving blood, by becoming involved in patriotic displays, but we in contrast as saved Americans will not only do these things but we will do something that they cannot do. We have the resources in Christ to actually attack the root of our present crisis and that is the evil heart of man. It is only through the gospel of Christ that the hearts of evil people can be changed. It is only through the gospel that the evil hearts of Arab terrorists can be changed.

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Therefore at the end of last week's message, by way of a challenge we returned to the passage that we began two weeks ago which goes from **Philippians 1:27 - 2:18**. What was the theme of this section of scripture? The underlying theme of Philippians 1:27-2:18 is "Those who have embraced the gospel need to walk in a manner worthy of the gospel that they have embraced."

The Philippians knew how to live in a manner worthy of their Roman citizenship. Paul is now exhorting them in essence to live in a manner worthy of their heavenly citizenship. If we fail as Christians to walk in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ then we have failed to walk in a manner worthy of our heavenly citizenship. Certainly Paul did not want to be guilty of this. And he did not want the Philippians to be guilty of this and therefore he gives them this wonderful exhortation in **Philippians 1:27** followed by an explanation of what he means which goes all the way down to **Phil. 2:18**. There are three basic components that Paul lists that make up conduct worthy of the gospel of Christ. Last week we introduced you to the first component.

The citizens of heaven should conduct themselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ by standing firm in one spirit and one mind. Let us read **Phil. 1:27-30**, "**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.**" Paul in these verses acknowledges that the Philippians are being opposed by various adversaries. Paul acknowledges that they are suffering as a result of this opposition. But he exhorts them as the citizens of heaven to walk in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ in spite of the opposition and and in spite of the suffering by first of all standing firm in one spirit and with one mind. In order to describe ourselves as standing firm, two things need to be present.

In order to be described as standing firm we must be striving together for the faith of the gospel. What does the passage say? "**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.**" We concluded in light of the immediate context that striving together for the faith of the gospel should be understood as striving together to advance the gospel. In other words, in order to be described as standing firm, we must be striving together to advance the gospel.

What is the work that Christ has given to the church in this world? The church is to strive together to advance the gospel. No Christian is excluded from this work. The whole of the church is expected by the Lord to be involved in this work. There is no adequate excuse for any of us not to be involved in this work. We know the need that exists in the world, we have the answer for that need and the Lord expects us to do all that is within our power to get the message out. What has he called us to do? He has called us to go fishing. What did he say to James and John when he called them to be His disciples in **Matt. 4:19**? He said, "**Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.**" This is our work in respect to the world.

What should our expectations be as we commit ourselves to this work of striving together for the faith of the gospel?

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As we strive together for the faith of the gospel, which is a reasonable and necessary work, we must also understand that it involves hardship (2 Tim. 2:1-3). Listen to the words of **2 Tim. 2:1-3** **“You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. (2) And the things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, these entrust to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also. (3) Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Jesus.”**

We have this week seen many men and women in our armed services being mobilized for war. And they are preparing themselves to leave the relatively comfortable confines of their military bases for more austere and more uncomfortable military positions around the world. We need as the soldiers of Christ to do the same thing. This is the level of commitment that the Lord expects from us as we stand firm striving together for the faith of the gospel.

There are many people within our church who are in fact suffering hardship in this way. They are expending themselves in order to see the gospel of Christ advancing. They are doing this not only by ministering in the programs of this church but they are actively involved in attempting to reach the unsaved of this world in their neighborhoods, and in their workplaces and within their families. Their service is costly both in terms of time, energy and material resources. But they are willing to do this as good soldiers of Christ, striving together with their other brothers and sisters in Christ for the faith of the gospel. But as good soldiers of Christ we should not only be willing to embrace a life of deprivation as we suffer hardship but we also need to be willing to suffer opposition. This leads us to the second thing that needs to be present in order to be described as standing firm. We do not only need to to strive together for the faith of the gospel but we also need to avoid being alarmed by our opponents.

What is the second thing that needs to be present in order to be described as standing firm? In order to be described as standing firm we must in no way be alarmed by our opponents (Philippians 1:28). Let us read **Phil. 1:27-28**, **“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.”** Suffering hardship as a good soldier does not only communicate the willingness to sacrifice the pleasures and comforts of this world but it also involves a willingness to suffer opposition.

As good soldiers of Christ it is not a matter of whether opposition will occur but rather when it will occur and how severe it will be. If we are in fact seeking, in light of our commitment to Christ, to stand firm in one spirit and with one mind striving together for the word of faith, opposition is inevitable.

This is a given. Listen to **John 15:16-20**, **“You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you, that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask of the Father in My name, He may give to you. (17) This I command you, that you love one another. (18) If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. (19) If you were of the world, the world would love its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.**

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(20) Remember the word that I said to you, A slave is not greater than his master,' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you"

As we move out into the world seeking to advance the gospel, striving together for the word of faith, there will be times when we will face opposition(John 15:16-20). This should not surprise us. This is what we should expect. Some Christians have the mistaken belief that by committing themselves to Christ they will enjoy a path of ease. This is not what Christ is calling us to when we commit ourselves to Him. He has not called us to take up a bed of roses but rather a cross which is a symbol of suffering.

But when this opposition comes we cannot allow ourselves to be alarmed. **V. 28** says, **“In no way alarmed by your opponents.”** The word “alarmed” (PTURO) almost always means “to be frightened, terrified, let oneself be intimidated.”

The Islamic terrorists that struck our nation certainly were not going to shrink back from their mission because of possible opposition and neither should we. We need to do just as they did. First of all we need to equip ourselves for the task at hand. We need to equip ourselves in the Word. We need to equip ourselves as best as we can to present the gospel with clarity and with conviction. We need to build relationships with unsaved neighbors and friends to pave the way for the sharing of the gospel of Christ. And secondly we need to be prepared to act when the opportunity presents itself to share the gospel without fear. Not only sharing the gospel without fear but with excitement, because we truly believe that it is the power of God unto salvation. Excited because we believe that it is only through the gospel that the strongholds of evil can truly be destroyed.

Will there be times when our message will be rejected and as a result we might suffer because of our sharing? Of course! We have been called to suffer in this way. But what we are going to suffer most likely will not be anywhere near the level or degree that the Philippians and the Apostle Paul suffered.

Paul certainly did not allow himself to be intimidated by his sufferings, certainly he was strongly encouraging the Philippians believers not be intimidated by their sufferings and we cannot allow ourselves in any way to be intimidated by those who might oppose us and our message. We must continue to press forward with the proclamation of this message. If we do this our confession of faith will come alive for us. If we can continue to press forward in the midst of opposition we will be able to see the bigger picture from God’s prospective and this will provide us an anchor in the midst of all that life may throw at us. How is this?

If we can avoid being alarmed by our opponents in our service for Christ it will be a sign of destruction for our opponents (Philippians 1:21-24). Let us again read **V. 28**, **“In no way alarmed by your opponents - which is a sign of destruction for them**” Notice the passage does not say, **“which is a sign of destruction to our opponents.”** What does it say? It says, **“It will a sign of destruction for them.”** If Christians, while undergoing persecution remain composed, their composure is a sign to them that their persecutors will be damned if those persecutors remain unrepentant (Philippians 1:28).

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This is a very sobering realization and one that will put our suffering for the sake of Christ into perspective real quickly. When we have this perspective we are not so concerned about us when suffering for Christ but rather we will be concerned for those who are persecuting us. This is why we see the response of Christ to His persecutors while dying on the cross, **“Father, forgive them for they know not what they do.”** And this is why we see Stephen crying out just before he dies at the hands of certain Jews for the proclamation of the gospel, **“Lord, do not hold this sin against them!”** If we fail to be reassured of the lostness of the world around us through such things as our perseverance while undergoing persecution we will lose an important motivator for conducting ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. If we are not frequently reminded of the lostness of the world through our persecutions we may, rather than seeking to reach the world, become very comfortable in the world.

But our composure is not only a sign to us of the future destruction of our persecutors, it is also a sign to us of our ultimate salvation (Philippians 1:28). Let us go on and read the rest of **V. 28** **“In no way alarmed by your opponents --- which is a sign of destruction for them, but of salvation for you”** Paul is encouraging the Philippians to view their perseverance amid persecution as a sign of ultimate salvation. If we fail to be frequently reassured of our special standing before God and our ultimate salvation, we tend to see things not with the eyes of God but more with the eyes of the world. We will find ourselves, rather than setting our affection on things above, setting our affection on the things of earth.

But what can keep us thinking about heaven? What can keep us thinking about our ultimate destiny of going and being with Christ? I believe, strongly based on the scriptures, that there is no better vehicle to remind us and to reassure us of our ultimate deliverance than our ability to remain composed and persevering under trial (James 1:2-12; 1 Pet. 1:3-7). Listen to **1 Pet. 1:3-7**, **“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, (4) to obtain an inheritance which is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, (5) who are protected by the power of God through faith for a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time. (6) In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been distressed by various trials, (7) 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.”**

Isn't this exactly what was happening to Paul in the midst of his sufferings in his Roman imprisonment? Wasn't he greatly rejoicing? Not only rejoicing that God was using his present circumstances to advance the gospel but being assured that all of his sufferings in his body would result in him being ultimately delivered. This is why he could say that death would be gain. This was not a novel thought to him but a thought I am sure was being pressed upon him each time he suffered at the hands of the world because of his bold and relentless proclamation of the gospel of Christ.

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CONCLUSION

WE HAVE BEEN CALLED BY CHRIST TO PROCLAIM THE GOSPEL. THIS IS OUR WORK. THIS IS A WORK THE WORLD CANNOT DO. AND IT IS THIS WORK THAT OFFERS THE WORLD THE ONLY HOPE FOR THE EVIL THAT IS IN MEN'S HEARTS.

LET US AGAIN, IN LIGHT OF THE TERRORIST ATTACKS ON THE UNITED STATES LAST WEEK, COMMIT OURSELVES ANEW TO THE TASK OF WORLD EVANGELIZATION. BUT LET US KNOW THAT IT WILL NOT BE EASY. WE MUST BE PREPARED TO SUFFER HARDSHIP AS A GOOD SOLDIER OF CHRIST. THIS MEANS THAT NOT ONLY WILL WE SUFFER DEPRIVATION BUT WE WILL ALSO SUFFER PERSECUTION. BUT DON'T ALARMED, FOR OUR COMPOSURE IS A SIGN OF DESTRUCTION FOR THEM, BUT OF SALVATION FOR US.....