

[war lord]

:: philippians 1.27-30 ::

Finishing up chapter 1 this morning. Our text is the last 4 verses.

Starting in verse 27, we read:

Philippians 1.27-30 - Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel, and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God. For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me.

Paul ends this chapter with some interesting battle language. While he's been talking about the fullness of God that a Christian can enjoy day by day, he's also been teaching us about the defense of the Gospel and our place in accomplishing God's work here on the earth.

Here we see words like conflict, stand fast, adversaries. These verses remind us that we are on a campaign for the Lord, against the forces of Satan, who seek to devour and destroy the lost people of the world.

The Holy Spirit is a restrainer. The Church is a combatant in the struggle for eternity. That makes us soldiers who have pledged ourselves to our Savior King, Jesus Christ.

To that end, Paul speaks in this text about our individuality as soldiers and our solidarity as a unit.

First, he says:

Philippians 1.27a - Only let your conduct be worthy of the Gospel of Christ...

Some versions have the word *conversation* there in place of conduct. Bible commentators point out that the word Paul used there was different than one he often used. It means more than speech, but speaks of our heavenly citizenship and our behavior in general.

When we step back and see the military analogy in this text, we can look at it this way: Is our conduct befitting a soldier of God? Are we in line, in rank under our Commander, Jesus Christ, and His orders?

General McChrystal recently lost his job, not because of criminality or treason, but because his conduct was not befitting a soldier. A soldier's life is not solitary, but is part of something greater. A greater Body, a greater goal. Therefore, especially in wartime, a soldier's actions, words and conduct are scrutinized and held to the standard of that greater goal.

Paul opens this text with the standard that all Christians are held to: The Gospel of Jesus Christ. His message. His methods. His purpose. His standard.

He goes on in verse 27 and says:

Philippians 1.27b - ...so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs...

A good soldier, spiritually speaking, keeps himself and his affairs in constant inspection readiness. We are equipped to keep ourselves holy, not perfectly, but consistently, so that God's pure white glove might find us faithful, humble, uniformed in His righteousness, armed with His provisions and munitions.

Whether Paul would again make it to Philippi or not, his desire was that the believers there would be prepared for an inspection. We call this being rapture ready.

Matthew 24.45-51 - "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods. But if that evil servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Philippians 1.27c - ...that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the Gospel.

Unity in the Body of Christ, unity in a local church, is essential to the work of the Kingdom. We live in an era when unity is not as valued as it should be. Culturally, the West has produced a large number of Christians who believe unity means the Church does what *I* want. We live in a time where often people break fellowship with their congregation over small, personal differences or opinions. That's not what we're called to.

Instead, we're called to stand fast.

We've all seen this example in a movie battle scene. The battalion is waiting for the onslaught, the captain is calling for them to hold the line, yet one or two or three crack under the pressure and break ranks, leading usually to instant death.

God constructed the Church so that we might strengthen one another and gain ground together as a unit. There is much to do individually, but together we're able to do things that individually we cannot. Together we can accomplish further work that we could never do alone.

Toward that end, we are called to stand fast. First, to stand fast in one spirit. One current. One direction. God is not a God of confusion, but of peace and clarity. Thus, He directs each local church to carry out specific missions in specific locations.

The Holy Spirit gives us the direction we need as a congregation. As a unit, we must stand fast in one spirit. One current. One direction that we've received from the Lord. Following His orders, as delivered through the men that He has raised up to serve in those positions.

Then, we are called to have one mind, striving together for the faith of the Gospel.

We must be on the same page when we work together in the Church. We must carry out God's leading by using the methods that He calls us to, but also by having an agreement of the route we are going to go. If I think I have a better idea of how tracts should be handed out, I'm free to suggest that idea. But, in the end, I am called to unity of mind with my brothers. So, when a course of action is decided, I am commanded to strive together with my fellow soldiers in one spirit and one mind because there is a greater goal than *my opinion* **and** God has a plan in mind, if we're willing to seek Him and receive it.

We don't overlook sin. We don't overlook stupidity. But, normally speaking, my job is to submit to authority and trust in the people that God has raised up to serve in His Church.

Philippians 1.28 - ...and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God.

This life is not shore leave. This life is active duty. We are sent to the front lines and there are adversaries out there.

The good news is that we have victory. There is an invincibility that comes along with living a Spirit-full life. "You want to beat me? Fine. You want to stone me? Fine. You want to burn me? Fine. I'm going home. I'm headed for eternity."

When we're not living in the thick of persecution, we tend to forget this invincibility. But it's ours. God came and won a decided victory of sin and death and the Devil. So, we don't have to be afraid of them anymore.

Sadly, we often harbor fear in our lives. We sometimes forget to shake that off and receive God's peace and contentment.

Bible commentator William Barclay wrote something interesting when he came to this passage. He said:

*The world is full of Christians on the retreat, who, when things grow difficult, play down their Christianity. The true Christian stands fast, unashamed in any company. He expects unity; they are bound together in one spirit like a band of brothers. **Let the world quarrel;** Christians must be one. He expects unconquerability...He expects a cool, calm courage. In times of crisis others may be nervous and afraid; the Christian will be still serene, master of himself and of the situation.*

We must master ourselves. Be inspection ready. Be conflict ready. Be armed and positioned to carry out the mission God is sending us on as soldiers in a unit, unafraid.

One author once said, "The oldest and strongest emotion of mankind is fear."

Perhaps that is true, but as a Christian, we have been *saved* and made into a new creation. We're now heavenly men and nothing can separate us from God's love or His plan for our lives. Fear is vanquished. When we fear, we are free to call on our fellow soldiers for strength and free to cast it on Jesus Christ, who delivered us from it.

Philippians 1.29 - For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.

This is a difficult verse, as far as verses go. But this is the life we've received. It's one thing to be issued a uniform. But when we became Christians, when we became citizens of heaven, we were enlisted into active duty.

A soldier in wartime must endure great difficulty and trial. Why? For fun? For experience? For the greater mission. *For God and country* is what armies have said historically. For us it's, *For God and Kingdom*.

The Christian life includes suffering. We are contending against the Devil and his desire to destroy mankind. There's definitely going to be some blowback in our efforts. Every week we read about skirmishes between darkness and light. Spiritual victory is won, but physical suffering still exists all around the world. It is a part of the Christian life.

If we're never suffering on any level for the Lord, perhaps the reason lies within us.

Don't get me wrong, I'm not saying we all have to lose hands or be beaten or imprisoned or anything like that. But if there's never *any* friction between us and the world, never any difficulty when it comes to our witness or our service to the Lord, then perhaps, just perhaps we're not carrying out the orders and the standard God has given us. Or, perhaps we've removed ourselves altogether from the front lines and only spend time with our fellow soldiers and never venture out to gain ground for our King.

Those are questions we need to pose to ourselves, with the careful, loving influence of the Holy Spirit. Because suffering is a given. Paul expected it, Jesus expected it, we should expect it and be ready for it, joyful through it, purified by it.

Philippians 1.30 - ...having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me.

Spiritual warfare, spiritual conflict, spiritual battle is nothing new for followers of Christ. Paul almost makes light of the type of difficulty that was demonstrated in his life.

Praise God that we can prepare ourselves for the trials of this life by reading Biblical case studies.

Want to know how to gain ground at work? Check out Daniel.

Want to know how to stay safe on the road? Check out Abraham.

There are so many ways we can prepare ourselves and train for what's ahead by looking into the revelation already given to us by God.

The Christian life is a battlefield. Sometimes you're stationed in Saudi Arabia, sometimes you're stationed in San Diego. God's got the orders worked out. He's put you in a platoon that you're tailor-made for. We walk invincible as we walk in the Spirit, unified with our brothers, purposed to carry the Gospel with us wherever we're sent.

You're sent. Get going.