

## Living In A Manner Worthy Of The Gospel - September 2017

### Philippians 1:27-30

As Paul concludes this wonderful section about living in difficult circumstances he gives us a focus for living that is simple yet so very important. And no matter where you are in your Christian journey you'll be able to find some practical truth in Paul's words.

Paul's philosophy is simple . . . **“conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel”**. The word used here is a word that refers to conducting yourself as a proper citizen. You might hear this kind of thing when an Ambassador was being sent to another country. They would be told to remember that they represented their country so they should behave accordingly. Or perhaps you might hear these words from a principal or coach when they say, “you represent your school, or community - **represent them well.**”

**What does it mean to conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel?** We could make a long list of what this might mean but let's look at what Paul says. He tells the Philippians that if they live their lives focused on living consistently with their faith, he'll see or hear certain things about them. He tells them he'll hear that they **Stand Fast. They will be people who are well anchored.**

As believers we face opposition from many fronts. We're confronted daily with competing philosophies. We face opposition from the values and morals of the world. Everywhere we turn these days it seems we face those who seek to weaken our foundations.

**We face constant temptation from the World, the Flesh and the Devil.** The person who lives consistent with the gospel, is a person who stands firm in the midst of opposition.

But in order to stand, we must be anchored to the right place. If you go to hang a heavy picture on your wall you can't just drive a nail into the wall. Well! Yes you could, it may hold for a while . . . but if the nail is not anchored to a stud, for sure it will come out of the wall. Right living comes from right beliefs and not the other way around.

Many people say they don't like doctrine. **But do you know what doctrine is? It's the truth that we believe.** If we don't study doctrine, we'll be nailing our faith to a spot that will not hold.

Paul says that those who are conducting themselves in a manner worthy of the gospel will **contend as one**. It's the word from which we get our word **"athletic"**. Just as a team must work together to be victorious, so Paul feels the church needs to work together to be successful in the world.

**We all come from different backgrounds don't we? We've different tastes, styles and interests.** And sometimes we can let our differences divide us or we can let our common experience of grace in Christ unite us. Our differences will not be the cause for division . . . they will provide opportunities to grow.

**I've said it before and will say it again - Christians in conflict with other Christians only causes the world to turn away.** But when Christians work together, the world takes notice. If we conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel we'll gladly set aside our ego for the purpose of advancing the gospel. We'll overlook minor differences and discuss bigger differences in a spirit of love.

The third characteristic of people living in a manner worthy of the Gospel is that they will **Live Without Fear**. The word for **"fear"**

is the same word that would be used for a horse that was startled. A startled horse takes off running, but not a Christian living in a manner worthy of the gospel. They will not run away out of fear.

They'll not cave in to the threats of others and will show that they really do believe that God will be their shield and fortress by living each day as a child of God. They'll be confident . . . not in their ability . . . but in His.

Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:20 that God has made us His ambassadors . . . as if He was making His appeal through us

### **We represent our Saviour;**

When we're at work

When we're negotiating a contract

When we're at the complaint desk of a store

When we're having a frustrating day in the garden

When we're mad at our spouse or children

When we're managing our personal finances

When we're going out for a night of entertainment

No matter where you are . . . you represent Jesus. **Paul's counsel is simple: Represent Him Well.**

### **How We Do This?**

**It sounds so simple doesn't it? But it's not.** At the end of this passage Paul gives us some help. I think he points out that much

of this has to do with our attitude. Paul points to two things we need to realize. **First, we're Privileged To Believe.**

It's an honour to be given a gift as wonderful as this.

It's an honour to be granted eternal access to the Father.

It's an honour to trust and be associated with one who is so trustworthy.

It's an honour to commit our cares to this one who is so sufficient for our every need.

We'll live in a manner worthy of the gospel when we realize that to live this way is an honour. An honour to serve one who never takes us for granted. It's a privilege that has been given us. We must never take it lightly.

We need to remind ourselves over and over that we stand in a grace that we don't deserve. We've been given a position that we'll never be worthy of. The honour we've been given should make us more determined than ever to live up to that honour.

The second attitude . . . the second privilege is much more difficult to accept. Paul says we not only have the privilege to believe . . . **but the Privilege To Suffer. How foreign this is to our ears!** Many people look to Christianity because they believe it will end their suffering. **And indeed it does . . . on one level.** When we come to Christ we no longer have to fret about eternity. But our struggle with the world may just be beginning.

**So could suffering could be seen as a privilege?** Suppose you've a child who is very sick. As a parent, would you willingly endure personal suffering on their behalf? **I suspect you would.** You'd go

without sleep. You'd sacrifice a body part. You'd spend your life savings. You'd even give up your own life if it could save your child. You'd willingly and gladly suffer out of your love for your child. And if someone asked you, you'd tell them that you'd do it all again because of the love you have for them.

**Paul says this is the way we should view Christ** - to love Him enough to suffer if need be for the honour of His name. It's not a curse . . . it's a privilege to be able to demonstrate our love for Him.

Paul could see the handwriting on the wall. He sensed that the Philippians might soon be persecuted for their faith. Stephen had already been killed (**recall Paul had a hand in that**) and James had also been put to death.

In AD 67, Nero ordered the burning of Rome. The fire lasted for nine days and when the blame turned to Nero, guess what - **Nero blamed the Christians**. And then he came at the Christians with a new and vicious vengeance.

Foxe's Book of Martyrs records how Nero contrived all manner of punishments for the Christians that the most depraved imagination could design. In particular, he had some sewed up in skins of wild beasts, and then they were attacked by dogs until they expired; and others dressed in shirts made stiff with wax, were fixed to stakes, and set on fire in his gardens, in order to illuminate them.

This persecution was general throughout the whole Roman Empire. In the course of it, Paul and Peter were martyred.

In Hebrews 11, that great chapter on faith, we read that early believers were tortured and refused to be released, so that they

might gain a better resurrection. Some faced jeers and flogging, while still others were chained and put in prison. They were stoned; they were sawed in two; they were put to death by the sword. They went about in sheepskins and goatskins, destitute, persecuted and mistreated - the world was not worthy of them. (Heb. 11:35-38)

**What blows me away is in each of these cases, the people considered it an honour to suffer for His name.** We'll hope that we're never called to suffer in these ways. But even if we are, pray that we might face those times as those who have gone before us. It's more likely though that you and I will face more subtle persecution for our faith.

We may lose our job

We may face lawsuits

We may be ostracized and verbally abused

We may be physically attacked

We may face business losses

We may be ignored by people we wish noticed us

We may be discriminated against because of our profession of faith.

Whatever the suffering that comes from being united with Christ (and not from us doing something stupid), we should count it a privilege to stand up for Him.

**So What Happens When We Live This Way**

Paul say two main things will happen if we live our lives seeking to live in a manner that is worthy of the gospel. First, **we'll Verify Our Salvation.** The world looks at how we handle the tough times to find out whether or not our profession of faith is real or not. A true believer shows they are a true believer by the way they live.

However, note a couple of important clarifications. First, we're admitted to Heaven on the basis of what Christ has done and not on the basis of what we do. We don't have to **"be good"** in order to be saved. However, any person who has placed their trust in Christ, is a person in whom the Spirit of God dwells and that person will change.

Second, it's important that you understand that no believer is going to live a perfect life. Every believer will stumble on occasion. **We're people who are in the process of transformation.** When we look for the evidence of genuine conversion - look over a long period of time. **A person who lives consistently will show that their conversion was genuine.**

**We verify the truthfulness of our salvation when we live consistent with our profession.** If we say we believe we're forgiven, we should live as people who have been set free from our past.

If we say we're saved by God's undeserved grace, we should be gracious in our dealings with others. If we say we believe in the dreadfulness of sin, then we should hate sin and work tirelessly to overcome it in our lives.

If we say we believe in the future glory of Heaven then we should show that our longing is not for this world, but the next. We do that

by the way we use our time, spend our money, and the attention we give to developing a relationship with Christ.

If we believe that God will supply all our needs we should stop churning. If we believe that God is working in every situation, then we should show that by our joyful endurance even in the hard times.

Being saved is much more than a prayer you say after a moving sermon . . . being saved is a settled trust and commitment to what Christ has done on your behalf. **True commitment reveals itself in the way we live.**

The second effect of Living in a Manner Worthy of the Gospel is that we **We'll Draw Others to Christ**. People of the world take notice of the emptiness that is in their own lives when they see the peace, joy, and contentment that exists in the child of God.

Jesus told his disciples, [Matthew 5:14-16]

“You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. **In the same way, let your light shine before men**, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.

When we live consistent with the gospel of Jesus Christ, our light shines and others can see . . . and will be drawn to the truth.

## **Conclusions**

**So, having said all this, what do we do now?** Here's a few suggestions. Take the time to reflect on the privilege and honour that is ours in being children of God. Many of us have grown up in



the church. We take it for granted. **So, take some time to consider where you might be today if God hadn't saved you.**

**Find some way to remind yourself of who you represent.** Maybe it could be a Bible verse or plaque hung in strategic spots. Whatever it is, consciously use it to **remind yourself that your purpose is to live a life worthy of the gospel.**

Finally, ask God to help you live out the gospel wherever you are. Ask Him to help you to reflect His goodness to others. Spend time thanking Him for His grace.

**There are many applications from this text. Let me make the most obvious one.** Don't ever give up on your friends and loved ones. **Don't ever stop praying. Don't stop loving them.** And don't be afraid to speak up for Jesus when you have the chance.

Here's the **"just one thing"** on Paul's heart that we need to remember. **You're a citizen of heaven. Live like it.** You can impact your world if you will ...

**Stand without division.**

**Strive without compromise.**

**Speak without fear.**

**Sacrifice without shame.**

**May God help us to make a difference for Christ by the way we live this week. And for all of us, as Ambassadors for Christ, let's represent Him well . . . in everything we do.**