

Remnant Life Church

March 20, 2022

The Church of the Philippians

Part 10

Unity: Standing Firm in One Spirit

Phil 1:27-30

Last week we examined the first part of Paul's statement in **Phil 1:27** that he was not sure he would ever see the people of the Philippian church again.

- We said that this was not a lack of faith on Paul's part
- But an understanding that the will of God does not always line up with what we want
- Yet we must live recognizing that His will is always best
- We are His servants, and a servant always does the will of the Master

Paul also tells the people that the only way they can stand when people and circumstances are coming against them is in the unity of believers in one spirit.

READ – Phil 1:27-30

Look again at verse **27** he says, *Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel.*

So, we know that the phrase **in the manner** is important to what Paul is teaching them

- That word in the original Greek is *pahl-ee-TOO-oh*
- There are many variations and tenses of the phrase but at the root is where we get the words politics, policy, and police – those things that have to do with our citizenship.
- But Paul is not talking about being the citizen of a country, he is talking about being a citizen of the Kingdom of God
- Your citizenship is demonstrated by how you live
 - We refer to the teaching of Jesus in Matthew 5-7
 - These are not just sound teachings they are the blueprint for how we should live
- Paul is telling the people in Philippi, this is how you should conduct yourself, how you should live every day if you are to live in the manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ.

That presents the next important word in the **27th** verse - **worthy**

- The concept of worthy is about weighing two things out
- When we say that someone is worthy of a reward, it means that their performance is commensurate with what they are receiving
- Or we say that the bonus an employee is receiving is due to their good work
- They are worthy of the recognition because their performance matches it

A life worthy of the Gospel is an inescapable obligation for the Christian

- But do not mistake this for our being worthy of God's love or His forgiveness

- **Rom 3:9-10** - *What shall we conclude then? Do we have any advantage? Not at all! For we have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin. As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one;*
- To be worthy of the Gospel means to follow and obey God, not man
- Let's look at an account involving the disciples that demonstrates what we are looking at here

READ: Acts 5:17-29

- In **Acts 5** Peter and the disciples are put into prison by the ruling Jewish religious body called the Sanhedrin
 - While they are in their cells, an angel appears and releases them while the doors remained locked and the guards at their posts
 - Now when the Jewish leaders heard that the disciples were all out and once again back in the temple courts they had them brought before them and reminded that they had been told not to do that (funny situation)
 - IOW they were told to be quiet and sit down
- But their response was why they were worthy of the Gospel
 - **Acts 5:29b** - *We must obey God rather than human beings!*
 - This is the answer you may be called on to give one day when you are told you can no longer speak of God and the love of Jesus Christ – will you be able to do that?
 - When your words and actions are weighed out, will they be worthy of the Gospel?
- Paul was always speaking in defense of the Gospel, but it was the actions of his life that made his defense worthy of attention
 - How can you expect people to deem your defense about Jesus worthy, if they do not see it being lived out in your life?
 - And, Paul is showing us, those actions cannot be determined by the circumstances around you (he is in prison)

And this is Paul's primary reason for writing to the Philippians

- He wants the people of the church to remain steadfast in their faith when under attack
- Remember that Philippi is a Roman colony – this is a designation highly sought after and coveted within the Roman empire
- For a town to be called a colony of Rome means that it is under Roman rule, they are protected by the might of the Roman army, the people are considered citizens and their names are on the roles in Rome, they also have all the rights and privileges of a citizen living in Rome
- But that also meant that to worship outside of the Roman faith, meaning the deification of Caesar and all of the Roman gods, was to live in danger, in ridicule, and under fire
 - Paul is encouraging the people to maintain a strong front in the face of the attacks
 - He tells them to stand firm

Standing firm will require you to change some things about your life'

- In football, a linebacker preparing to tackle a running back must change his posture

- If he is standing up straight with his feet close together he has no chance of making the play
- He must spread his feet apart, bend his knees, get his hands and arms in a ready position to react to the runner
- It is in the same way that Peter said in **1 Peter 3:15** - *Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.*
 - And why do you have hope?
 - Why don't the troubles and trials of life bowl you over?
 - Because your posture is different because of Jesus
 - Your actions are worthy of the Gospel of Jesus Christ because your response to the hope in your life is seen by others every single day

But here is what you must understand - it is impossible to do that consistently on your own

- Sure, you may be able to pull it off once in a while or for a measure of time
- But you will never be able to sustain it
- Why?
 - Because satan is ALWAYS trying to discourage you, knock you off course, manipulate and tempt you into a place where you say and do things that are not honoring to God
 - When you are by yourself, when you withdraw or isolate yourself during a difficult time, you have no one to encourage you, strengthen you, or give you a different perspective that may change your thinking and responses
 - All of this simply means you need to be a *part of a team*
- Here is another way to say that – Christianity is a team sport, not an individual one
 - Tennis, golf, running are all solitary endeavors
 - You have no one to help you, pick you up, or add to your efforts
 - The reason baseball, basketball, football, and hockey are so great is that you have teammates
 - There is the opportunity every time you play for you to do something that is beyond yourself because of your teammates
- This is one of the reasons that being in church is so important for the Christian
 - Streaming sermons on line is both a blessing and a curse
 - Some call other things they do such as watching a preacher on TV or online a substitute for church
 - There is no substitute for the fellowship and accountability of the church family!
- The question you may be asking then is why does being a part of a church fellowship make you stronger in your day-to-day life?
 - The answer is simple
 - TREES!

But not just any tree – very special ones that provide us with a wonderful metaphor regarding the importance of church fellowship

While trees come in all sizes, heights, and circumferences, there is one species that is universally recognized as the grandest of them all – the Giant Redwoods

- While they do grow outside of the United States, most notably in Ireland, the most densely and well-known of the trees is found along the coast of northern California in Sequoia National Park
 - The 10 tallest trees in the world and the 10 largest trees by volume are all located there
- Many that hold very special distinctions
 - The tallest tree in the world – Hyperion – 380 ft tall – Coastal Redwood
 - The largest tree in terms of sheer size and weight is a Redwood by the name of General Sherman a Sierra Redwood with the distinction of being called “The World’s Largest Living Thing”
 - It towers 275 feet in height
 - At its widest point it is 36.5 feet across (perspective - opening of the stage is 30’)
 - The diameter of its largest branch is over 7 feet in circumference
 - And it has a total volume of over 600,000 board feet (the amount of usable lumber it would provide)
 - Perspective
 - The total weight of the tree is over 6000 tons
 - It is the equivalent weight of over 3000 automobiles
 - Its diameter is greater the width of an average home
 - Many of its branches are wider than virtually all of the trees found in the Rocky Mountains
 - There is enough wood in this one tree to build 45 5-room homes
 - There are others – the General Grant (second largest); and a tree called Chandelier
 - Famous because the base of the trunk has a road that runs through the middle of it and cars drive through it every day

Okay, you say, this is all very interesting but what does it have to do with the importance of being connected to a church body?

- Because of one other fact of the Giant Redwoods that you might not be aware of
 - In spite of their enormous size and weight, the roots of the tree go no deeper than between 6 and 12 feet
 - They do even have a tap root
 - IOW it has a comparatively very shallow root system
 - That’s crazy, right – anybody with a rudimentary understanding of physics knows that nothing of that height and weight can be supported by such a small base
 - I didn’t say it was small
 - I just said it was shallow
- The fact is, the roots of the Redwood don’t extend down, they spread out
 - They will spread anywhere from 100 150 feet in every direction and some of the very largest can occupy an area of over 4 square acres
 - But that raises another interesting thing to consider
 - If they spread out so far, what about the other nearby giant trees?
 - What happens when the roots are growing in and around each other?

- Now how many of you are beginning to see where I am headed with this?
- The roots of the many trees in the same area will intertwine creating an anchor for each of them that would be impossible to uproot
- To knock one down means you would have to knock them all down
- Consider how that coincides with the importance of the church family
 - There is incredible strength and security when you have allowed your life to intertwine with other believers
 - Notice again that the roots of the tree are not deep
 - Meaning you don't have to reveal every intimate detail of your life in order to be secure in the church family
 - Simply committing yourself to this church family means you would have many people who would be delighted to encourage you
 - They would be happy to hold you when the winds of strife or temptation are howling
 - And to hold you up when you are just sometimes too weak to even stand

What is needed for this to be true in your life?

1. Accept and recognize that you CANNOT do it on your own and when you try it will ultimately not end well
2. A willingness to be a little bit vulnerable
3. Make your life in the church a priority and not just one more thing on your already too busy schedule

Look at what Paul says again in the 27th verse - *Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel*