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livinghopechurch.net

7 | PHILIPPIANS 1:27

HOW TO WALK WORTHY

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Announcements

1. Welcome visitors!
2. Thank you for those who joined us for our week of prayer last week.
3. Last week's Fighter verse: Isaiah 41:10

Introduction

Open your Bible if you will to **Philippians 1**. The title of our study this morning is: "How to Walk Worthy."

Making Aliyah to Our New Homeland

This morning, we are going to talk about what it means to walk worthy and how exactly we attain that. When I was in Jerusalem last year at this time, I heard about a lot of people making *aliyah* to Israel. *Aliyah* is a Hebrew word that has to do with a fragrance ascending up, and to make aliyah in Jewish culture has always related to the Jews returning to their homeland. It has the idea of them ascending to God's presence in Jerusalem. In other words, a person, usually young people, will leave their homeland, say America or some other place, and they make their *aliyah* to Israel and become a citizen there. When they make aliyah, they give up a lot. They no longer live according to the culture of their countries, but adopt a new homeland. People will come from all around the world speaking other languages, but they all have to learn Hebrew and speak Hebrew. They adopt the Jewish culture. It's an amazing thing. They take on the citizenship of Israel.

I can't go to Israel and make *aliyah*. You have to have a Jewish heritage in order to do that. But we can all of us can make *aliyah* to the true Jerusalem above and ascend to God's presence this morning. Remember *aliyah* means "going up." And we as Christians are to make our aliyah to a **higher calling**! Our passage this morning in a real way teaches that when we came to know Christ, we made our *aliyah* to our homeland, the New Jerusalem. The very God who created us dwells in us by his Spirit. And because of that new citizenship, we are called to ascend to the high calling of God by walking worthy of the Gospel.

Paul says later on in chapter 3...

But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus (3:13-14)

I'm tired of this world. I want to walk worthy of that high call in Christ. How do we do that? Let's learn about it as we read our passage today.

Scripture Reading

Let's stand and read Philippians 1:27-30,

Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, ²⁸and not frightened

in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God. ²⁹ For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, ³⁰ engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have (1:27-30).

This is God's Word.

In a real way, God is calling us to make *aliyah* to our new homeland. When I was in Israel, and we crossed into the city limits of Jerusalem, I looked around and some people were crying. And a whole lot of people started singing, *Hosanna in the highest, Hosanna to our king!* Now one day we are going to make *aliyah* to our heavenly home physically, but we are called to make *aliyah* spiritually right now.

We have a new heavenly citizenship. God wants us to ascend to higher ground in our walk with him this morning.

Review from Last Week

Here we have a divine imperative. “*Only [Above all], let your manner of life be lived out as a citizen of heaven, worthy of the Gospel of Christ.*” We noted last week that your response to God’s command reveals the condition of your heart. This command as all God’s commands can only be received by a humble heart.

We are to walk worthy of the Gospel. Our life is to always reflect the Gospel. Paul was concerned about this. Notice Paul plans on checking in on the Philippians. “So that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm...” (1:27b). Whether Paul is there or absent, he wants to hear of their **consistency**.

1. BE **CONSISTENT** IN HOLINESS (1:27B)

Transition: Walk worthy. That’s what Paul says. Receive it. What an honor. What a privilege. Christ is worthy. Revelation 5:12, “Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom and might and honor and glory and blessing.” He’s worthy of your life. He’s worthy of your total commitment. He’s worthy of your serious and radical sacrifice. He’s worthy of your time and your life. He’s worthy of every second of every day. He’s worthy of your love. He’s worthy of your strength. Give him your life. If you are young, he’s worthy – serve him your whole life. Start young. If you are old, it’s not too late! It’s never too late! He’s worthy.

Paul begins by saying: “whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are **standing firm**...” If you are aiming for a life worthy of the Gospel, the apostle points to a life of obedience. There is a pattern of life that does not depend on human accountability. The fact that Christ is King and omnipresent and indwelling us through the Spirit, is enough to motivate the Christian to a consistent pattern of obedience. What is that pattern? It involves *first*: a **consistent** pattern of obedience to

Christ. Paul says I desire to know – whether in person or by someone else visiting you (like Epaphroditus) who observe your pattern of life—I want to know that you are **standing firm** in consistent obedience. Live out the love of Christ. Live out your devotion to Christ. He is worthy.

so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel... (1:27b).

A COSMIC CONSISTENCY

Paul exhorted the Philippians in a way which would have appealed to them. What he said, literally, was: ‘Exercise your citizenship worthily of the gospel of Christ.’ Our consistency comes from a cosmic focus: we are citizens of a heavenly kingdom. We are so focused on meaningless things, we need to lift our heads up to the heavens.

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. ² Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth (Col 3:1-2).

Lift up your heads, O gates! And be lifted up, O ancient doors, that the King of glory may come in (Psa 24:7).

Lift up your head to the New Jerusalem, child of God. That’s where your citizenship is. This way of speaking would have been easily understood by the Philippians. Philippi was a Roman ‘colony’, a title seen as one of the coveted prizes of the Roman empire. ‘Colonial’ status meant that the people of Philippi were reckoned as Roman citizens. Their names were on the rolls at Rome; their legal position and privileges were those of Rome itself. They were a homeland in miniature.

But all this is also true of them spiritually as men and women in Christ. Grace has made them citizens of a heavenly city; in their far-off land they are an outpost of the heavenly homeland, the New Jerusalem; heaven’s laws are their laws, and their privileges, its privileges. The life *worthy of the gospel* where the exalted Christ, the exalted Lamb who was slain, forms the focal point of all life.¹

A GROWING CONSISTENCY

Paul says, whether I am present or absent, I want to have a report that you are living a consistent life, worthy of the Gospel you claim to believe. What does this mean? It means that as the people of Philippi faced their **trials and temptations**, and as we and face our trials and tests, and frustrations and fits and frames of mind, we would **consistently** be choosing to **obey this command** to live a life **worthy** of the Gospel. Paul’s hope was though all the trials and tests come, it would be reported to him that the Philippians are living lives worthy of the Gospel.

¹ J. A. Motyer, *The Message of Philippians*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1984), 93.

Where is our hope? In ourselves? No! Our emotions and circumstances are sometimes like a roller coaster. We change. But there are **changeless things** in this universe you can anchor your soul to.

- Is the hope of the Gospel **changeless**? Yes!
- Is Jesus Christ's position as King of kings changeless? Indeed!

Anchor yourself to that. God's promise to give you **sufficient grace** to live a consistent Christian life is changeless as well. There is a consistency in the believer's growth. It's not the same rate for everyone. It's not perfection. It's not that there are no ups and downs. There are dry periods and times when our growth is arrested and stunted.

But the overall pattern of Gospel living is clear: Paul says: "Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ," that is, "Let it be **consistently** worthy (1:27), that whether I drop in to see you or Epaphroditus travels to Rome to give me a report in this rented house where I am imprisoned, that I may hear of your consistent obedience. That is what will gladden my heart. Amidst all the **changes in society**, changes in your circumstances, all of the ups and downs in your emotional state, and all the changes that life constantly brings – among all that, I want to hear above all else, that you are a **consistent** people."

We are far from where we ought to be, but we are also so far from where we once were. We were dead in sin, now we live. We were blind, now we see.

John Newton, author of Amazing Grace, said it this way:

"I am not what I ought to be, I am not what I want to be, I am not what I hope to be in another world; but still I am not what I once was, and by the grace of God I am what I am."

Are you consistently growing in your character? Are you more humble when you are right? Is it your attitude in an argument with your spouse or close friend that you are like the one who is wrong? When you are accused of some fault, do you say, "I'm the problem. It's me O Lord." Spurgeon said, "If anyone thinks ill of you, do not be angry with him; ... If you have your moral portrait painted, and it is ugly, be satisfied; for it only needs a few darker touches, and it would be still nearer the truth." When you are accused, realize you are much more sinful in God's sight than in man's.

Are you growing in your reliance of the grace of God in trials? Are you growing in self-denial and seeing consistent victory in Christ? The pattern of your growth and obedience is to be consistent.

AN ASSUMED GOSPEL CONSISTENCY

The Scriptures assume that the Christian who is justified will be sanctified. Whatever God begins, he completes (1:6). Justification and sanctification cannot be separated any more than justification and glorification can be separated. They are all one full salvation:

past, present, and future. Anyone who would like to separate them teaches error. They may be loving Christians, but they are wrong for this reason: the New Testament assumes that true, genuine believers will persevere in holiness.

A MILITANT CONSISTENCY

How desperately this world needs to see Christians who are consistently reflecting Christ. Are you committed? Are you all in? We are to “endure hardness as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.” A soldier can’t be allured by civilian life. “No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him” (2 Tim 2:4).

Or are you controlled by something other than the Lordship of Christ? We live in the generation of feelings. Every one is led by the rudder of their emotions. The mark of our culture is hedonism and narcissism and serving self. And you cannot allow this world’s culture to put its imprint on you. If you let self dictate whether or not you serve God, then the mark of your life will be inconsistency. What about you? Are you predictable? Do people see a godliness in you that is consistent? Father, mother, do your children see in you a consistent humility? Are you consistent in the right ways? Is there a growing kindness? Is there an increasing love for the all the brothers and sisters, not just the one’s that are easy to get along with?

Is there a consistency in your **service** for Christ? Are you helping in one area of the church, and you are comfortable, but are you ready to grow in another area of ministry? You need to be willing to stretch and grow in your service.

A PERSEVERING CONSISTENCY

As a Christian, when you feel like giving in the towel and quitting, it is the Spirit who comes and brings a militaristic resolve never to quit. He comforts us. He puts a divine and holy ambition to persevere no matter how hard it gets. Consistency is the mark of grace in our lives. By God’s grace we can “stand firm” in the hope of the Gospel. No matter what comes, we can say with Job, “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him” (Job 13:15).

Brothers, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, ¹⁴I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus (Phil 3:12-14).

“Having put my hand to the plow, I will not turn back.” That’s Paul’s great passion and concern for the Philippians. It’s the burden of these pastors and elders. We long for your consistent character in the Gospel.

We avail ourselves of the means of grace, not because our flesh feels like it, but because we must. The very happiness of our soul depends on it. But our flesh, the sinful, selfish part of us, constantly fights against our best motives. The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak. So we go to pray, because God told us, “Men ought always to pray and not to lose heart.” So we pray whether we feel like it or not. And soon we do feel like it. Soon we are delighted in prayer.

We meet with the congregation for fellowship and preaching not because we feel like it. God commands us not to neglect meeting together for worship, but to do so more and more as we see the Day of Christ approaching. We fellowship and worship not because we feel like it, but because God commands it. And once we are here we are so glad we are so glad we've come.

CONSISTENCY EVEN WHEN YOU DON'T FEEL LIKE IT

We don't always feel like doing what we ought to do. The flesh is weak. But once we do obey we are so glad we did. The joy of the Lord is our strength. We meet him in the midst of obeying him. We don't wait for a certain feeling to obey God. We obey.

We get turned off that unclean program that we thought would be so good, whether we feel like it or not. The man of God cherishes his wife, and the godly wife yields and submits to her husband, whether the feelings are there or not. Our obedience is based on the desire of God, not our own desires. God says, "Do this and live." Our heart is tainted with sin so we do not always feel as we ought to feel. That's what the Bible means when it says, "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not to your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him and he will direct your path" (Pro 3:5-6). You can't lean to your feelings. You must trust the omnipotent and all wise voice of God.

How Can I Begin?

What does consistent growth look like? Well, the best way to start is to go to the impossible places in your life.

Contentment in Life: Some days it's hard to be **married**. Some days it's hard to be **single**. Accept where you are in life as a gift from God. Walk worthy in whatever state God has called you.

I know some days in your singleness or marriage that seem impossible. Start there. Be content. You need to get your focus off of your singleness or marriage and on to Christ.

Gossip: What about gossip? That's a hard thing to change. Some of you have remade gossip and justified it by pointing to the reasonableness of your heart's motives. You just want someone to know this and that to pray, but really you are cutting that person down. You know gossip is not a fruit of the Spirit. The **answer** to gossip and jealousy is to start loving that person that you seem to thrive putting down in your mind and with your mouth. Start serving that person. Have them over. It's hard to gossip about a person that you are feeding a meal to and that you are praying for. Love that person. Stop the gossip.

The **impossible:** I don't know what seems impossible to you, but start there. God is a God of power and grace. He wants to demonstrate how faithful and powerful he is. Go to that place you've given up on in your spiritual life. Start there. Perhaps it's **purity**. Perhaps it's **anger**. Perhaps it's **covetousness** and **materialism**. You can't get a handle on your **debt** because you are addicted to the American dream. Whatever it is, test God. He's never failed. His reputation is impeccable.

Get a brother or a sister to pray with you. Walking worthy was never meant to happen alone. We are a body, a forever family, a flock: we can't do this alone. When we fall, we need a brother to help us up again and encourage us to keep walking forward.

Transition: So, we are to walk worthy, and the first way Paul says we can do that is consistency. I want to see you standing firm in the Gospel.

...so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are **standing firm in one spirit**, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel... (1:27b).

But here we see something else. Externally, the Christian walking worthy of the Gospel has a consistent, growing walk with Christ. There is growth in sanctification. There is a growing victory over sin. It may take time, trials, and tests, but God breaks us and renews us, breaks us and renews us. This is the pattern: externally consistency in Christlike character.

But now we come to the second mark of the worthy walk: fearing God. This is the heart of the passage. The pattern of obedience is not only to be **consistent**, but it is to be carried on in the **fear of God**. The external mark is consistent growth and obedience, but the inward engine is a heart fears God and melts before his presence.

2. BE **CONSCIOUS** OF GOD'S PRESENCE (1:27B)

Paul says: it's not about human accountability that makes us walk worthy. Whether we have human accountability or not, we walk worthy of the Gospel. We have a far deeper motive for walking worthy of the Gospel: We fear God. We are aware of the presence of God. It's not about Paul's apostolic presence that motivates the Philippian believers. It's the fear of God.

so that **whether I come and see you or am absent**, I may hear of you that you are **standing firm** in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel... (1:27b).

DEFINITION OF THE FEAR OF GOD

The fear of God is an expression that describes an experience of the awe and majesty of the living God. We can know concepts, but God wants us to know him personally.

Proverbs 9:10, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding."

FEAR GOD IN MY ABSENCE

Paul was aware of the danger that his presence as a man of God might greatly influence the measure of the Philippians' obedience to the revealed will of God. "Whether

I come and see you or am absent, I want to hear that you are standing firm... for the faith of the Gospel” (1:27). But he comes back to this theme in verse 12 of the next chapter:

Therefore, my beloved, as you have **always obeyed** [*consistency*], so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure (2:12-13).

Paul says don't just fear God in my presence, fear God in my absence! You see what he is saying? Your walking worthy of Christ is not mainly due to human accountability. It's a much deeper motive: You are aware of the God who is working in you! You are so aware of this you **tremble** and **fear**.

Joseph in the Old Testament

Joseph in the Old Testament knew the fear of God. When he was tempted by Potiphar's wife, and she daily tempted him and said, "Lie with me" what was his response. Here is a man living in the fear of God. Listen to him: "**How then can I do this great wickedness and sin against God?**" (Gen 39:9).

From a young boy, Joseph had a fear of God. Yes, he received dreams and visions. We should expect that God wants to bless our little ones with personal revelation of himself through the Word of God. Young children in our church ought to be following the Lord in our congregation.

Now notice Joseph later on, as he is approached by Mrs. Potiphar, he hears her immoral desires for him, and he runs. He flees. Remember, he is far away from home. He has no human accountability. He is thousands of miles from his mama and daddy and his brothers. What does he have to lose? Why doesn't Joseph sleep with Mrs. Potiphar? Because Joseph fears God.

Not this saints: the ultimate motivation for holiness is not human accountability. As helpful as that is, it will not ultimately work unless there is first a deep rooted fear of God.

Adam in the Garden

It's not our human accountability that transforms us, it is the living God. If our striving for a life worthy of the Gospel is material altered by our spiritual guides, we have yet to walk in the fear of God. You cannot walk worthy of the Gospel without an acute sense of the presence of God. There is a fullness in God that is forfeited by sin. We saw this in the life of the first man. When he sinned, and paradise was lost, the most important thing that was lost was Adam's communion with God. He was out of delightful submission to the will of God.

When Jesus died and said, *Tetelestai*, It is finished, God ripped the veil from top to bottom and opened paradise again. We can worship him now within the veil.

"He gave himself, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God."

We are interdependent in the Body of Christ, but we human accountability is not what is most important. We need to have the powerful and glorious presence. I've lost the fear of God.

When I come from my devotions and come to breakfast, and my wife burns my pancakes, and I make some snide comment, I have left the presence of God behind.

I go to work, and I start hating my job or my boss or a co-worker and I'm filled with annoyance with someone created in the image of God, I've stopped fearing God.

3. BE **COHESIVE** WITH GOD'S PEOPLE (1:27B)

Let me say that the next thing we see flows from the first.

UNITY FLOWS FROM HUMILITY

Unity comes from the fear of God because God's fear promotes a deep and profound humility in our hearts. "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart, O God, you will not despise" (Psa 51:17).

Unity always comes from humility. Paul's goal is for them to walk together, standing firm in the Gospel and serving together side by side in the Gospel.

so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are **standing firm in one spirit**, with **one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel**... (1:27b).

UNITY FLOWS FROM THE HOLY SPIRIT'S WORK

We already have this unity, but we need to guard it. It was given to us as a gift from the Holy Spirit when we were born again.

I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called,² with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love,³ eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph 4:1-3).

Proud people don't serve together. Proud people fight. Ask God for a fresh vision of his holy presence. Ask him to humble you. It's what we need. You are either humble as a child of God or you will be humbled. "God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble" (Jas 4:4).

UNITY FLOWS FROM HARD WORK

Standing Firm – Military Term: This is military language. Paul wants to hear that they are "standing firm in one spirit." There is a place in our lives **where we do not bend**. We are standing firm in the Gospel. To walk worthy of the Gospel goes against this world. There is so much coming against us.

so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are **standing firm in one spirit**, with **one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel**... (1:27b).

Philippi is a Roman colony. That's a high privilege. They value the citizenship privileges given in that status. Philippi was also a military town, heavily populated both by **active-duty troops** and by **retirees** from service in the Roman legions. Some of the church's Philippi's members would have been active and retired soldiers and would associate vivid combat memories with Paul's words.² If the military works hard at keeping in unison. Putting their shields together. Following commands of the general, so we as Christians should stand firm in one spirit, the Holy Spirit. We should follow his commands in the Word and in through his voice in our conscience.

Steadfastness – Athletic / Olympic Term: Then Paul says we are to work hard at unity as an athletic team does. "...with **one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel**." The word "**striving**" is derived from a root that sometimes refers to athletic competition. Not far south of Philippi is Achaia. Before the Olympics came to Athens, they began in Achaia. This was a town known for their athletic teams. Everyone does their part, but they all work together.

Side by Side – Military Term – Seamless Wall: Ancient Greek athletics developed out of military training for combat, as we still see today in sports such as the javelin, the hammer, the discus, and wrestling. Here, Paul is thinking in terms of **mortal combat**. The Roman soldiers had to march "side by side" together in war. He paints the picture of an advancing line of Roman legionnaires, their long shields forming both a seamless wall before them and a "roof" over their heads against the enemy's arrows and spears. His point is: "Don't let the opposition divide you!"³

Instead, let the pressures from your opponents draw you together in a deeper and stronger unity! Paul will develop this theme more fully in 2:3 – "Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves" (2:3).⁴

He's going to show us how to do that in chapter 2, we are to imitate Christ who being in the form of God humbled himself and chose not to **submit himself to becoming a man!**

It's hard work to be unified! Walk worthy "...with **one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel**." It's a battle.

In a war you don't have time to look at your own self of lick your own wounds. You march forward together helping each other. This is military language. You leave no one behind! You'll have to battle your flesh. You'll have to battle wrong thoughts about people. You'll have to instruct yourself and renew your mind (Eph 4:22ff). It's hard work to stay unified. Brothers and sisters, we are to be advancing, side by side for the faith of the Gospel.

² Dennis E. Johnson, *Philippians*, ed. Richard D. Phillips, Philip Graham Ryken, and Daniel M. Doriani, 1st ed., Reformed Expository Commentary (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2013), 89.

³ *Ibid.*, 92.

⁴ *Ibid.*

UNITY FLOWS FROM OUR HIGH CALLING

We stand firm like a soldier. We strive side by side like athletes. Why? For the faith of the Gospel. What is the Gospel? It is the Good News of the substitutionary atonement. It's so simple a child could understand: Jesus died for my sins. That's the Gospel. God's wrath is satisfied. My hell is paid for. Christ died and rose again for my justification.

What is faith? Faith is trust. Faith is not twelve steps – it's one step: surrender. It's a total trust and surrender to the fact that Christ, who is exalted God would humble himself to die in my place for my transgressions.

Now this high calling isn't just individual, it's corporate. We have a responsibility for one another. I am responsible to walk with you side by side and serve together for the faith of the Gospel. Your burdens are my burdens and my burdens are yours. Together is a wonderful word. As we learned early, it is the Spirit of God that put us together. Let us rejoice and serve along side one another, exalting Jesus Christ!

Conclusion

Walk worthy saints because Christ is worthy. He is exalted. Recognize that. He is worthy of your life and energy and all that you are and have. Walk in consistent obedience. Walk in his fear. And in humility let's walk and serve together side by side for the Gospel.