



Conduct Yourself in a Manner Worth of the Gospel of Christ!

Sermon: Sunday 10:15 am – September 18th, 2011 – At Living Hope Lutheran Church

Philippians 1:27-30 - New International Version 1984 (NIV1984)

²⁷ 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 one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel ²⁸ without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God. ²⁹ For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him, ³⁰ since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.



Sermon: Conduct Yourself in a Manner Worth of the Gospel of Christ!

Pentecost-14 Sunday – 10:15 am - September 18th, 2011 – Pastor Todd Goldschmidt
(Haleigh LaBorde Confirmation)

With the words of our text, the Apostle Paul closes out his personal report to the Philippians, and begins a series of exhortations which continue throughout most of the rest of his epistle. He wrote the words of this letter while imprisoned in Rome, unsure of the exact outcome of his predicament. Yet he confidently maintained: “I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain” (1:20-21). Paul realized that no matter what happened to him—live or die—the Philippians should “conduct themselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.” And that’s God encouragement for you, Haleigh, our confirmand, and all of us this morning as well: no matter what happens, we should

CONDUCT OURSELVES IN A MANNER WORTHY OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST!

The root meaning of the verb translated “conduct yourselves” is “exercise your citizenship.” The Philippians—many of whom were Roman army veterans and their families—were especially proud of their Roman citizenship and the rights and privileges that went with it. Paul wanted to remind them that the rights and privileges they enjoyed as citizens of God’s kingdom through faith in His Son, Jesus, far exceeded their rights and privileges as citizens of the Roman Empire. The same can be said for us, as citizens of the U.S.A., as we discussed in last Sunday’s sermon on the 10th anniversary of 9/11. Just as their conduct and ours in so many ways give evidence of our cherished citizenship, so it should reflect our cherished spiritual citizenship even more.

To exercise our citizenship in a manner worthy of the gospel means that we live in a way that gives genuine evidence of the new spiritual life the gospel has produced in our hearts. When God’s Spirit worked through the gospel to call sinners like you and me to faith in Christ, we were changed from the inside out. God’s Spirit came to live in us and we became new creations. Our lives were changed, our perspective reordered, our behavior patterns radically altered to conform to the will of God as He has so graciously revealed it to us in the pages of Scripture. Whereas we formerly lived only for ourselves and what we could *get* out of life, we now live for the Lord and for others. Now, as “God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, we clothe ourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.” We “bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances we may have against one another.” We “forgive as the Lord has forgiven us” as the Apostle Paul urges us to do in his letter to the Colossians (3:12-13).



When we “exercise our citizenship in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ,” we will also “stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel.” As those who “live by the Spirit,” we stand together, shoulder-to-shoulder, arm-in-arm, unified in our effort to reach out with the saving truths of God’s Word to a dying world. We “make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace,” as Paul encourages us to do in his Ephesian epistle (4:2). With so much disunity in Christendom these days—almost always as a result of departing from the true Word of God—you and I need to faithfully conform our wills to the will of God and subject our faulty, paltry human reason to the Spirit-inspired, inerrant wisdom of the gospel. We need to strive in and through the power of the Spirit who works through that saving Word to tell others that God still demands moral perfection; that He still expects us to be holy like He is.

Unless we measure ourselves by God’s perfect standard, we’ll always find wiggle room and make excuses for our immoral thoughts, words and actions. We’ll minimize our wrongs by comparing ourselves to others; we’ll blame our circumstances for our bad behavior; we’ll even point the finger at God for allowing us to find ourselves in situations that make us prone to sin. Few churches and pastors proclaim the damning truths of God’s law in all of their severity any longer. “Hell-fire and brimstone” sermons are a thing of the past in most denominations today. The time has come when people do “not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they have gathered around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear” just like Paul predicted would happen in these last days in which we live (2 Tim. 4:3). Sadly, so many have “turned their ears away from the truth and turned aside to myths.” At God’s command we “keep away from” (Rom. 16:17) such false teachers even as we try to steer their hearers in the right direction by our personal testimonies to them whenever God gives us the opportunity.

We don’t need to be afraid of our enemies as we carry out the work the Lord has left us in this fallen world to do. He has promised to be with us by His Spirit, to protect us from the evil one, and to give us the very words we need when we need them to witness for Him even before kings. And so Paul writes in our text, “do not be frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God. For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him.” Jesus never said it’d be a bed of roses to testify to the truth. In fact, He said we’d have quite the opposite experience. He stated, “if anyone would come after me, he must deny himself, take up his cross and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it. But whoever loses his life for me and for the gospel will save it.” Then he asked, “What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul?” (Mk. 8:34-36).



Martin Luther wrote: “Out of difficult experiences emerge true Christians. Without troubles, people talk a lot about faith and the Spirit but don’t really know what these things are or what they’re saying.” Friends, faith isn’t faith until it’s faith. Unless your faith is really tested by trial or temptation, so that you have to really on God with all your might in order to pass the test and see you through, then your faith will remain weak and ineffective. Only in times of testing is our faith in Christ exercised and strengthened so that we’re able, by God’s Spirit, to cling more tightly to the truths of God’s Word and never let them slip through our hands metaphorically speaking. So, it will be for you, Haleigh, throughout your years ahead. The more time you spend studying God’s Word like you have in Catechism Class, the more you apply your heart to God’s wisdom, the more actively involved you become in the work of your Savior’s kingdom, the better equipped you’ll be to withstand the assaults of Satan, society & your own sinful flesh. I pray that whenever you think God’s all that you have, you’ll realize that He’s all you need. Amen.

Haleigh, I’d like you to read the answers to the questions I asked you to prepare for today so that you can have an opportunity to demonstrate the faith God’s Spirit has worked in your heart, to give God glory for bringing you to believe the sacred truths of His Word, and to reveal what it means for all of us to conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.