

Preparing For battle

Text : **Phil. 1: 27-30**

INTRODUCTION :

A. Even great warriors must prepare for battle and many include prayer :

1. Most revered of all British heroes, Vice Admiral Horatio Lord Nelson wrote :

May the Great God, whom I worship, grant to my Country, and for the benefit of Europe in general, a great and glorious Victory; and may no misconduct in any one tarnish it; and may humanity after victory be the predominant feature in the British fleet. For myself, individually, I commit my life to Him who made me, and may His blessing light upon my endeavors for serving my Country faithfully. To Him I resign myself and the just cause which is entrusted to me to defend. Amen. Amen. Amen.

2. One of the most famous prayers of an American hero was penned at a critical juncture of the second world war for Gen George Patton by the chief chaplain of the 3rd Army.
 - a. Though brief, only 71 words, that prayer is widely believed to have positively influenced the course of the war.
 - b. Read excerpts from the story of the prayer as written by the chief chaplain of the third army, James H. O'Neill : (edited from ... www.pattonhq.com/prayer.html)

The incident of the now famous Patton Prayer commenced with a telephone call to the Third Army Chaplain on the morning of December 8, 1944, when the Third Army Headquarters were located ... in Nancy, France: "This is General Patton; do you have a good prayer for weather? We must do something about those rains if we are to win the war." My reply was that I know where to look for such a prayer, that I would locate, and report within the hour. As I hung up the telephone receiver, I looked out on the steadily falling rain, ... The few prayer books at hand contained no formal prayer on weather that might prove acceptable to the Army Commander. Keeping his immediate objective in mind, I typed an original and an improved copy on a 3" x 5" filing card.

This done, I ... reported to General Patton. He read the prayer copy, returned it to me with a very casual directive, "Have 250,000 copies printed and see to it that every man in the Third Army gets one." ... I said ... "Very well, Sir!" ... He took his place at his desk, signed the card, returned it to me and then Said: "Chaplain, sit down for a moment; I want to talk to you about this business of prayer." He rubbed his face in his hands, was silent for a moment, then rose and walked over to the high window, and stood there with his back toward me as he looked out on the falling rain.

"Chaplain, how much praying is being done in the Third Army?" was his question. ...: "I am afraid to admit it, but I do not believe that much praying is going on. When there is fighting, everyone prays, but now with this constant rain -- when things are quiet, dangerously quiet, men just sit and wait for things to happen. Prayer out here is difficult. Both chaplains and men are removed from a special building with a steeple. Prayer to most of them is a formal, ritualized affair, involving special posture and a liturgical setting. I do not believe that much praying is being done."

The General left the window, ...

Chaplain, I am a strong believer in Prayer. There are three ways that men get what they want; by planning, by working, and by Praying. Any great military operation takes careful planning, or thinking. Then you must have well-trained troops to carry it out: that's working. But between the plan and the operation there is always an unknown. That unknown spells defeat or victory, success or failure. It is the reaction of the actors to the ordeal when it actually comes. Some people call that getting the breaks; I call it God. God has His part, or margin in everything, That's where prayer comes in. Up to now, in the Third Army, God has been very good to us. We have never retreated; we have suffered no defeats, no famine, no epidemics. This is because a lot of people back home are praying for us. We were lucky in Africa, in Sicily, and in Italy. Simply because people prayed. But we have to pray for ourselves, too. A good soldier is not made merely by making him think and work. ...

Patton's His now famous prayer reads as follows :

Almighty and most merciful Father, we humbly beseech Thee, of Thy great goodness, to restrain these immoderate rains with which we have had to contend. Grant us fair weather for Battle. Graciously hearken to us as soldiers who call upon Thee that, armed with Thy power, we may advance from victory to victory, and crush the oppression and wickedness of our enemies, and establish Thy justice among men and nations. Amen.

General Patton used prayer as a form of preparation for battle. This morning I want us to see some guidelines the Apostle Paul gave the Christians in Philippi to prepare for battle. Christianity is in an ongoing spiritual battle against evil and the forces of Satan who desire to extinguish the light of the gospel.

READ ... Verse 27

Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel

I. TO CONDUCT OURSELVES IN A WAY THAT IS WORTHY OF OUR CITIZENSHIP WE MUST ... FIRST, STAND FIRM IN ONE SPIRIT.

A. “standing firm” is one word in the original.

1. *stēkō* : to stand, to continue to be, to persevere, to persist.
 - a. This is a military term used for those who hold their ground without yielding.
 - 1) Paul uses many unusual words in the book of Philippians.
 - 2) Philippi was a garrison city. (**Strong military presence and many retirees.**)
 - 3) Therefore, Paul seasons this book with many military terms.
 - b. This word refers to one who exhibits unflinching courage in the face of battle.
2. The soldier described as “*stēkō* “ was one who steadfastly refused to leave his post, no matter how heated the battle got he did not give ground.

B. The Apostle Paul makes a spiritual application of this military term.

1. Christian, no matter how heated the battle, stand your ground. **Don't give an inch.**
2. No matter how bad things may seem at the moment, **STAND FOR THE FAITH.**
3. Stand firm like a soldier who will not abandon his post in the heat of battle.

C. Paul does not spell out any specific enemy who is attacking the faith at Philippi.

1. He establishes a principle for all time and for all places.
2. Anytime the faith comes under attack, Christians are to stand firm without yielding.

D. "In one spirit"

1. Be unified in your standing. (Share the one goal that Jesus assigned to us.)
2. Do not allow anyone to break through your line and do not retreat.
3. When godliness and the Christian faith are under fire, stand firm, do not forsake.

II. TO CONDUCT OURSELVES IN A WAY THAT IS WORTHY OF OUR CITIZENSHIP WE MUST ... **Vs 27b** ... STRUGGLE TOGETHER FOR THE FAITH.

A. We Christians are in this fight together and we must fight as one unit.

1. Unity is a common theme all through the New Testament.
 - a. **Phil. 2: 2** - **make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.**
 - b. Compare ... **Eph. 4: 1-6** , **I Cor. 1: 10** , etc.
2. No army succeeds unless it fights as a cohesive unit.
 - a. Same principle applies to any cooperative endeavor : Athletic teams, businesses.
 - b. It is especially true of God's people / church. (Congregationally or universally)
Luke 11: 17 – **Any kingdom divided against itself is laid waste; and a house divided against itself falls.**
 - c. The church in America stopped growing when we lost our unity. (**also congregations**)
3. We are many, but we fight side-by-side as one man. (**putting aside all differences**)

B. Christianity is a constant battle against evil, against the forces (influence) of Satan

1. The word translated "**striving**" is an unusual word.
 - a. This word is used only once in the Greek bible.

- b. synathleō : to labor with others, (**“Ya’ll work together now.”**)
- c. This word was used to describe the fight to the death in the Roman coliseum.
- 2. “synathleō” describes a line of soldiers fighting together as a unit.
 - a. The front lines of the Roman soldiers stood shoulder-to-shoulder forming a wall.
 - b. If one fell they closed ranks to seal the breach or another stepped up from behind.
 - c. The outcome of the battle depended upon their ability to hold the line together.
- 3. Paul applies this to our striving, but ours is for the faith ... in the gospel.
 - a. This is a spiritual battle to the death that involves each one of us.
 - b. It’s a battle which has eternal consequences for every combatant.
- 4. It’s a battle that can only be won by diligent effort on the part of each of us.
 - a. We have Jesus as our commander and chief.
 - b. We have elders to lead us into the battle.
 - c. We have the sword of the Spirit and the shield of faith.
 - d. **BUT ... each of us must fight the good fight of faith TOGETHER in rank.**

C. An army is made up of many people from widely varied backgrounds.

- 1. For an army to work, each individual must put aside his differences and meld in.
- 2. For an army to succeed, each individual must accept the objective of the whole.
- 3. Every soldier must know that he can depend on his comrades in arms.

D. Paul applies this very concept to the church.

- 1. Christians surrender their own personal preferences, their goals and their ambitions.
- 2. Christians join together to fight against any and every enemy of the faith.
- 3. Christianity is under attack as it has not been in more than 1000 years.
 - a. There is organized opposition against all things Christian.
 - b. With each victory, the forces of the prince of darkness to become more emboldened.
 - 1) Pluralism is being forced upon us.
 - 2) Hedonism and secular humanism are advertised daily in all our homes. (**TV**)
 - 3) Our nation is on a downhill slide toward the secularism that has engulfed Europe.
- 4. Standing together as one we can defeat the enemies from without and from within.

III. TO CONDUCT OURSELVES IN A WAY THAT IS WORTHY OF OUR CITIZENSHIP WE MUST ... STOP BEING FREIGHTED BY OPPONENTS.

Verse 28 – in no way alarmed by your opponents – which is a sign of destruction for them, but of salvation for you, and that too, from God.

A. This word “alarmed” (KJV = “terrified”) is another unusual word.

1. This is a unique word used nowhere else in the Greek bible.
2. *ptyrō* : be afraid, to frighten ... (illustrate how horses are spooked)
3. In secular writings of the day, “*ptyrō*” was used to describe easily spooked horses.

B. Paul says, “Do not allow yourself to be intimidated by those who oppose the faith.”

1. This is an enormous problem in the church today.
 - a. Far too often we keep silent allowing evil (darkness) to rule the day.
 - b. Because Christians are outnumbered by the world, we tend to be silent. **to be “P.C.”**
2. **“All it takes for evil to prevail is for good men to do nothing.”**

C. Paul says, “When a Christians refused to be intimidated by evil, it is a sign that they are saved, but that the world is not.”

1. One preacher said, “Your failure to be fearful will be sign that you will be saved.”
2. We must NEVER let the enemies of the faith make us afraid.
3. Paul commands, **“Do not be afraid !!!”**
 - a. Your courage communicates something to the opposition and it will reassure you.
 - b. **II Tim. 1: 7** ... God did not give to us a spirit of timidity.
 - c. Any time you are afraid, you have a spirit within you that DID NOT come from God.

IV. TO CONDUCT OURSELVES IN A WAY THAT IS WORTHY OF OUR CITIZENSHIP WE MUST ... **Verse 29** ... SEE SUFFERING AS A SUBSTITUTIONARY PRIVILEGE.

A. Those who stand as a true and faithful Christian in the face of the evil that is all around us in the world may well suffer.

1. Hawthorn is quoted as having said, *“History bears out that those who believe in the word of God, who uncompromisingly speak the truth and who unyieldingly live in accordance with the word of God pay for their resolution and courage and often with their lives.”*

2. The Apostle Paul stated the same thing more succinctly,
II Tim. 3:12– Indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted.
3. **Acts 4-5 ..** Pet and Jn **“rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame”**

B. The Christian must learn to rejoice in response to suffering.

1. It's a privilege to be allowed to suffer for the cause of Christ.
 - a. Not to suffer for one's own foolish mistakes or sin.
 - b. Not to suffer because one was not circumspect in his presentation to others.
2. When one refuses to compromise Christian values on the job and suffers for it, he should rejoice and give thanks for the privilege of suffer FOR Christ.
 - a. Sometimes employers want the Christian to use dishonest business practices. (**refuse**)
 - b. **ILL.- Christian hired buy butcher was instructed how to keep the fan blowing on the butcher paper like a sail adding weight to each sale.**
Female waitress instructed to wear immodest apparel and lean over tables.

C. Christians today live in a world more like that of the Apostle Paul than ever before.

1. Flight attendant was not allowed to wear a cross where it could be seen.
 - a. “Seek” men wore turbans.
 - b. Muslim women worn head coverings.
2. **We must be prepared to stand against the ever-encroaching wave of secularism, that seeks to compromise us and to limit our ability to practice our faith in Christ.**

CONCLUSION :

- A. Here in **Philippians 1:27-30** we have seen that Paul admonishes us to live lives worthy of our citizenship in God's kingdom by :
 1. By standing firm in one spirit.
 2. By struggling together for the faith.
 3. By standing before the enemy without fear.
 4. By recognizing suffering for the faith as a privilege.
- B. **This is how the apostle Paul tells Christians to prepare for spiritual warfare.**
- C. **Are you prepared for the spiritual battle that Christians wage day-by-day ?**
 1. Before one can battle for the faith, he must be in the faith.
 2. Those who stand faithful until their battle ends are promised a home with God.

INVITATION