

FIGHTING TOGETHER WITH THE POWER OF CHRIST

Thursday, April 23rd, 2020

Philippians 1:27-30

“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 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. For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him, since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.”

“The word of the cross is foolishness to those who are lost; but for us who are saved, it is God's power.” This saying hung in large letters for everyone to read in the back of the church where I grew up. It comes from 1 Corinthians 1:18 and came to mind as I read this passage. As a child it was a mystery to me what it even means, and I don't presume I to have completely understood the depth of this truth as an adult. But I do know that in the eyes of the world, the way we as Christians are to fight and struggle, as Paul is concerned here with nothing but a fight and struggle, must seem like foolishness. It's a weakness, a waste, resulting in nothing.

But the fight we are to fight for the gospel is our calling, and it's out of this fight that we see we are truly saved and that it's truly from God Himself. It is His grace, as Paul writes here, not only to believe in Christ, but to suffer for him. *Uhh... excuse me, Jesus?*

We all know how the Hollywood films go and when I look out into the world, whether in films or literature, I can see a clear longing in the human heart for true heroes. But heroes of faith look completely different! We don't fight to gain the glorious victory; instead, Jesus has already overcome death and *He* is the eternal victor. We step into the power of His resurrection and therefore shouldn't be intimidated by our opponents. The fight of faith means to die anew each day, bearing our cross and entrusting our life to Jesus both in joyful and painful times, and that's when we become victorious! That's God's promise.

And that's exactly what Paul is talking about: to stand firm even in trials and thereby to display God's power in our own small, weak human nature. Many things come to mind about the fight of faith, and the Bible is littered with verses about it. I think of the wars Israel fought against the Philistines, David against Goliath, where God makes it clear that He was the one to bring the victory (1 Sam. 17). I think of putting on the armor of God from Ephesians 6. I think about fighting with God's power to penetrate and destroy all lofty fortresses erected against God (1 Cor. 10:3-5).

What moves me the most however when I read Philippians is Paul's focus on unity - *you stand firm in one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel...* Even though Paul writes the church from his prison cell far from Philippi, he's still very aware of his connection to his brothers and sisters - *whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence...*

We should meet these strange times with humility. We should neither be overdramatic about this crisis nor just flippantly brush it off and thereby imply the real suffering of many is insignificant. But before all let us *stand firm in one Spirit* and find our strength in Jesus: the one true, victorious hero for all eternity.

Prayer: *LORD, thank You that you have accomplished victory and that I can step into the power of Your resurrection! I thank you for my brothers and sisters in the faith, that I get to fight the good fight of faith with them at my side instead of alone. Bless those who are lonely at this time. Let them know and sense that we are unified and that we are thinking of them. Amen*

-Solveig Küspert-

