

Realign Part 6: Without Being Frightened in Any Way by Those Who Oppose You (Courage)

Thesis: Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.

Text: Philippians 1:27-30

We need to put on and to develop new capacities for what is coming in our culture. This sermon series is about developing new capacities.

Let's read 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 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 (Philippians 1:27-30 NIV).

The one thing I would stress is this: your public behaviour must match up to the gospel of the king. That way, whether I do come and see you or whether I remain elsewhere, the news that I get about you will indicate that you are standing firm with a single spirit, struggling side by side with one united intent for the faith of the gospel, 28 and not letting your opponents intimidate you in any way. This is a sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation—a sign that comes from God. 29 Yes: God has granted you that, on behalf of the king, you should not only believe in him, but also suffer for his sake. 30 You are engaged in the same struggle which you once watched me go through; and, as you now hear, I'm still going through it (Philippians 1:27-30 NT Wright).

Our King wants us to align with what he says, with what he does, and with how he feels.

Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ (Philippians 1:27).

- Living in a manner worthy of the gospel stands throughout this book as Paul's ultimate goal for the Philippians.
- **Where we are out of alignment, we are called to realign:** *whatever happens [with whatever you face, with whatever you go through, with whatever comes your way], conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the good news of your Messiah, of the King.*

To conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ-- no matter what happens, not matter what we face, not matter what we go through, not matter what comes our way-- **calls for steadfastness, unity, courage, and joy, even in the face of opposition and suffering.**

In this sermon series, we are exploring what it means to live in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. We are considering what it means to align with the ways of Jesus in this hour of history.

We want to grow in four capacities of alignment:

1. **Steadfastness:** *stand firm in one spirit (Philippians 1:27).* (Feb. 7).
2. **Unity:** *contending as one for the faith of the gospel (Philippians 1:27).* (Feb. 14 and Feb. 21)
3. **Courage:** *without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you (Philippians 1:28).* (Feb. 28)
4. **Joy:** *Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! (Philippians 4:4).* (Mar. 7)

Today, let's consider what it looks like to live without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you (Philippians 1:28).

1. **Courage:** *without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you (Philippians 1:28).*
 - a. We are called to live full of courage, faith, and action as followers of Jesus.
 - b. To walk in a manner worthy of the gospel of the King, whatever happens, **means that we have practiced responding out of courage rather than letting fear control our lives.**
2. **Fear is not supposed to rule our lives.**
 - a. Consider the phrase "without being frightened." The term occurs only here in the New Testament (Philippians 1:28) and suggests **a reflex action resulting from being startled.**

- i. This term was used of horses that “spook” because of something that scares them.
 - ii. The church was to have an unflinchable steadfastness, even in the midst of persecution and opposition.
 - iii. Whoever the opponents were at this point, they were not to intimidate the Philippians in any way.
 - iv. **Application:** Think about it. Nothing—not opposition, difficulty, nor intimidation-- should knock us of our game of conducting ourselves in a manner worthy of the good news of our Messiah, of our King.
- b. **Fear is a strong emotion.**
- i. It is meant to get us in action without thinking. It is instinctual.
 - ii. There are times when we **respond instinctively with fight, flight, or freeze**. It is a gift from God.
 - iii. **Illustration:** One doesn’t have to think about what to do when seeing a child run into the street in front of an oncoming car. Instinct kicks in. We get into immediate action, shouting and running to save the child.
 - iv. **When we are threatened, it is natural to self-protect with either fight, flight, or freezing.**
- c. **Fear is a harsh taskmaster.**
- i. Some of us have practiced a lifetime of reacting fearfully and instinctively rather than reflectively and thoughtfully. It is what we were taught, what we saw modeled, or what we did to self-protect.
 - 1. When you give in to fear and chronic anxiety, you are reacting and not being led by the Spirit; we are not living into “thy kingdom come, thy will be done” in me and on earth as it is in heaven.
 - 2. Strongholds and vows are ruling us instead.
 - ii. Some of us have lived our lives ruled by fear. We have been hurt, wounded, traumatized, or lied to in such a way that we live in heightened alert; we always feel threatened. (Good news: that wounding can be healed so that we can live differently.)
 - iii. Some of us live reactively out of fear, perceiving every situation, every encounter, every person as a threat.
 - iv. Some of us have generational fear ruling our lives. We are unable to live into the words of Jesus for his kingdom and for his will to be done, because fear triggers automatic responses that disempower our ability to discern and respond according to the will and ways of Christ.

- v. Here is good news. We can learn to live and respond to fear like those in the **military**. **Soldiers are trained to run toward the noise, confusion, and mayhem of battle, not away from it.** They practice responding to threats in courage and action, rather than giving into the instinct of fear.

3. Emotions are a gift from the Lord.

- a. **We believe that emotions serve a very important function. Emotions tell you something about yourself and your circumstances—and ultimately give you greater insight into the nature and character of God.**
- b. For example, **fear is a signal that you sense some kind of threat or danger**, either to yourself or to someone you care about. It is a very future-oriented emotion. **Ask yourself, “What am I afraid of? What am I imagining is going to happen?”**
 - i. In some cases, there may be a real threat that you need to protect against.
 - ii. In other cases, you may realize that there is not actually anything to be afraid of. Instead, recognize that your chronic anxiety has been triggered—likely because your negative vows have been activated.
 - iii. If you find yourself in this situation, ask God to show you where the fear is coming from.
 - iv. Talk out loud to a friend or family member about it. Expressing the fear can help diminish its intensity and give you access to your thinking.
 - v. Then you can determine what, if any, action you need to take.
- c. Simply being aware that you feel afraid and being able to express it to those around you (even if all you can say is “I don’t know why, but I’m scared.”) will help you. People who are driven by unexpressed fear can often hurt themselves and those around them.
- d. **Think of a recent experience when you felt fear. What was the threat or danger?**

4. Choosing courage: you were created in the image of God to express strength and courage.

- a. *Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land I swore to their forefathers to give them. 7 Be strong and very courageous. Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, that you may be successful wherever you go. 8 Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. 9 Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be*

terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go (Joshua 1:6-9).

- i. Throughout Scripture, the Lord commands us not to be afraid; **we are commanded not to give in to fear.**
 - ii. Throughout Scripture, we are commanded to be strong and courageous.
- b. **Here is what I believe:**
- i. Our God is courageous and strong, full of faith, hope, and love.
 - ii. We were created in the image of God.
 - iii. God calls us to be strong and courageous, because that is the way that God designed us to live as children of the King.
 - iv. God sees us differently than we see ourselves, and he is calling us into who we are in Christ.
 - v. God gives us more than his answers, words, and promises; he gives us his presence which is the source of everything we need.
 - vi. Whatever God commands, he gives the grace to obey and to get in action.
 - vii. With God helping us: In the face of brokenness, trials, tragedies, trauma, lies, opposition, attack, and evil, we have the capacity to choose courage and faith rather than fear and doubt... with God helping us.
 - viii. The Lord desires to answer the prayer to grow our capacity for boldness and courage (Acts 4:29-31).
 1. *Now, Lord, consider their threats and enable your servants to speak your word with great boldness. 30 Stretch out your hand to heal and perform miraculous signs and wonders through the name of your holy servant Jesus." 31 After they prayed, the place where they were meeting was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of God boldly (Acts 4:29-31).*
- c. **Practice choosing courage through frequent transformation conversations.**
- i. In some ways, growing in courage is like developing a muscle or skill. It takes intentional effort and consistent practice.
 - ii. The process of change: We move from unconscious incompetence (unaware), to conscious incompetence (aware but choosing not to change), to conscious competence (aware and practicing), to unconscious competence (second nature) (The Johari Window).
 - iii. **One way to grow our capacity for courage is to engage in frequent transformation conversations** (1 John 1:7).

1. It takes courage to walk in the light with God and others.
 2. One way to grow your courage muscle is to have transformation conversations with people who are safe.
 3. In a transformation conversation, we are sharing the picture of our **current reality** and **casting vision** for our preferred future.
 4. When we share, we want to be **clear, authentic, and passionate**.
 5. When we share regularly, (1) we keep transformation alive in us and (2) we give room to the Holy Spirit to speak to other people. If a person sees that God is at work in you, it gives them hope that God can work in them, too.
5. **Accessing courage:** learning a different way of showing up
- a. The shift of moving from destructive emotional patterns (like giving in to fear) to actually showing up in a way that reflects the character of God, **may seem like an overwhelming task**.
 - i. Is it really possible to let God transform your emotional responses?
 - ii. What part do you play in the process?
 - b. **Here is an outline of some simple steps that represent a way you can participate in the work God is doing in your emotional life.**
 - i. **Pause:** As soon as you realize that you're falling into an anxious emotional response, step back from the situation and do whatever you need to do to calm down (journal, vent to God or to a friend, meditate, go for a run, etc.). If you are in the middle of a conversation, you may need to ask for a "time out." Set a time when you will try to come back and to have a complete conversation.
 - ii. **Identify:** As soon as you are able, explore the meaning that you have made of your experience, and ponder whether the meaning is one you want to keep. Name the emotion(s) that accompanied the meaning you made, and express its intensity level.
 - iii. **Wonder:** Ask yourself the questions associated with the particular emotion (e.g., Anger: What is the injustice? Fear: What is the danger? Sadness: What is the loss?). Consider what the emotion is trying to tell you about yourself and your situation.
 - iv. **Reflect:** Take a moment to walk through your guiding principles. How do you want to "be" in this situation?

1. What would you like to be feeling? Compassion instead of disgust? Joy instead of envy? Patience instead of frustration? Courage instead of fear?
 2. What action would you take to get to a different feeling state? In other words, if I am feeling scared but want to feel courage, what action would I take that would reflect courage?
 3. Ask God to show you what that would look like and how to cultivate those things in your life. Note that just because you act in accordance with your guiding principles doesn't mean that the feelings you desire will automatically follow.
- v. **Act:**
1. If you took a "time out," step back into the situation and try to show up the way you want to show up. If you are unable to, don't be too hard on yourself.
 2. Take the opportunity to reflect on the experience with a coach and see what empowering meanings you can make.
 3. Remember, if you made a mess, you can always go to those affected and clean it up. No shame!
- vi. As you make a habit of practicing these steps in your daily life, invite God to show you where destructive emotional patterns are present in your life. Let God show you the root of those patterns and give you a vision for a different way. Remember that God's patience is unending as God leads us into a deeper experience of love, joy, and peace.

Call to Action:

1. **Action: Reflect on whether or not you are conducting yourself courageously in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, whatever happens.**
 - a. Where we are out of alignment, we are called to realign: *whatever happens [with whatever you face, with whatever you go through, with whatever comes your way], conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.*
 - b. What is the Lord putting his finger on in your life? Take time to lift up this question to the Lord, to listen, to pay attention, and to respond to the Lord (realign).

c. Good news: Where you are out of alignment, the Lord invites you to realign and he gives you the grace you need to change and practice a new way of being.

2. **Action: Grow your awareness and capacity for courage.**

a. Examen: **Consider a recent time when you were in a situation that triggered an emotional response.** Write a journal entry in which you describe the experience, and then answer these questions.

i. **Pause:** Looking back, how could you have taken a time-out and done what was necessary to calm down (journal, vent, meditate, talk with someone, etc.)?

ii. **Identify:** What emotion were you experiencing, and what name would you give it?

iii. **Wonder:** What caused the emotion, and what was it trying to tell you about yourself and the situation?

iv. **Reflect:** Based upon your guiding principles, how would you like to “be” in future situations? What would you like to do differently in the future?

1. Where else do you see this pattern in your life?

2. Where else are you showing up in a way that is destructive to yourself or others?

3. Spend some time wondering about this and asking God to show you the root of it and to give you a vision for a different way.

v. **Act:** If you made a mess, describe how you plan to go to those affected and clean it up.

1. **Acknowledge that you made a mess.**

2. Ask about the **impact** on the other person(s).

3. After you have heard the impact and felt the impact, **apologize sincerely.**

4. **Re-promise:** seek to give your word to show up in the way that you want to and according to your guiding principles. Re-promise to what you gave your word to do, in the manner in which it was meant to be done, and in the time in which it was meant to be done.

b. **Practice choosing courage through frequent transformation conversations.**

i. One way to grow our capacity for courage is to engage in frequent transformation conversations (1 John 1:7).

ii. It takes courage to walk in the light with God and others.

iii. Seek to have frequent (2 – 3 times a week) transformation conversations with people who are safe.

c. **What is the Lord putting his finger on in your life?**

- i. Take time to lift up this question to the Lord, to listen, to pay attention, and to respond to the Lord (realign).
- d. **Good news:**
 - i. Where you are out of alignment, the Lord invites you to realign.
 - ii. God wants to give you his help and his grace to realign.

This message today is an invitation from the Lord. If you feel condemned or shamed, then you are not hearing the voice of the Lord. If you feel challenged and stirred up, that is good.

We need to practice intentionally in order to live into this word for the year-- **Realign**: *whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.*

If we are to embody and express outwardly the good news of King Jesus, it will take **awareness** (intimacy with God), **authenticity** (openness and honesty with God and others), and **alignment** (radical obedience; full partnership with Jesus and others on his mission).

Where we find that we are out of alignment, we walk in the light. We cast vision with clarity, authenticity, and passion. We identify our current reality and declare our preferred future in Christ. We get in action to learn skills and to develop new capacities so that we come into realignment.

Summary:

The word for the year for us in 2021 is this: **Realign**. *Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.*

There will be many opportunities and challenges in this year to see where we are in or out of alignment morally or missionally. The Lord wants to help us to realign, we might respond in ways that line up with the good news of our King.