

Whatever Happens, Walk Worthy
Opening of School Convention
September 2, 1998, 7:15 p.m.
Whatever Happens...Keep the Faith

Introduction

1. Ephesians 4:1-3 (Read)
2. Key words: worthy, calling, humble, gentle, unity of Spirit, bond of peace
3. Context of 4:1
 - Ephesians 1-3 – Indicative/Imperative
 - Ephesians 4-6 – Doctrinal/Ethical
 - Ephesians 4:1 – transition verse
 - The calling to which he speaks in 4:1 refers back to Ephesians 1, and also II Corinthians 5:18-20

¹⁸ All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: ¹⁹ that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation.. ²⁰ We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

4. References to Philippians 1:27, *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.*

And Philippians 1:12, Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel.

To what was Paul referring when he made these references:

I. Whatever happens...

A. To get our answer, let's take a fascinating journey through the later part of Acts.

1. Acts 20-23

- Paul has just completed his third missionary journey
- taken an offering for the Jerusalem church
- knew he would never see some of his Christian friends again
 - ◆ On his way to Jerusalem, he stopped to visit with...
 - * Ephesian elders (20:25)
 - * Tyre Christians (21:4)
 - * Caesarea Christians (21:12)
 - ◆ They begged him not to go “only trouble”
 - ◆ As predicted
 - * Paul was arrested in Jerusalem (21:27)
 - * He had gone to temple to pray
 - * A riot broke out
 - * Taken to Sanhedrin (great defense given)

2. Acts 23:11ff – following his defense before the Sanhedrin...

- God gave him a vision (23:11, *The following night the Lord stood near Paul and said, “Take courage! As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify in Rome.”*)
- However, Jews plotted to kill him

- Paul was transferred to Caesarea
3. Acts 24-26
 - Placed on trial before Felix
 - Remained in prison for two years
 - Appeared before King Agrippa
 4. Acts 27
 - Finally request granted-- sent to Rome for trial
 - Encountered typhoon
 - Experienced a ship wreck
 5. Acts 28:16
 - He finally arrives in Rome
 - Placed in jail again
- B. What significance is there in the affirmation to “walk worthy” to MVNC students, faculty, and staff?
1. Regarding your calling to be a worthy leader?
 2. Regarding the situation you find yourself in at MVNC.
- C. Paul’s experience reminds us that...
- * Delays may occur
 - God told Paul he would go to Rome,
 - He did not tell Paul when, how, how long it would take before the vision would be fulfilled.
 - After God gave Paul the vision...(23:11)
 - ◆ Paul was placed in prison for two years.

- For Paul, for us...progress may not seem as evident at times in your work, your calling, plans...
- * Suffering and hardships may result
 - For Paul, there was a plot to kill him
 - He was manipulated (24:26)
 - He received threats of death (23:21)
 - He encountered a typhoon (22:14, 18)
 - He experienced a shipwreck (27:27)
 - ◆ You (we) may have been tempted, at times, to wonder why the problems, sickness, hardships, hassles, when you are following God's calling.
- * Doubts could arise
 - Paul could have thought about his friends and their advice
 - ◆ (21:14) They urged him not to go.
 - ◆ (21:12) They pleaded with him.
 - He could have questioned his own judgment
(Acts 26:32) "This man could have been set free if..."
 - Paul could have said, "Did I make a mistake?"
 - Perhaps we are tempted at times to look back and ask:
 - ◆ Why?
 - ◆ What if?
 - ◆ Did I make a mistake?
 - Paul did not.

- I am more tempted to.
- * “Disasters” or parallels in our lives may hit us
 - typhoon
 - shipwreck
- * In all of these times, we need to be reminded of the words of the song by W. C. Martin,

*I trust in God wherever I may be
On the land or on the rolling sea
For come what may from day to day
My Heavenly Father watches over me.
He makes the rose an object of His care
He guides the eagle through the pathless air
And surely He remembers me
My Heavenly Father watches over me.
I trust in God; I know He cares for me;
On mountain bleak, or on the stormy sea,
Though billows roll, He keeps my soul
My heavenly Father watches over me.*

But, in spite of all the above experiences for Paul—in spite of “what happened” ...

II. He walked worthy

A. Read Acts 27:25 (wrong on outline), *So keep up your courage, men, for I have faith in God that it will happen just as he told me.*

1. When tempted to doubt, have faith in God.
2. Paul walked worthy through transforming faith. "I have faith in God...that it will happen..." (That's transforming faith!)

B. This passage reminds me of another passage in Phil. 4:12, *I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned to secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.*

1. Paul walked worthy...with quiet contentment
 - 14 days without food
 - all the delays/suffering/setbacks
 - Yet his transforming faith held him steady.
2. Paul's journey, my journey, your journey, gives us new meaning to the song,

In His time, in His time,

He makes all things beautiful in His time.

Lord, please show me everyday

As You're teaching me Your way,

That You do just what you say, in Your time.

C. Paul "walked worthy" for miraculous results (Acts 28:31)

1. God's word to Paul was finally realized. He arrived in Rome.
 - Was everything easy? NO. Prison faced him...again.

- Did he complain? NO. Instead, he...
 - ◆ wrote Prison Epistles
 - ◆ evangelized the guards
 - ◆ nurtured believers
- 2. He accepted the situation, the place, where God placed him, and “bloomed” where he was planted.
 - He accepted the situation where he found himself, and God used him profoundly in exactly that setting.
- 3. Again, song comes to my mind.

*God will make a way, when there seems to be no way,
He works in ways we cannot see,
He will make a way for me,
He will be my guide, hold me closely to His side,
With love and strength for each new day,
He will make a way. God will make a way.*
- 4. For you...for me at MVNC—there may be problems...at home, at school, with friends, or finances. There may be a death of a family member, loss of a job, a low grace, or misunderstandings.
- 5. Yet, with a strong faith in God, He will make a way... and hold us steady...until He shows us His way.

Conclusion

1. Whatever happens to you at MVNC...(and beyond)
 - positively/negatively
 - good/bad
 - affirming/undermining
2. You can walk worthy...by keeping the faith, as did Paul (Acts 27:25)
 - Whatever happens...keep the faith.
 - ◆ It's okay. God is in control.
 - ◆ Stephen's e-mail; ELF-MVNC...
3. Another chorus:

Grace alone, which God supplies,

Strength unknown, He will provide

Christ in us, our Cornerstone,

We will go forth by grace alone.
4. Do you know the chorus, "Faith in God"

Faith in God can move a mighty mountain,

Faith can calm the troubled sea,

Faith can make the desert like a fountain,

Faith can bring the victory.
5. Remember the words of Paul in the midst of delays, suffering, typhoon, and shipwreck, "Keep up the courage, men, for I have faith in God that he will do exactly what he said he would do."

6. This is the transforming faith that will enable you and me to respond with gusto to Paul's urging us, in Eph. 4:1, to "live a life worthy of our calling" as ministers of reconciliation.

May it be so, Lord.