

# Kings Norton Baptist Church

Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> August 2022 10 am

Standing firm in the Gospel

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Welcome to all.

Opening Scripture Ps 99 / 100

Hymn MP 33 And Can it Be

Scripture Psalm 34 (page 561)

Prayer of praise and thanksgiving.

Children's talk Light

Chorus MP 52 check God sent his son

Notices Members Mtg, Fellowship Lunch, Lydia, Camp, SFOI

Prayer time

Communion prep warning, baptised & members

Communion

Reading Phil 1:27-30 (page 1179)

Hymn MP 1209 My heart is filled with thankfulness

Sermon Standing firm in the Gospel

Hymn MP445 Lord the light of your love *Shine Jesus Shine*

Closing Prayer

Close

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See also 11\_10\_16.doc



## Prayer & Exordium

- The Queen's Baton entering the Alex Stadium brought the 2022 Commonwealth games to life. It travelled from Buckingham Palace on its worldwide Relay first to Cyprus and then visited all 72 nations and territories of the Commonwealth. The route spanned 269 days, covered 90,000 miles with the help of over 7,500 Batonbearers.
- On Thursday 27<sup>th</sup> July we at St Paul's in the Jewellery quarter as the baton came past the church on it's final leg to the Alex Stadium.
- The Olympic Games uses a torch lit in Olympia in Greece. The torch is carried to the host country and after doing a loop around the stadium lights the Caldron.
- So too the gospel has been making its way around the world from its starting point in Jerusalem. The torch, the light and life of Christ comes through the message of God's Saving grace.
- Hold up F F Bruce and "The spreading Flame"

So we pick up the story as the Lord prompted Paul and his companions to cross over into Europe, Luke says **from there we travelled to Philippi, a Roman colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia.** Acts 16:12

At Philippi the Lord opened Lydia's heart and the church in that city was born.

It wasn't long, however, before there was trouble in Philippi, the church was formed in - and shaped by - suffering. Paul looking back says: **We had previously suffered and been insulted in Philippi, as you know, but with the help of our God we dared to tell you his gospel in spite of strong opposition.** 1 Thess 2:2

The Gospel, Paul's great concern, became the hallmark of the church at Philippi. Paul commended them: **"I thank my God ... and pray with joy .... because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now,** Phil 1:3,4,5

✚ Would the Lord say that about us here at KNBC? Don't we want to honour him in this way? To love the Lord - is to love His Gospel!

The gospel is a key theme appearing eight times in this letter. So when we as a church ask? *"What on earth are we here for?"* The answer should also be **'the gospel'** x2. As a Gospel church we want to reach out with the gospel, and in seeing people saved build them up, to then see them go out with the gospel.

✚ As it has come to us - so it must go from us

Can you see even in our passage v27 **the gospel** occurs twice:

**“<sup>27</sup> Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy - of the gospel. stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith - of the gospel”**

But we must first ask what is the ‘Gospel’ anyway? If I gave you pen and paper and said write down the Gospel what would you write?

### *Summarise the Gospel*

The Gospel is Jesus Christ, x2 - It is who He is - and what He has done, it is his finished work on the cross and his resurrection to life. It can be summed up in these words from 1 Cor 15: **“Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve.”** 1 Cor 15:4-5

✚ That is what happened, we must know it - and understand it.

■ London Tube – Looking down the carriage you can only see so far. Then a moment comes when the carriages line up into a long straight line, when we have the truth it all lines up, we can then see clearly.

The Gospel is not singing, or worship, or drama, or praying or healings or smiles. The Gospel is a message - the message of life. Do you see it clearly?

The Gospel is the message of the truth about God - the truth about you and the truth about what God has done in Christ to save you from the wrath to come. **It is the life belt or lifeboat to save you from the storm ahead.**

The resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead is the confirmation that the Day of Judgment will come!

But the resurrection of Jesus Christ is also the starter gun for the gospel of God’s Grace. Here through his work on the cross any sinner who has turned from his or her sinful ways can receive the free gift of forgiveness of sins and eternal life.

Christ’s return to life brings the new world to come - into this world now. x2

✚ The gospel is the declaration of peace between man and God. It is the announcement of the end of hostilities.

✚ For all who will come the gospel is the doorway to hope, an invitation to life, the pronouncement of being declared ‘not guilty’ before God. It is the new way, the other way, it is standard to run to. Everything has been done, all is now ready, **“come”** x2 the one word summary of the Bible.

The Gospel is for every man or woman, boy or girl who has ever lived – or will ever live - on this earth. It is the way – the only way to be saved!

Everyone who walks through that door should know that God is here, that another world exists, that the kingdom of God is real, and taste heaven.

**We have seaport, airport, even a space port, the church is the heaven port. The church is not only the carrier of a message, it is the message! Jonah!**

We are told to **conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel**. what does that mean? **In a manner worthy of?**

Read on, the answer to what that means is explained in the following phrase: **I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel**

✚ It means to stand firm in it – and contend for it x2

Do that and you are **conducting yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel**. **stand firm** and **contending** sounds like military language doesn’t it - so also **without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you**. Going on to speak of **destroyed**, and **saved**. It is the language of the army and battle **frightened, oppose, destroyed, and saved**. No wonder the Lord gives us armour!

### *Standing firm v27*

The original word is steko – to ‘stand’. Someone who stands firm does not give ground, does not give in, nor ‘give up’ on what the Gospel is.

1 Cor 15: **“Now, brothers, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand.**

The gospel of Christ is the gospel of His grace **By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain.**

I spoke to someone last week who had come to Birmingham to plant churches. “Why don’t you help those churches which are already here and reaching out with the Gospel?”. His reply: “Things have changed in the last 20 years God is working in new ways”

**By this gospel you are saved, hold firmly to the word I preached to you.** Said the Apostle Paul: **Otherwise, you have believed in vain.**

■ Beware of the ‘new’ As MLJ said if it is new – then it is not the original Dig in, hold your ground, the world is constantly shifting, the tectonic plates of public opinion are always on the move, changing standards, new

priorities, new sensitivities, a new view of the value of life, of morality, of gender, of family, Let's make sure we the church don't follow the world.

**Our minds are designed to: Learn God's truth, Love God's truth, Live God's truth.**

Let us not compromise, let us not water down the gospel, many do just that, believing that widening the doors will get more in. It is the fear of man, It's an unwillingness to tell the truth about our sinful state before God

**Repentance means to change my ways – It is always necessary - and it must be preached.**

May we never reduce our activity to social events, just making friends with no aim for them just hoping they will slip into the kingdom somehow. They need to know something and do something.

CH Spurgeon the London Baptist minister and a great champion for the gospel said in 1867:

**"As good stewards, we must maintain the cause of truth against all comers. 'Never get into religious controversies,' says one; that is to say, being interpreted, 'Be a Christian soldier, but let your sword rust in its scabbard, and sneak into Heaven like a coward.' Such advice I cannot endorse. If God has called you by the truth, maintain the truth which has been the means of your salvation. This is an age in which truth must be maintained zealously, vehemently, .. continually. Playing fast and loose, as many do, believing this to-day and that to-morrow, Is the sure mark of children of wrath; but having received the truth, to hold fast the very form of it, as Paul bids Timothy to do, is one of the duties of heirs of Heaven. Stand fast for truth, and may God give the victory to the faithful!"**

Standing firm "in one spirit"

Paul had confidence in them: **I will know that you stand firm in one spirit x2**

Most of us here would not be united in anything if it wasn't for the Holy Spirit within each true believer. He changes everything. It is His presence that unites us as true believers – we are bonded by Him and in His truth.

So Paul says to God's Born Again people: **Be on your guard; stand firm in the faith; be men of courage; be strong. Do everything in love.** 1 Cor 16:13,14

The work of the Holy Spirit is to testify Christ to us, - to teach us of Him.

✚ So simply "The Spirit is most evident when Christ is most Glorified" x2

✚ Let us stand firm in the Gospel - and stand firm for the Gospel!

## **Contending for the gospel**

Jude wanted to encourage Christians in his letter but he saw there was something urgent to address, the gospel, the faith was under attack and so he says **Dear friends, .... I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.** Jude 1:3

Saints, that is every true believer, the Faith, the truth of the Faith, the Gospel is entrusted, given to you to guard and use. **Sports Car, Musical instrument,**

**Only Christ's people will carry Christ's gospel, No-one else will want to.**

The Gospel relates to you, to everyone in this room. Either it has come to you - and you are saved, or else it has come to you – and you have rejected it. If you are saved – then the first evidence of that is you take it to others.

✚ **If you are not taking the gospel to others - then it needs to come to you!**

Taking it to others does not mean to be a street preacher like our brothers from the US. You may be thinking I cannot stand up and preach like others. No but you can hand out a Good Newspaper, walk out of your front door and visit a neighbour praying for opportunities to speak to him or her of what the Lord has done for you. The Lord will bring to you those he wants you to speak to – pray and it will happen!

In the NIV we read **contend**, the AV says **strive together**, x2 That is a much better way of putting it. We strive at something and do so along with others

■ **The English football team, striving together Political parties, Ukraine**

Contending "as one man"

**Strive together** literally with one mind.

A divided people achieve nothing. As the cartoon said last week:

■ **We will never get ahead because we are too busy trying to get even!**

The way to be together is to work out our Christian lives; submitting to the word of God, submitting to the Spirit of Christ and submitting to each other.

■ **The joy of Mission agency everyone is a gospel person, CWG?**

A united church is very strong.

■ **The Roman soldiers would form a square, with closed ranks it would be a formidable defence against the enemy**

The devil's pride and joy is to divide Christians, he is expert at taking a little thing and making it a big thing, he loves it when one won't forgive another.

## Whatever happens

**Stand firm and contend for the gospel** “<sup>27</sup> **Whatever happens,** x2 .....

Paul is saying hang on to the gospel, ‘**Whatever happens**’ He, they - are still waiting for the outcome of his imprisonment and trial, it could go either way, he may be released, he may be killed so he says **stand firm, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence.**

How are you when that person you most look to – is gone. Dad, Mum, that strong friend, that boss at work who held it all together. Your grandparents. Paul had spoken in Php 1:25,26 of his coming to them again, and had spoken it with some confidence even though he was now a prisoner; but even if he didn’t, - we must trust in the Lord.

**Now it is God who makes both us and you stand firm in Christ.** 2 Cor 1:21

Paul may be absent - but the Lord is never absent. We must try him and trust Him. He is faithful and will not give up on you or hand you over. Do not let your faith fall apart because that other person is not around.

Do not connect your faith to people, leaning on that person, listening to sermons by that person, bible study with so and so.. having someone as ‘that listening ear’. Women more naturally lean on others. Always wanting to share problems with others can actually become a substitute for taking it to the Lord. Beware, - whatever you feel the benefit is, - make sure your trust is in Him alone.

The Lord’s surrounds His people. Those signs on the back of lorries, **if you cannot see my mirrors then I can’t see you’.** The Lord is there, he can always see you, he is watching. You cannot see him - but he can see you.

■ **Glass squash courts you can’t see those around but they can see you.**

The squash players can play to the best of their ability knowing many are watching and cheering them on – so as Christians we can be spurred on to Christlikeness and victory knowing we are surrounded by the Lord, his ministering angels and the host of heaven. *So keep on going!*

## ***Lastly – Opposition,***

When you face opposition it’s so easy to be overcome and give up.

They had suffered in Philippi. So too now in many countries.

I mentioned the experiences of an India brother recently. He was full of resolve to call on. One of the reasons was that he expected it.

■ Someone asked C.S.Lewis, "Why do the righteous suffer?" "Why not?" he replied. "They're the only ones who can take it."

He knew the truth of v29 . **For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to **suffer** for him.**

Bringing the gospel to them did not come easily. We are often quite ready to give in when difficulty comes. They had persevered in gospel work through sufferings and opposition. One we might cope with, but strong opposition would you continue? God is our all in all in trouble. He helps:

✚ “**You will need these snow chains for that difficult road ahead, put them on so you do not skid off the road.**”

In the OT when God’s people had completed their punishment in Exile they returned to Jerusalem and found the temple in ruins. They set to work to build up the Temple, that is to restore God and his worship to its rightful place. But when opposition and trouble came - they gave in, they gave up - and the work stopped. They all went home and neglected the house of the Lord. They gave up their building work on the temple – but started their building work – at home. They got going on their DIY. Instead of building up the temple of the Lord – they spruced up their own homes instead.

It’s Haggai the Prophet who gets them back to work. His simple message: **“The Lord is with you”**

✚ **We are not going to see results without the work. Will Jesus bring people in if we are not active in seeking the lost? Why should He?**

Let us not give up on being a church of gospel proclaimers. In due time we will reap – there is a promise there. The labour will soon be forgotten & **“The return will be far greater than the investment”** We don't do this alone - we work in this together to honour God – Trust Him to add to his church.

**As the Queens Baton travelled the world and came to Birmingham so let us remember that the men and women of God who have gone before have passed to Baton on to us – The baton of the Gospel - let’s not drop it, or leave it gathering dust in the cupboard, but run well with it**

Let us stand firm, contend for, and strive together in that which is most precious to the Lord – His Gospel.

✚ **Let us do what God asks us to do – He will then do more than we can ask him to do!**

✚ **“Lord may your Holy Spirit be our guide, Your Holy word inform our mind, your glory our supreme concern.” \_\_\_\_\_END**