



## Daily Devotionals

(click here to go to our website – [stmatthewsrichmond.org](http://stmatthewsrichmond.org))

### PHILIPPIANS 1:27-30 THE WITNESS OF ONE

Written by Rev. Dr. Charles D. (Chuck) Alley, Ph.D., Rector of St. Matthew's Episcopal Church, Richmond, Va.

<sup>27</sup> *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* <sup>28</sup> *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.* <sup>29</sup> *For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him,* <sup>30</sup> *since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.*

Throughout the Bible the world is seen to be hostile to the people of God. During the time of the writing of the New Testament, persecution from both pagans and Jews was the soil in which the Church grew. In fact, nineteenth and twentieth century America are the exception rather than the rule when it comes to the history of the relationship between the Church and the world. But even then, complacency led to members of the Church living lives in a manner that was not “worthy of the gospel of Christ.” A radical individualism developed in which personal salvation was elevated in importance over the unity of the community resulting in a subtle return to the time of the Judges when every man did what was right in his own eyes (Judges 21:25). In the spiritual sphere, as in the wilderness, the predator kills by isolating his victim from the group.

One of the most graphic scenes demonstrating the strength of the community comes from the movie, *Gladiator*. The Roman General, Maximus, has been enslaved as a gladiator and finds himself in a group of gladiators who stand to be slaughtered for the entertainment of the audience. His group was to enter the arena on foot and then others in chariots would ride rough shod over them. The foot-gladiators' natural instinct was to scatter and take on individual charioteers. But Maximus “commands” them to stand together in the middle of the arena with their shields facing outward. When they stand united and the chariots crash into them, the chariots turn over and the foot-gladiators are victorious.

We are called to “*stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel.*” And when we stand firm, we are standing not only with those who walk with us now, but also with all those who have ever stood for the Lord in this world – all the descendants of Abraham. Like the gladiators we will be bruised and battered. But the world, like the audience in the arena, will also see a difference that is the truth.

*May I, dear Lord, seek not to rely on my own strength in order to walk the walk you have ordained for me. Grow my awareness of my need to walk with my brothers and sisters in the Church so that our united witness might make an impact on the unbelief of this world. Empower me to accept the responsibility and accountability of being a member of your Body in order for our actions in this world to be identified as coming from you and not ourselves. Unite us as your Church and glorify yourself through us. Amen.*

[click here to go to our website – stmatthewsrichmond.org](http://stmatthewsrichmond.org)