

Striving Together to Advance the Gospel – Part 2

Philippians 1:27-30

Introduction:

1. The Bible teaches that there is presently a great spiritual conflict taking place on this earth. The conflict is between the church of the Lord Jesus Christ and the armies of Satan. **Ephesians 6:10-12**
 - Paul refers to Satan as our adversary in **1 Timothy 5:14-15** as does Peter in **1 Peter 5:8**.
2. Let me explain to you what the battle is over.
 - We, as believers in Christ, have had something very precious committed to our trust. It is the gospel of Jesus Christ. **1 Thessalonians 2:4**
 - We have been commissioned to get this gospel out to the world.
 - Satan, our adversary, wants that good news squelched. He does not want it to get out to this world - to Daytona, Port Orange, United States, or any other nation. **2 Corinthians 4:4**
 - **Illustration:** the gospel is like a football - we are trying to advance it and Satan wants to stuff us at the line of scrimmage and stop its advance. In fact, he wants to push us backward. The gospel is what releases people from Satan's slavery.
3. With that understanding of the spiritual conflict we are in, let's read **Philippians 1:27**.
 - "*Striving together*" literally means "to wrestle in company with."
 - So Paul tells the church, "You are on the same wrestling team. You are fighting and striving **together** (as a team) for the faith or the advancement of the gospel."
 - That is our job description, church - that is our mission.
4. As a local assembly of believers, how are we going to advance the gospel of Christ? How will we get the job done? How can we infiltrate enemy lines and advance the precious gospel of Christ?
5. There are three simple truths that Paul will teach us here in this text.

First, by living a life that is consistent with the gospel. vs. 27

1. Paul refers to their "conversation" in verse 27.
 - This is actually an Old English word that refers to your daily conduct and lifestyle, not simply your speech (although that would be included).
 - So, when Paul talks about your conversation, he is referring to how you live life on a daily basis.
2. Paul is teaching that our daily lives should be such that they are becoming to the gospel.
 - **Illustration:** Your wife comes out in a new dress and you say, "That dress is very becoming on you. It brings attractiveness to you. You're already beautiful, but that dress accents your beauty."
 - Our lives should make the good news of Jesus Christ look attractive. The gospel of Christ **is** beautiful, but our lives accentuate its beauty.
3. If your life is becoming to the gospel, it means that people are **drawn** to the gospel by the way you live life and conduct yourself.

4. Our lives should be drawing people to the gospel. **Titus 2:12** says that our lives should be adorning (beautifying) the doctrine of God our Savior in all things. **Colossians 1:10**
5. If the gospel is going to advance forward, it will take believers who live lives that are consistent with what they say they are.
 - **Illustration:** Back to football - if the quarterback says, "Hike!" can you imagine if one person starts kicking it like a soccer ball, another starts trying to dribble it like a basketball, another gets a bat and starts trying to hit like a baseball. We would say, "Come on guys, if you say you're football players, act like it!"
 - The gospel brings salvation, forgiveness, God's indwelling Spirit, and makes us a new person in Christ. Our lives should reflect this radical change.
6. Do you know what the biggest challenge is in advancing the gospel? People who **say** they are Christians and don't **behave** like Christians.
 - Christians who have the same mindset as everybody else at work. Non-Christians say, "He lies like everybody else and it doesn't seem to bother him, steals from the company, cheats customers, gossips about fellow workers, disrespects the boss, goofos off when the boss isn't around, etc."
7. When your actions match your beliefs, this is called integrity.
8. When your actions contradict your beliefs, this is called hypocrisy.
9. Integrity doesn't mean perfection, but when we fail and our lives come up short of God's Word, we admit our sins and failures. We don't try to project this image that we are perfect. This is repulsive to others.
10. Paul admonished Jewish believers of this very thing. **Romans 2:21-24**
 - Paul says, "You say you believe this or that and project this image, but your life and actions don't match." People pick up on this sort of thing real quick.
 - Paul said that because of their hypocrisy, God's name was blasphemed among the Gentiles. The football was going backwards.
11. Christian, let me show you God's plan for all of us. **2 Thessalonians 1:12**
 - The name of Jesus Christ being glorified in you.
12. If we are going to advance the gospel of Christ and fulfill the mission we have been given, it will take the members of CrossRoads living lives that are consistent with what we say we are.
 - When we fail, we admit it. There is no façade - we live real and authentic lives unto Christ.

Second, by working together as a team

1. Notice the phrase in verse 27, "*Striving together...*" This phrase gives us our English word "athletics." Paul is envisioning the church as a team, and he reminds them that teams work together if they are to win victories.
2. The Bible teaches that when we trust Christ as our Savior, His very Spirit comes to live within us, and we are made one with the Lord. **1 Corinthians 6:17; Ephesians 5:30**
3. But did you know that God's Word teaches that we are also made one with each other? **Romans 12:4-5; 1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 4:4-6**

- We are brought into a spiritual union with each other. But two things can be in union and still not be in unity. **Illustration:** two cats with their tails tied together
- 4. That position of oneness should be lived out and practiced in our everyday relationships with one another. In other words, God wants us to **live** in unity as a church family. **Romans 12:16; 1 Corinthians 1:10**
- 5. We are all different and unique individuals, but we should be unified in our love for God, our love for His Word, our faith in Jesus Christ, and our desire to see His gospel spread throughout Daytona and the world.
- 6. Satan's plan is to fracture the church with internal divisions. Why is this his plan? Because if we are fighting each other, we won't have the energy or passion to fight him and send out the gospel.
 - **Illustration:** Three Stooges - Curly accidentally hits Moe, Moe bops Curly back, Larry hits Moe for hitting Curly and before you know it, they are fighting each other instead of the bad guys. This happens in churches. Christians get to fighting each other instead of fighting the bad guys - Satan and his host.
- 7. Satan's plan is to divide and conquer. It is only as we strive together that we can overcome the wicked one.
- 8. Satan uses things like bitterness, gossip, a critical spirit, big egos, jealousy, etc. It doesn't always have to be a big issue, it can be a minor issue that he simply gets people to hold a grudge about. We need a constant application of **Ephesians 4:32**.
- 9. Ever been on a team where there was one person who had to be in the spotlight and get all the praise? He made it difficult for the rest of the team.
 - A church is like a team. Each person has his or her assigned place or job, and if each person is doing that job, it helps all the others on the team. Not everybody can be the quarterback or leading scorer.
 - Each person has to know his role on the team and fulfill it to the glory of God and the advancement of the gospel.

Third, by displaying relentless courage

1. As our church spreads the gospel of Christ, let's make one thing clear - there are adversaries. vs. 28
2. As we already said earlier, Satan opposes the spreading of the gospel, and he uses **people** to accomplish this purpose.
3. A Christian must have backbone and courage because not everyone will love you and pat you on the back when you share Christ as the only way to heaven and when you stand for the Bible as God's Word.
4. In fact, it very well could include a certain degree of suffering. vs. 29;
cf. **2 Timothy 3:12**
5. But Paul says, "Don't be terrified of your adversaries." In other words, don't be afraid of them. Then Paul gives the church several encouragements.
 - First, these battles demonstrate the reality of your salvation. vs. 28
 - It proves which team we're on. It shows that we belong to Christ and those who are persecuting do not.
 - Second, it is a privilege to suffer for Christ. vs. 29

- It is our privilege to believe on Him for salvation, but Paul says it is also our privilege to suffer for His sake.
- Notice, he said, "...suffer for *his* sake..." Sometimes we may suffer for our own actions or bad choices we have made. Sometimes we create our own problems.
- But if we are suffering for Christ, it is a high and holy honor.

1 Peter 4:15-16

- He suffered for us and gave His all so that we could be forgiven eternally. Our willingness to suffer for Him shows our love and gratitude.
- Third, others are experiencing the same suffering. vs. 30
 - Satan wants us to think that we are all alone in the battle and that we are the only ones suffering.
 - Paul reminds these believers that he is going through the same difficulties that they are experiencing hundreds of miles away in Rome.
 - They had witnessed Paul and his suffering and saw his resolve, and that surely encouraged them to fight the good fight of faith and not give up.
 - Maybe you are here today and you feel like giving up. Don't do it - take courage.
 - If we as a church are going to fulfill our God-given missions and proclaim the gospel of Christ, we must demonstrate relentless courage.

2 Timothy 2:3