

Place: Lurgan Baptist 30:11:2014

Reading: Philippians 1:27-30

THE JOURNEY TO JOY

5. A CALL TO ARMS

Can you imagine for a moment that you are a journalist sent out to report in a country like where there is a battle? *What do you expect to see?* Battle weary troops in combat gear, living in the most difficult of circumstances, and carrying their weapons at all times. But instead when you get there you are surprised to find soldiers dressed in civilian clothes, playing table tennis, lying around swimming pools, sipping cold drinks, with no weapons anywhere in sight. My if such an army was defending our country we would have every reason to be alarmed. You see, that army has forgotten its mission. *It thinks that its mission centres around its own comfort and having a good time.* As Stephen Cole says, " *If that enemy attacked, the members of the army might try to desert, claiming, 'I didn't sign up for this. I signed up for all the benefits but I had no idea that I might get shot at.'* "

Now I believe that is where the church in Ulster is this morning? We have promoted the Christian life for all its benefits. " *Come to Christ and He will solve all your problems. He will give you a great marriage and an abundant life.* " So people sign up, thinking about sitting around a pool and enjoying the good life with Christ. Then the bullets start coming, and the bombs

start dropping and people start getting hurt and dying, and these laid back recruits say, " *I didn't sign up for this.*" My *do you realize that you are a soldier in God's army not Dad's army?* The Lord has not saved us so that we can live comfortably, happily, and selfishly in suburbia. He has conscripted us into His army. You see, the Christian life is not a playground it is a battleground. Do you recall that this opening chapter is all about the gospel of the Lord Jesus? In (1:3-11) Paul talks about *the fellowship of the Gospel and this relates to God's people:* In (1:12-26) Paul talks about *the Furtherance of the Gospel and this relates to the lost,* but now in (1:27-30) Paul talks about the *Faith of the Gospel and this relates to our adversaries.*

My we are sons in the family enjoying the fellowship of the gospel, we are servants in the vineyard sharing in the furtherance of the gospel, but we are soldiers on the battlefield defending the faith of the Gospel. Now " *the faith of the gospel,*" is the Christian faith as revealed by God and recorded in the Scripture. Jude calls it " *the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.*" (Jude 3) Paul warns in (1 Tim 4:1) that " *in the latter times some shall depart from the faith.* "

My if Satan can only rob believers of their Christian faith, the doctrines that are distinctively theirs, then he can cripple and defeat the ministry of the gospel. It is tragic and sad to hear professing Christians say, " *I don't care what you believe, just as long as you live right.*" Do you ever hear that sort of talk? My that

is absolute nonsense. What we believe determines how we behave, and wrong belief ultimately means wrong behaviour. Each local church is but one generation short of potential extinction. No wonder Satan attacks believers, seeking to get away them away from " *the faith*." Now how can we fight this enemy ? Well, here Paul issues " **A Call to Arms.**" He gives us three essentials for victory in the battle to protect " *the faith*." Notice the first one,

(1) WALKING CONSISTENTLY

You see, the Christian life is not only vital and vocal, but it is visual. If we say we have something, then the world should see something. Someone has said, " *If I see something that waddles like a duck, quacks like a duck, and swims like a duck, I get the idea that it is a duck.*" I wonder when others look at our lives do they get the idea that we are Christians ? For one of the greatest weapons against the enemy is not a stirring sermon, or a powerful book, it is the consistent life of believers. Now the old English word " *conversation*, " in (1:27) means " *walk and not talk*" Paul is not thinking here about language but lifestyle. You see, our lifestyle,

(a) MUST REFLECT OUR STATUS:

Do you see that word " *conservation*," ? It's a Greek word (politeuomai) from which we get the word " *politics*," it really means " *citizenship*." Now remember Paul is writing from the very centre of the Roman Empire, from Rome itself. Philippi was a

Roman colony (Acts 16:12) and Roman colonies were little bits of Rome placed throughout the world. In these colonies the citizens never forgot that they were Romans. They spoke the Latin language, wore the Latin dress, and insisted on being stubbornly Roman despite the fact that they lived 800 miles from the city of Rome. "Now, " says Paul " *just as you are a little colony of Rome in Philippi, never forget you're a little colony of heaven on earth.*" " *Only let your conversation (citizenship) be as it,*" (1:27) In (3:20) Paul says, " *Your citizenship is in heaven,*" Now when a baby was born in Philippi it was important that its name be registered on the legal records. Of course when you trust the Lord, you become a citizen of heaven, your name is registered on heavens record (4:3)

What a privilege, what a dignity to be a citizen of heaven. My ... we are enrolled in heavens register, we speak heavens language, we obey heavens laws, we are loyal to heavens cause and we are waiting for heavens Lord. Aren't you glad that you're a citizen of heaven this ? Billy Sunday said, "***If Christians would live like they are homesick for heaven the devil would not have a friend left on earth.***" My ... you are a citizen of heaven but are you reflecting your status ?

A soldier in the army of Alexander the Great was charged with misbehaviour. He was brought before Alexander about his conduct. Alexander asked, " *What is your name ?*" With trembling voice the soldier replied, " *My name is Alexander, sir*" Again, Alexander the Great asked, " *What is your name ?*"

Again the soldier replied, " *My name is Alexander sip;*
" Then Alexander the Great shouted at him, " *Then change your name or change your life.*" My does your demeanour befit your dignity ? Does your practice match your profession ? You see our lifestyle must (a) and it must,

(b) REVEAL OUR SAVIOUR:

" *Let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ.*" (1:27) The word " *becometh,*" is interesting. We hear that someone's clothes does or does not become him or her. What is meant is the colour or cut of the clothes does not become him or her. Does your spiritual garments become the Lord Jesus ? ***Would the Lord Jesus wear what you have on ?*** My the gospel is more than a creed, its Christ. To live as becomes the gospel, we must manifest the likeness of Christ. Anything less than likeness, to Christ is belying our belief and belittling our gospel. Someone once asked Ghandi, " *what is the greatest hindrance to Christian missions in India ?*" Ghandi replied, " *Christians.*" My is your conduct in keeping with the gospel ? Is there someone that you know right now, who has been turned from the gospel because of your life ?

The gospel is *simple* so should we be in dress, speech and behaviour. The gospel is *true*, it's gold without dross. The gospel is *fearless*, as we should be in action and profession. The gospel is *gentle*. My your bad temper is contrary to the gospel. The gospel is *loving*. The gospel is *merciful*. The gospel is *holy*. My it's

worth remembering that the world around us knows only the gospel that it sees in our lives.

***You are writing a Gospel
A chapter each day,
By the deeds that you do
And the words that you say
Men read what you write
Whether faithful or true
Say what is the Gospel
According to you ?***

My " *the Gospel,*" is the good news that Christ died for our sins, was buried and rose again.
(1 Cor 15:1-3) There is only one gospel. We dare not add anything to the gospel, we dare not take anything from the gospel and we dare not substitute anything for the gospel. We are saved by grace alone, through faith alone in Christ alone. " *We have some neighbours who believe a false gospel,*" a church member told his pastor. " *Do you have some literature I can give them ?*" The pastor opened his Bible to (2 Cor 3:2) " *Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men.*" He said, " *The best literature in the world is no substitute for your own life. Let them see Christ in your behaviour and this will open up opportunities to share Christ's Gospel with them.*"

My one of the greatest weapons against the devil is a godly life. And a local church that practices the truth, that " *behaves what it believes,*" is going to defeat the enemy. This is the first essential for victory. (1)

(2) WORKING COOPERATIVELY

Paul is taking us now from the world of politics to the world of athletics. The words " *striving together*," gives us our English word " *athletics*." Paul pictures the church as a team and reminds them that its team work that wins victories. Now this is the first hint that there was discord in the Philippian church. Later on Paul bluntly named names. My Satan's strategy has always been to divide and conquer, and how delighted the enemy is to see internal division within the local church. We fight among ourselves and Satan makes strident advances. We shoot our wounded and he smirks. My It's only as we " *strive together*," that can overcome the wicked one. Now you will notice that this " *co-operation*," is,

(a) **IN THE LORD: IT'S DOCTRINAL:**

The phrase " *stand fast in one Spirit*," is paralleled in (4:1) by the phrase " *stand fast in the Lord*." Of course in the balance of New Testament teaching the Father is the great Architect of salvation, the Son is its Accomplisher, and the Spirit applies to the individual and to the church the benefits which the Father planned and the Son purchased. (Eph 1:4-13) So when Paul pauses here to speak of their unity in the Spirit, he is directing attention to the blessings bestowed upon them by the Spirit who has incorporated and baptised them into the body (1 Cor 12:13) regenerated them into new life (Jn 3:5) and indwells them in the fullness of divine power. (Rom 8:11) Of course Paul is writing to

believers and did you notice that each chapter begins with either " *in Christ*," or " *in the Lord*." (1:1 2:1 3:1 4:1) This co-operation therefore is " *in the Lord* " This is not ecumenical co-operation, but evangelical co-operation, it is not co-operation without the body, it is co-operation within the body. " *In the Lord* " Now a great deal of talk today is made about union and unity but most of it is superficial. Either we are called to surrender our faith and submit to someone's else belief, or to compromise our convictions altogether and not believe anything definitely. My in the tide of ecumenism and charismatic tendencies great truths essential to our Christian faith have been discarded, and Christ has been " ***sold out***."

" *The faith of the Gospel*," that is the Christian faith as revealed by God and recorded in Scripture means so little to so many. But I submit to you that there can never be union apart from the truth. Indeed do you recall the warning that Paul gives elsewhere when he says, " *Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but rather reprove them*." (Eph 5:11) Christian are you stuck in some old ecumenical church with some old modernist minister ? Will you speak out ? Will you get out ? Will you stay out ? (Rev 18:4-5) My ... when the honour of Christ and the purity of the gospel is at stake there can be no compromise. We cry with Luther, " *Here we stand we can do no other*," we say with Spurgeon " *You cannot have unity without forsaking truth, and to forsake truth for the sake of unity is to betray Jesus Christ*." (a)

(b) **FOR THE LORD: IT'S EVANGELICAL:**

Do you see what Paul says ? " *With one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.* " (1:27) One is at one end of the line, Paul at Rome, others at the other end, those at Philippi, but it is the same line. There's a beautiful phrase in the book of Zephaniah which talks about serving the Lord " *with one consent.* " (3:9) Or as the margin puts it, " *with one shoulder* " Have you seen a military march past ? Not a shoulder out of place, for all the world as if it were but one shoulder. (1:27) What a picture of an united front. Was this not Paul's concern ? Is this not our concern ? That we might united in getting the gospel out ? My there are too many real adversaries, too many golden opportunities, and too much to be done for us as Christians to split the church over personality clashes. My are we striving together or pulling apart ? John Wesley said,

If I had three hundred men who feared nothing but God, hated nothing but sin, and were determined to know nothing among men save Jesus Christ and Him crucified, I would set the world on fire.

Just before the battle of Trafalgar, Nelson inquired of Admiral Collingwood where his captain was and learned that he and Captain Rotherham were not on good terms with each other. Sending a boat for the Captain, he placed the hands of Collingwood and Rotherham together, pointed to the enemy's ships and earnestly looking them both in the face he uttered the simple words, "**Look, yonder is the enemy.**" It was enough, disagreements were forgotten and victory was gained. I wonder have you forgot the identity of the

real enemy ? Has bitterness against another believer so consumed you, that you are no longer " *striving together for the faith of the gospel,* ? " My we are citizens of heaven and therefore should walk consistently. We are members of the same " *team,*" and therefore should work co-operatively. But there is a third essential for success as we face the enemy. (1) (2)

(3) WARRING COURAGEOUSLY

Paul now takes us from the world of politics and from the world of athletics, to the realm of warfare. He says, " *Don't be alarmed by your opponents.*" No one can read the early chapters of the Acts of the Apostles without being impressed with the occurrence of the word " **boldness.** " *It* is one of the distinguishing signs of being filled with the Spirit of God. So it is not surprising that Paul expects this quality of courage and fearlessness among the believers at Philippi. Indeed, he asks for,

(a) A BOLDNESS WHICH REFUSES TO SHRINK:

" *And in nothing terrified by your adversaries,*" The word " *terrified* " means " *to be intimidated.*" It was used to describe a startled, scared, and panicky horse. A horse generally panics when it only half sees some object. Paul is saying in effect, "*Don't be terrified by what you half see. Rather face your adversaries courageously, and you will defeat them decisively. This will be both a sure sign of their judgement and a token of your salvation and deliverance.*" My what a word this is for our day.

We are living in a climate of tolerance, compromise, and half-heartedness. How crowded are the ranks of the fearful. The Bible says, "*The fear of man bringeth a snare.*" (Prov 29:25) My we are afraid to stand up for the great absolutes of our Christian faith. The fact is we are terrified of our adversaries. That's why we can only get a handful of fellows out to stand on the street and give our invitations and tracts. Why ? Because we have lost our boldness. Now do you see what this boldness and courage does ?

1. IT CONFIRMS THE SAVED:

The words "*evident token,*" mean "*proof*" If we are marked, by boldness and courage in the face of opposition its proof that we are real. It shows that we have the real thing. Its shows that we have more than a profession. We have a possession. 1.

2. IT CONDEMNS THE LOST:

God-given courage is not only a proof of our salvation, it's a sign of their condemnation. The unmoved church, the church that is unafraid in the battle is a clear omen to the lost of their destruction. *Now Paul throws light here upon a recurring problem that faces us today.* It's a problem that daunts preachers and discourages people. It's the problem of producing real spiritual conviction. I tell you it is a very humbling exercise to estimate the ratio between the number of messages preached and the number of souls won for Christ. Yet do you see that this problem does not belong solely to the preacher ? For Paul shows here that this problem

touches upon the quality of the life of the church. My are we living lives that befit the gospel of Christ ? Is this a church where there is unity and concord ? A church where is doctrinal purity ? Where steadfastness is being maintained ? A church that is unashamed and undaunted in the face of opposition. My these are the things from which conviction of the unsaved flow.!

(a) And then,

(b) A BOLDNESS WHICH REJOICES TO SUFFER:

" *For unto you*" (1:29-30) The word "*given,*" has the idea of "*grace.*" The thought is that suffering is a benefit or privilege which God graciously bestows upon those who can be trusted. Do you recall what it was said of the early disciples ? "*they departed from the presence of the council rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.*" (Acts 5:41)

A few years ago I listened to Dorel Popa, the pastor of a large Baptist Church in Arad, Romania. He told that in the very City Hall where he later was to become Lord Mayor he was interrogated for the sake of Christ. ! He spoke of the suffering saints of Romania. He concluded with these words, "*For unto*" (1:29) He said, "*It was a privilege to suffer for His sake.*" David Jeremiah tells of Josef Tson the pastor of the largest Baptist church in Romania during the days when the communists ruled his country. In 1973, he published a document that described how the communist government had obstructed religious

freedom in his land. As the result of his brave disclosure, he was singled out for persecution and harassment. On one occasion, they threatened him with torture and death. This was his courageous response,

Your supreme weapon is killing. My supreme weapon is dying. Here is how it works. You know that my sermons on tape have spread all over the country. If you kill me, these sermons will be sprinkled with my blood. Everyone will know I died for my preaching So, sir, my sermons will speak ten times louder than before. I will actually rejoice in this supreme victory if you kill me.

In 1555 Queen Mary came to the throne of England. Over 300 Christians were executed under the orders of "Bloody Mary" Among them were Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley. The two preachers were bound to a post and wood was piled high around them and then set on fire. Latimer looked at Ridley and said, "*Be of good comfort, Master Ridley and play the man. We shall this day by God's grace light such a candle in England, as I trust shall never be put out.*" What about us ? What have we suffered for Christ ? We would have to confess very little.

My has society become tolerant ? Or has the church become more indifferent ? Is it not that present day Christianity is " pussy footed," it is so inoffensive that the world finds it soothing. Inaugurate an aggressive programme for the gospel, get out and out for the Lord and see what happens. The world will either " *drop us cold,*" or " *knock us out.*" **A Call to Arms.** How will

you respond. My are you prepared to "*stand up and be counted ?*" The story is told that in the French wars our soldiers were very dispirited on the eve of great battle, owing to the disparity in the number of the English troops. Gathered around a camp fire one night a few men were discussing the situation; every now and then another, and another, joined the group, unrecognised in the darkness, but all seemed to agree, on the hopelessness of the morrow's fight, they were so heavily outnumbered.

Suddenly out of the darkness there spoke a new voice, a voice so well known to them all, a voice which called them instantly out despair, a voice that posed one strategic question. "*And how many do you count **ME** for ?*" It was the Iron Duke himself, the Duke of Wellington, who led them that next morning to a brilliant victory. Do you feel you're standing alone for Christ in the fight ? "*How many do you count **Him** for ?*" Will you remember that one with God is always a majority therefore "*Fear not, for they that be with us are more than they that be with them.*" (2 Kings 6:16)