

Philippians - Part 2

The Fight For The Faith

Philippians 1:18-30

Memory Verses: Philippians 1:21

MANUSCRIPT

Introduction (Me, We, & the Struggle)

Last week we began our study of the book of Philippians. And what we saw was that it is not really a book, but a letter. A letter from Paul to the partners, deacons, and elders of a church in a small town known as Philippi. This is a church that Paul started on one of his missionary journeys, and so he cares for it deeply.

Last week we saw that Paul's chief concern for the church at Philippi was their joy. In fact, Philippians could be nicknamed the book of joy. In just four short chapters we see the words joy or rejoicing 13 times. And notice that Paul uses the word joy, not happiness. In fact the Bible consistently tells us to rejoice or be joyful, but it never tells us to be happy. Why? Because happiness is a feeling based upon circumstances. Happiness is a good thing, but it is also fleeting. It's temporary. Joy, on the other hand, is a feeling of contentment regardless of ones circumstances. You can be devastated, sorrowful, and sad due to the present trials that you are facing in this world, and still have joy. Recently, every time I read the news I grow frustrated at the divisiveness and temperament of our current society. Life is hard, and at times unfair. But that doesn't mean I despair. No, despite all of the hardships of this life we can still have an underlying sense of joy. How? Because we know that no matter how hard or painful it gets in this life, we are secure within the arms of Christ and have the reward of eternal glory ahead of us.

Not only that, but as we saw last week, we are also filled with joy when we minister for the Lord in this life. When you engage in ministry you will inevitably be ministered to more than those you seek to serve. There is something special that happens inside of God's children when they sacrificially and selflessly give of themselves for the sake of others. As Mother Teresa famously said, "joy is a net of love by which you can catch souls." The more we minister, the more we love, the more people come to know our Lord, which gives us more joy in our souls. If you want joy, it's simple, minister for the Lord.

This week we want to look at another aspect of the Christian's life that ultimately causes them to rejoice, and that aspect is the fight for the faith. Have you ever watched a war movie or show; something akin to Saving Private Ryan or Band of Brothers? When you watch a movie like that there are three things that become obvious about the climate of war.

Brave men and women will sign up to fight for a righteous cause. They begin their fight because they believe deeply in the pursuit of freedom, or to destroy tyranny, or to protect the innocent; a worthy cause. But something happens in the middle of war; their motivations seems to shift a little. They, for the most part continue the fight, not simply for the cause, although they still believe in the cause, but for the friends that they have made along the way that they now find themselves in the trenches with. They signed up to fight for their country by destroying the enemy, but now they fight for their country by protecting the family that fights beside them. And who are the women and men who end up making it through the fight? Those who learn to shed their fear and advance in the face of certain death. That's why we call them the brave, because they advance while others retreat. They charge forward while others check out.

This morning I want you to recognize that we are in a war. As a Christian you have enlisted in the Lord's army to we fight the enemies of sin, secularism, and satan on a daily basis. We fight with a just and righteous cause, with the lives of every man woman and child hanging in the balance. Every moment we spend on this planet is spiritual warfare. Every place you go; you job, your neighborhood, your gym, your school, is a battlefield. And yet, so many so called Christians live life as if there is no immediate threat, and there is no need to fight. They've grown complacent to the cause, and they've put down their weapons, and they've allowed the enemy to advance, and this cannot be. Christian you are called to fight, until you take your last breath on this earth, you must never give up the fight.

Read with me if you would, our text for this morning found in **Philippians 1:18-30**. Just as with the war movies I discussed earlier, we see that the fight for the faith has a just cause, a family to fight for, and those who remain fearless will win the war. It will take all of us to fight this fight. As J.C. Ryle points out; "a true Christian is one who has not only peace of conscience, but war within. He may be known by his peace as well as his warfare." The main point this morning is clear... **True Christians Will Be Known For Their Warfare And The Joy Which Remains Through Their Fight**. So let's look at our passage this morning and see the three aspects of spiritual warfare which each Christian must accept.

Teaching (Expand on the Problem, God)

The first aspect of spiritual warfare in this passage is that... **Every Christian Should Be Willing to Live & Die For The Sake of Honoring Christ (vs18-21)**. At the end of **verse 18** Paul picks up right where we left off last week; rejoicing. Here he continues to be filled with joy because as we see in **verse 19** he knows that regardless of "this" (his present circumstances of being in prison) he will be delivered. Does this mean that he is confident that he will be delivered from prison? Perhaps. He does in deed eventually get released from this stint in jail. But, perhaps it refers to

his faith in the fact that regardless of what happens to him in this life it will be according to God's plan and for his glory. No matter what happens he's going to be okay. Ultimately it means that he will inherit salvation and glorification in eternity.

Paul also rejoices because he feels spiritually strengthened by the prayers of the church and the help of the Holy Spirit. As we mentioned last week, there is power in constant intercessory prayer because the Holy Spirit can do way more than we can in the flesh. Paul knows this, and feels this.

This joy, that dominates Paul's attitude, that determines his course of action, leads him in [verse 20](#) to express the primary purpose of his entire ministry, or as he calls it, his "eager expectation and hope." The very thing that gets Paul out of bed in the morning and guides all of his decisions is this; to live without shame and to honor Christ. That's it. This is what it's all about. This is the primary cause and the supreme mission of all Christians; that we conduct our lives in a way that brings ultimate glory to Christ.

That means, first, that we must not be dishonorably discharged. We cannot allow our ministry to be tainted by sin or by failing to live according to the code of Christ and His Word. Rather, as [verse 27](#) and [Ephesians 4:1](#) puts it, we must continue to walk in a manner worthy of our calling. Look at [Isaiah 50:7](#) which tells us that through God's help the Christian soldier will not fall into sin and disgrace. Instead, they will set their faces, like the hardest of rocks, not looking to the left or the right, but focused on the glory of God. When the battle is over, they will not be put to shame.

Secondly, it means, that we must honor Christ with our lives, or as Paul puts it, our bodies. This means that we are to live for Him as courageously as possible. Many people claim to be Christians, but do they really live for Christ? In our day and time, it takes a lot of courage to live boldly for Christ in this world. I'm always amazed by the story of Richard Wurmbrand who served 9 excruciating years being tortured in a communist prison in Romania for daring to preach the Gospel. When he was released he went straight to the town square where he opened up his Bible and began to preach. He was immediately put back in prison where he served another 5 years of torture and beatings. Now that's what it means to live courageously for Christ. In [Acts 20:24](#) Paul says that his life doesn't count for much except that he does his duty to preach the gospel of the grace of God. This is how we live courageously for Christ. We preach. We share the Gospel. And we do it boldly. Listen... according to scripture, **the only reason your life has any meaning or counts for anything is that you share the Gospel of Christ with the world.**

This is what it means to live for Christ. But notice, Paul also said,

"or by death." We honor Christ in our bodies by living for him as courageously as possible, or by dying for Him as courageously as possible. Once again, we are at war. And this may be the most sobering aspect of war; in war, people die. Soldiers die on the battlefield. They do so knowing that it is better to die for something than to live for nothing. Think about it. Is Christ worth dying for? And if so, could there be a greater honor than to give our lives in this world for the cause of Christ? Therefore, **live for Christ in such a way that if it were possible, it may cost you your life.** Here in America, it probably won't cost your life, at least not yet, but you can still live as if you were willing to die for the cause. Look at [Romans 17:7-9](#); whether we live or die it is for the Lord. I want you to think about those who have given their lives in this war. I want you to think of the apostles. Guys like Peter, James, Matthew, Andrew, and Thomas who all gave their lives for the cause. The only one who was not martyred was John, who was given the consolation prize of being exiled to a desolate island. Or what about the reformers, many of whom, like William Tyndale, gave their lives to make sure that the Bible was available to us, the common man. Or what about modern day missionaries like Graham Staines who gave his life to the cause of Christ by sharing the Gospel to the lost and by ministering to lepers in India. He and his two small boys were burned to death in their station wagon while they slept simply because they lived courageously for Christ.

And how can we live courageously and if need be die courageously for Christ? Because of [verse 21](#), if we live, we live for Christ, which is an abundant life, and if we die, we will be with Christ, which is an eternal life. The bottom line is this, **This life is a war which we joyfully fight for the cause of Christ knowing that Christ, his Gospel, and our reward are worth it. True Christians Will Be Known For Their Warfare And The Joy Which Remains Through Their Fight.**

The next aspect of Christian warfare is that... **Every Christian Should Faithfully Fight For Their Spiritual Family (vs22-27).** Look at [verse 22](#). Paul knows that this fight is both laborious and fruitful. Laborious because, being a part of the church is hard work. But, fruitful because Christ will be glorified through the church. Remember, the church is plan A and there is no plan B. This means, in [verse 24](#), that regardless of the hard work, the fight for our spiritual family is necessary. As Paul said, he wants to be with Christ, but just like the Army Rangers, he can't leave any man behind. He must stick around for one purpose; to disciple the church. In other words, get this; the only thing keeping me here is discipleship to my church family. **Some of us so easily reject the church for trivial things, while Paul rejected heaven for the church.** Do you understand what he is saying? Other than preaching the Gospel, disciplining the church body is the most important mission we have. So important that even Heaven's gotta wait.

Let's examine what Paul says about discipleship here. As we've already said, it's a labor of love. It's not quick. It can be a lifelong commitment and therefore it takes intentionality. Discipleship doesn't happen by accident. It takes deliberate planning, time, and resources.

In **verse 25** we see that discipleship is necessary for "progress... in the faith;" spiritual maturity, and for their joy in the faith. It is implied here, that since Paul sees it as his responsibility to do the discipling that he will be leading the discipleship process. He could do this through three avenues; one on one mentorship where he takes it upon himself to pour into one individual at a time. This is a very effective method which we encourage at Stone Creek. As **Proverbs 27:17** says; iron sharpens iron as one man sharpens another. Our prayer is that everyone would be mentoring someone and being mentored by someone. The only stipulation is that it should be with someone of the same gender.

Or it could be done in a small group bible study where the group trusts one another and is willing to share their faith journey with one another. Or it could be done through corporate preaching as I'm doing right now. All three are needed for spiritual growth. If you are only coming to preaching... you'll miss crucial discipleship training that can only come through one on one mentorship or small groups. If you are only going to small group, then you will miss crucial discipleship training that comes from hearing the Word of God preached. These are the three primary means by which spiritual maturity is fostered within the body of Christ... but **verse 25** also says that discipleship is necessary for "joy in the faith." I don't know about you, but nothing nurtures my joy in the faith more than being with my brothers and sisters in Christ. The church is necessary for us to maintain an attitude of joy in this life. Another way to look at it is this... **Discipleship is the spiritual fight we fight to help our brothers and sisters win their spiritual fight**.

Discipleship is laborious, necessary... and (**verse 22**) discipleship is fruitful. When we commit to the ministry of discipleship within the body of Christ, we will see men and women, boys and girls, grow and mature and join the fight. And, as **verse 26** shows us, you will see some fall in love with the spiritual family and give Christ glory because of it. In **verse 27** we see that the fruit of discipleship is a unified fellowship in the church. There is nothing better than a healthy church and unified church who acts worthy of the Gospel; a church body that accurately reflects and represents Christ. They stand firm on the standard of the word of God. They have a common love (or spirit), and a share a common vision (or mind). And they fight together, "striving" side by side, arm in arm, to spread the Gospel to their community. The fruit of discipleship is this... we don't fight one another, we fight with one another. Listen, the church is our greatest gift on this earth because **the surest way to win our spiritual battles is together. True Christians Will Be Known For**

Their Warfare And The Joy Which Remains Through Their Fight

The last aspect of spiritual warfare is simply that... **Every Christian Should Fight Without Fear (vs28-30)**. **Verse 28** teaches that Christians shouldn't fear anything (any of the attacks) their opponents can do to them or threaten them with. Who are our opponents? They could be civil authorities like the government. They could be anti-christian rivals or persecutors... which unfortunately sometimes includes family. Your opponents could also include your own flesh or the devil.

Regardless, we shouldn't fear any of them, nor their attacks. What are their attacks? One of their greatest weapons is social rejection. This is the most common attack in our American culture. You may be labeled a bigot, or a science denier, but that's pretty much the extent at this point. Still, it hurts. In other parts of the world the attacks increase in severity; like economic oppression. Right now in Iraq, Christians who are outed can be barred from owning businesses or working jobs. Or, as we see in **verse 29**, how about the attacks of outright physical abuse. The same type of physical abuse that Christ himself suffered at the hands of his persecutors. It is estimated that upward of 1 million Christians around the world suffer physical persecution of some kind every year. Or, as we see in **verse 30**, imprisonment, the very same conflict that Paul was experiencing. Right now there are 70,000 Christians incarcerated in North Korea prisons simply because they were caught with a Bible, or said a prayer. And at last we come to the last weapon; death. Last year alone an estimated 4000 Christians (that we know of) were killed for their faith. But here's the thing that our persecutors don't get... for us, as Paul says, death is gain, death is a reward. So the jokes on them. And if death is the worst they can do... and to die is gain... then what do we have to fear? Nothing at all.

In fact, when we refuse to be afraid of our persecutors or their persecution, when we remain faithful to Christ despite their attacks, it does two things! One, it shows our enemies that God is powerful and that they have no chance of winning. If you keep oppressing someone, and beating someone, and taking everything they have in this life, and they continue to righteously defy you and proclaim Christ... you've lost! Secondly, it proves that we are saved. Get this... **if you are courageously willing to run into battle, against all forms of persecution, for the sake of Christ, there can be little doubt of your salvation.**

And, finally, we refuse to be afraid of suffering, because, according to **verse 29**, our persecution and suffering has been granted to us by Christ for his glory. Understand this very important point, you aren't in a war by chance and your sufferings aren't coincidence. Instead, this is what you've been called to in order that the world will see Christ through you. **2 Timothy 3:12** says that you will be persecuted for Christ. Do you get it? It is an honor to suffer for Christ, because as **Philippians 3:10** says, when we suffer

for Christ we share in his sufferings. And when we suffer in this spiritual war, it reveals Christ to the world like nothing else can. How? Joy! Remember the linchpin of letter is Joy. Our joy in our suffering is still our greatest witness to the world of the goodness of Jesus Christ. **Romans 5:3** says that we rejoice in our sufferings. **James 1:2-4** ; says that we should count it all joy because our sufferings make us more like Christ. Our joy through our sufferings is a lighthouse to the world that no matter what awful things happen to us Christ is supremely good. **True Christians Will Be Known For Their Warfare And The Joy Which Remains Through Their Fight**

Application

So what is the application this morning? What is the take away? Well, it's threefold. We know that we have a cause to fight for, the glory of Christ. We fight for that cause in a way that we are not ashamed of ourselves and that Christ is honored. If need be we must give our lives for the cause. Therefore, this morning, we must commit to the cause. Would you dedicate your life this morning, commit your life this morning, to the cause of Christ. To live honorably without sin. To courageously proclaim the Gospel. And if need be, die for the sake of Christ? If so, could you simply put your hand in the air?

Secondly, we know that we have a spiritual family to fight for. We must fight for them by joining them in the discipleship journey. We fight for a unified fellowship through one on one mentorships, small groups, and corporate worship. Therefore, this morning, we commit to the church. Would you dedicate your life this morning, commit your life this morning to the work of discipleship among your spiritual brothers and sisters? If so, would you simply put your hand in the air?

Thirdly, we know that we have nothing to fear. We don't fear our opponents and we don't fear their attacks. In fact, we are honored to suffer on account of Christ and we rejoice in our suffering because it makes us more like Christ. Therefore, this morning, we commit to the consequences. Would you, this morning, say that you want to live for Christ without fear? That you want to boldly march forward regardless of the persecution? If so, would you simply put your hand in the air?

If you have put your hand in the air, you have been recruited into the army of the Lord. I pray you fight well. I pray you fight with joy. **True Christians Will Be Known For Their Warfare And The Joy Which Remains Through Their Fight**

Conclusion

C.S. Lewis, the famous Christian theologian and author, fought hard his whole life. Many believers can attribute their conversion in part to Lewis. At the end of his life, when contemplating death, he said this...

"My prayer is that when I die, all of hell rejoices that I am out of the fight." Christian, let us live so hard for Christ, and let us do so much damage to the kingdom of the enemy, that when we die hell is happy to see us out of the fight.