

The third essential is CONFIDENCE (28-30). Paul says, *“This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God. For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him”* (29-30). Paul gives us encouragement that gives us confidence in the battle. We not only believe in Christ, but also suffer for Christ. In Philippians 3:10 Paul calls this *“the fellowship of his sufferings.”* Paul tells us this suffering is *“granted”* to us, in other words, it is a gift! If we are suffering for ourselves, it would be no privilege, but if we are suffering for and with Christ, it is a high and holy honor.

Paul says, *“since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have”* (30). The enemy wants us to think we are alone in the battle, that our difficulties are unique. But it is not the case. Paul reminded the Philippians that he was going through the same difficulties they were experiencing hundreds of miles from Rome. Knowing that our fellow believers are also sharing in the battle is an encouragement for us to keep going and to pray for them as we pray for ourselves.

Going through spiritual conflict is one way we have to grow in Christ. God gives us the strength we need to stand firm against the enemy, and this confidence is proof to the enemy that he will lose and we are on the winning side (Phil. 1:28). The Christians at Philippi had seen Paul go through conflict when he was with them (Acts 16:19 ff), and they had witnessed his firmness in the Lord. As we face the enemy and depend on the Lord, He gives us all that we need for the battle.

As we have the single mind, living for Christ and the gospel, we will have joy in the midst of the battle, because it produces in us consistency, cooperation, and confidence. We are in the battle stations. We need to stand firm in our journey of faith and life, helping and encouraging one another no matter what circumstances. We need *“spiritual teamwork”* as we strive together for the faith of the gospel. Let us pick up our spiritual weapons (the Word of God and prayer) and march together.

June 04, 2017

Philippians (4): **Battle Stations!**

Philippians 1:27-30

Rev. Dr. Charles Yoon

A church member was coming out of church after Easter service, and the preacher was standing at the door to shake hands. He grabbed him by the hand and pulled him aside. The pastor said to him, “You need to join the Army of the Lord!” He replied, “I’m already in the Army of the Lord, Pastor.” Pastor questioned, “How come I don’t see you except at Christmas and Easter?” He whispered back, “I’m in the secret service.” I don’t know how many of you are in the secret service. I want you to be in the Army of the Lord.

One of the major criticisms of Christians today is that many Christians are militant and aggressive, especially on people who have other faiths or cultures. And if we are militant toward people, that is wrong. We are soldiers, but our aggression is not to be toward innocent people. We need to know who our real enemy is.

There is an enemy who is out to steal the treasure from God’s people. As long as we are sealed with the Spirit, the enemy cannot have our soul. But he isn’t going away and fights us on other fronts. His focus has shifted. He wants to interrupt and destroy our joy, effectiveness, and testimony! He wants us to end up a wounded and weary soldier on the sidelines. Paul had met the enemy in Philippi, and he was facing the same enemy in Rome.

Many people say, “I don’t care what you believe, just so long as you live right.” But, what we believe determines how we behave, and wrong belief ultimately means a wrong life. Most local churches today are only one generation short of potential extinction. No wonder Satan attacks our young people or tempts them with money or pleasure, seeking to get them away from the faith and the church. The battle is going on right in our own church. It’s a battle for souls. It’s a battle for the hearts of believers. It’s a battle of wills! It’s a battle to change minds and attitudes. Church is a battleground, not a

playground! We are in a fight, not a frolic. We are in a struggle, not a stroll. We are in battle stations!

How can we fight this enemy? We use spiritual weapons – the Word of God and prayer (Eph. 6:11-18; Heb. 4:12), and we must depend on the Holy Spirit to give us the power that we need. But an army must fight together. This morning Paul explains in today's text that there are three essentials for victory in the battle to protect the faith.

The first essential is CONSISTENCY (1:27a). Paul says, *"Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ"* (27a). The most important weapon against the enemy is not a stirring sermon or powerful book; it is the consistent life of believers. Paul is saying that we have to keep on following Christ and living according to his word in good times and in bad.

There is the story of a 104 year old man who was being interviewed by a newspaper reporter. The reporter asked, "How did you do it? How have you lived so long?" The centenarian answered, "I ate the right food, got plenty of sleep each night, didn't fool around, and never indulged in alcohol, smokes, or chewing tobacco." The reporter replied, "I had an uncle who lived like that but he died at fifty-five. Can you explain that?" "Sure," the old man replied, "he just didn't keep it up long enough."

Many times as Christians we don't keep up living for Christ long enough. We're on fire for God for a while. Initially we try to live worthy of Jesus' sacrifice, but before long we revert to our old ways. When tough times come, we fall away. We don't persevere. We aren't consistent.

Therefore, we need to ask ourselves this question regularly: "Am I conducting myself in a manner worthy of the gospel?" We do not behave in order to go to heaven, as though we could be saved by our good works; but we behave because our names are already written in heaven, and our citizenship is in heaven. People around us know only the gospel that it sees in our lives. An unknown author writes, "You

are writing a Gospel, A chapter each day, By deeds that you do, And by words that you say. Men read what you write, Whether faithless or true; Say, what is the Gospel According to you?" We need to walk out these doors and behave what we believe! The greatest weapon against the enemy is a godly life. When we consistently "behave what we believe," we can defeat the enemy.

The second essential is COOPERATION (1:27b). Paul says, *"Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel"* (27b). The word *"striving together"* reminds us of an athletic term, "teamwork." Paul pictured the church as a team and he reminded the Christians at Philippi that it is teamwork that wins victories.

There was division in the church at Philippi. For one thing, two women were not getting along with each other (Phil. 4:2). As the result of division the work of the church was hindered. The enemy is always happy to see internal division in a local church. His motto is "Divide and conquer!" *"Standing together"* is a way to overcome the wicked one. The important word is *'together'*: standing firmly *together* in one spirit, striving *together* against enemy, and doing it with one mind and heart.

We are on the Faith Church team, working together in ministry. Each one of you at Faith Church has your assigned place and job. If you don't have any job, please find one. If each one of you is doing your job, it helps all the others and the church. Not everybody can be captain or leader or chairperson. The team has to follow the rules, and the Word of God is our rule book. There is one goal – to honor Christ and do His will. If we all work together, we can reach the goal, win the prize, and glorify the Lord. In other words, Paul reminds us again of the need for the single mind. There is joy in our lives, even as we battle the enemy, if we live for Christ and the gospel and practice Christian team work.