

Session 3

HEAVENLY OUTPOST

INTRODUCTION

Last Sunday I wanted to lay the foundation for the affirmation: Church members are ministers. In our religious climate and social norms this is a difficult truth to live out. In many churches the pastoral staff have become the organizational CEOs. This is not biblical. Members are ministers!

My text today is found in the Letter of Paul to the Philippians: *“Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, and not frightened in anything by your opponents . . .”* (Philippians 1:27–28a, ESV).

I – AN OUTPOST IN A FOREIGN COUNTRY

These verses teach us one of the reasons that Paul is writing to these Christians in Philippi. For the sake of time I’m foregoing some of the background and context to this text. What is essential, is that you see that part of Paul’s appeal to this Church is that their “manner of life be worthy of the Gospel”. Let me unpack this a bit:

- A. Paul starts this verse with the word “only” or a better translation is the NIV, *“Whatever happens”*. Whether Paul is released from prison or not; whether he gets to see them or not, let this be known about you: conduct yourselves worthy of the Gospel. I point this is out to show the importance and emphasis that Paul is making. “No matter what ... do this,” he writes.\
- B. He addresses something called their “manner of life”. The word involves the idea of their citizenship. The noun form of this verb is *politeuma* where you clearly see the political idea in the word. Gordon Fee helps us to see that just as Philippi was a colony of Rome, the Church within Philippi was to be a colony of heaven.¹
- C. As members of this colony, this society, this outpost of Heaven, they are to live worthy of the Gospel. This is the colony’s constitution, the charter of this society, the expectations of its citizens: Live in keeping with, aligned to, in harmony with the Gospel.
- D. Halfway through verse 27, Paul explains his objectives even further: “that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel.”² The local Church is a heavenly outpost in the middle of foreign, even hostile territory. This outpost is not to live

¹ Fee, G. D. (1995). *Paul’s Letter to the Philippians* (p. 162). Grand Rapids, MI: Wm.B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.

² *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. (2016). (Php 1:27). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

following the dictates of the foreign power, but in keeping with the Gospel. And the call of its citizens is the “stand firm united for the faith of the Gospel”.

This unusual phrase “for the faith of the Gospel” can be understood when you account for the whole clause: “striving side by side for the faith of the Gospel”. Paul is thinking of the content of the Gospel. The objective faith that is embodied in the Gospel. They are to promote and to protect this Gospel message.³

I trust you are seeing the picture. If I was to bring this into the 21st Century I say it to you this way: *Elk Point Baptist Church has been planted by God as a heavenly outpost in this wicked world. This colony is to be characterized by citizens who live out the implications of the Gospel; who proclaim the Gospel to this world and who protect the Gospel.*

So, the question we need to ask is what does that mean, practically? What do we mean by living out the implications of the Gospel? How are we to proclaim it and protect it?

II – GOSPEL BELIEVING & GOSPEL DRIVEN CITIZENS

First, Paul clearly sees that there is an ethical element to the Gospel. In other words, the Gospel produces a certain way of living. Secondly, Paul sees the Gospel as a message to proclaim and protect. Let’s consider the first one. There are many passages we could go to, but I am choosing Titus 2.

III – GOSPEL LIVING

Let’s read [Titus 2:1-15](#).

The Gospel teaches us (negatively) to say no to sin (That’s the first half of repentance.) and (positively) to live a self-controlled life showing freedom from sin (That’s the second half of repentance.); and to live in light of the Second Coming.

Paul reminds Titus that the reason Christ came and died was to “. . . to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works.” (Titus 2:14, ESV). Someone who has believed the Gospel now belongs to Christ who saved us from ungodliness, cleansing us and fitting us for good works.

So, Paul reminds them what is true: *Since you believed the Gospel you have repented of your sin, turning to Christ to live purified and productive lives.* So on that basis if you are an older man (vv1-2), there are implications; if you are an older woman (vv3-4a) there are implications; if you are a younger woman (wife and mother) (vv4b-5) there are implications; if you are a young man (v6) there are implications; if

³ *Expositor's Bible Commentary, The*, Pradis CD-ROM:Philippians/Exposition of Philippians/II. First Series of Exhortations (1:27-2:18)/A. Exhortation to Unity and Courage in view of External Foes (1:27-30), Book Version: 4.0.2

you are Titus (or perhaps a pastor) (vv7-8) there are implications; or if you are a slave (employee) (vv9-10) – you are to live a certain way.

In other word, just using this passage as an example, Paul is convinced that if someone has believed the Gospel; they have looked to Christ and repented; if they have embraced the hope of the Gospel, then their lives will show that evidence. Paul is convinced that if someone has trusted in a Savior who came to set them free from sin and to live lives of holiness – their lives will show that. Paul is convinced that if we believe the Gospel, that is, by faith we belong to God in Christ Jesus, we will never be the same – our conduct will change, our homes will change, our church will change and our work will change!

But this outpost is also to proclaim and protect the Gospel. What does that mean?

IV – GOSPEL PROCLAIMING AND GOSPEL PROTECTING

Gospel Proclaiming

Again, a lot could be said on this matter, but let me try to wrap this up in a package we can all grasp. Let us affirm some presumptions:

1. In the New Covenant there is no divide between sacred and secular. All of life for the Christian is sacred.
2. Several times throughout the week the Church gathers for exhortation, fellowship and care.
3. For most of the week the Church scatters for employment or vocation.
4. Both the gathered Church and the scattered Church are involved in spiritual pursuits.
 - Could it be that when the Church gathers, it is God-intention that we edify one another?
 - Could it be that when the Church scatters we are in the business of evangelizing the foreign country we live in?
 - Could it be that the primary reason the Church scatters is to obey the Great Commission which says literally: “AS YOU GO make disciples of all nations.”⁴

It is clear to me (and I hope to you) that one of the primary reasons you have a job, one of the primary reasons we access community services and events, and one of the primary motives for us NOT being taken out of the world is so that “as we go we make disciples”. If the entire scattered Church embraced this mandate the results would be immeasurable. “As you go – make disciples.”

Gospel Protecting

There is also a need to protect the Gospel. Paul said to Timothy: “*Follow the pattern of the sound words that you have heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. By the Holy Spirit who dwells within us, guard the good deposit entrusted to you.*” (2 Timothy 1:13–14, ESV). That pattern of sound

⁴ [The Holy Bible: English Standard Version](#). (2016). (Mt 28:19). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.

words is the Gospel. Guard the Gospel. Similarly in Jude, he wrote, *“Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.”* (Jude 3, ESV).

Paul told the Ephesian elders at his departure to Rome, *“I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them.”* (Acts 20:29–30, ESV)

Now here’s the point, Beloved. We are to proclaim the Gospel to unbelievers. But they are not a threat to the Gospel.

- It’s not Islam that is a threat to the Gospel;
- It’s not Mormonism or other cults that threatens the Gospel;
- It’s not Eastern religions that threaten the Gospel;
- It’s not paganism, atheism, new age-ism that threatens the Gospel
- In their natural state they don’t believe the Gospel.

Then who are we to protect the Gospel from? Answer: from me and you, from professing believers, from “angels of light”. We need to protect the Gospel from those who say they love God and are zealous for God (but they have established their own righteousness). It is not unbelievers that are a threat to the Gospel – it is professing believers.

Let me not mince words. Today, (as in the past) the Church of Rome has perverted the Gospel. We are living in the days when so-called liberal Christianity has watered-down the Gospel. We have coming into our homes through television and other media a prosperity message that is no Gospel at all. So, as your pastor I take seriously the charge to protect the Gospel. This makes us unpopular with other so-called churches that call us to ecumenical gatherings. This makes us unpopular with those who have faith in faith and not in Christ alone. This makes us unpopular with those who have a form of godliness but deny its power. This even makes us unpopular with some in our own church – maybe this morning! We are commanded to protect the Gospel.

V – CONCLUSION

Paul pictures the local church as a colony, an outpost in foreign and often hostile land. Its citizens are called to live out the implications of the Gospel. That includes such big topics as holiness, charity, justice and righteousness. Its citizens are called to go into the neighboring communities and make disciples. Its citizens are to guard the Gospel by guarding its citizens – for there will be some who come in to “deceive you and persuade you to *“ . . . desert~~ing~~ him who called you in the grace of Christ and ~~are~~ turn~~ing~~ to a different gospel—”* (Galatians 1:6, ESV).

Before I conclude should we not affirm what the Gospel is?

Out of love for sinful, God-rejecting mankind, God sent His Son into the world and He added to Himself human flesh. He lived a spotless, perfect life. To all who place their faith in Him, He gives to them freely and by grace, His righteousness. They are thereby justified by faith in Christ alone apart from any works on their part. Jesus willingly went to the Cross and there He experienced the wrath of God, accomplishing salvation for believing men and women. On that Cross He paid the full and complete price for their sin. All their sin, past, present and future has been atoned for, therefore they are eternally forgiven and secure.

On the third day God bodily raised Jesus from the dead. This was God's declaration that what Jesus achieved satisfied Divine justice for His people. This same power that raised Jesus from the dead is now working in the lives of those who believe, conforming them to the likeness of Christ. All who are in Christ are guaranteed this same bodily resurrection from death and eternal life.

When Jesus ascended back to Heaven, He took up His high priestly role and now lives every moment of every day interceding for His Bride, the Church. Therefore, He is able to totally and completely save forever those that have trusted in Him. And by the gift of the Holy Spirit, given in grace by the Father, all believers are baptized into His Body, forever united with Christ and all others who have believed the Gospel.

This same Jesus will return to earth and all who have trusted in Him will be united with him forever in a state of glory and grace. All sin will be vanquished. Faith will become sight. The curse will be forever forgotten. Peace and righteousness will reign for ever and ever.

That's the Good News. Believe it. Live it. Proclaim it. Protect it.