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The Way of Gospel Advance; Phil 1:27-30

GPBC

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Introduction – When Paul writes in 1:21 “For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain,” he has aptly described the whole of the Christian life in 11 words. To live is Christ means that Christ is everything. To have Him and nothing else is to have everything – to have everything and not have Christ is, in the end, to have nothing at all. To live is Christ. To die is gain. Christ Himself awaits His people in glory. In this life we have Him by faith – in the life to come we will have Him by sight – that is gain, or as Paul puts it in v23 – beholding our Savior in glory is far better than anything we behold here! We called v21 Paul’s life verse, Paul’s treasure verse, because in its sacred, succinctness, it captures and defines life in Christ and Christ as our treasure in death. Now in our text today Paul exhorts us and compels us to follow him on this path of holy joy.

The gospel of Christ is being advanced through Paul’s life because of his singular focus on Christ. So much so that even in the worst of circumstances, his imprisonment, he says in v12 “what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel.” Paul’s testimony throughout ch1 is the way of gospel advance. This is the path clearing the way for the gospel in our lives as believers so that the gospel advances among the unbelievers around us.

- I. Gospel Faith Requires Gospel Living (v27)
 - a. Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ.
 - i. Only – this is the one thing – this is the main thing – the singular focus of our lives – let your manner of life – the way you live (attitude, actions, words, habits, hobbies, pursuits) – let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ.
 - ii. Our lives must match, must coincide, must confirm our profession. The believing and the living go together!
 - iii. What we claim to possess on the inside must shine on the outside. Where Christ resides, He presides! What we treasure defines and directs our lives. Only let...
 - b. So that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you – you see when Christ is our all, word gets around. People

take notice when something is different, unusual, unexpected. They may appreciate it or make fun of it, but for sure they can't help but notice it. When God's people love as God loves us, when we forgive as God has forgiven us, when our hope is rooted in Christ and not in this world, when we cling to holiness and renounce sin, when our mouths are filled with worship and not complaining – people take notice when God is on the move! And word gets around that God is up to something.

- c. That (what does Paul want to hear) you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel
 - i. 2 ways that evidence our manner of life is worthy of the gospel of Christ: standing firm and striving for the faith.
 - 1. Standing firm – holding our ground. Not giving the world, the flesh, or the enemy one single inch. Not compromising truth for lesser, unsatisfying things because we have found the far better.
 - a. You don't compromise if you truly believe what you have in Christ is better!
 - 2. Striving for the faith – in the battle, not on the sidelines – on the frontlines. Taking up that armor. Fighting the fight of faith. Taking down lies. Cutting through deceptive schemes. Casting aside what weighs us down. If we don't realize we are at war, we're already defeated! Satan wants your testimony, your joy, and the soul of everyone you know. This is not a game – this is war! We spend too much time and energy fighting one another instead of resisting the devil!
 - ii. The only strategy for victory – side by side. We engage the enemy as an army not as a lone ranger. The enemy loves to see a soldier alone on the battlefield because that makes easy prey. 3 basic ways the enemy separates us from the protection of fellowship: he entices us with sin, he gets us put out with someone or something at the church, or he distracts us with the trinkets and pursuits of the world.

- iii. We need each other. Church means assembly. God has put us into a family. That's why we have bible studies and small groups and seal teams. We can only stand firm and strive for the faith arm in arm!
- iv. The only hope for victory – unity. Standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving for the faith. Being in the same place at the same time is not necessarily unity. It takes one spirit, one mind. Because you see if the enemy can divide us, he's already won. Unity doesn't come naturally or easily. Everyone wants their own way and thinks their way is the only way. Unity requires humility, forgiveness, self-denial, and putting others ahead of our wants. Unity is difficult to obtain and difficult to maintain. In fact, the only unifier, the great unifier, is the gospel!

II. Expected Opposition is an Indicator (v28)

- a. III. Battery tester. You see that tester was an indicator, a clear sign, that Legend needed a new battery. In the same way, opposition to the gospel is an indicator, a clear sign, indicating two truths simultaneously.
 - i. Those who oppose the gospel dwell in darkness, and opposing the light is a clear indication of their enslavement to sin and soon coming destruction.
 - ii. But then it also serves as a clear sign of salvation. Those who are willing and ready to face and endure opposition, have been rescued from darkness. They have come to know the light, they have come to know Christ, and He is worth any cost. Don't be frightened in anything – being opposed for the gospel indicates adherence to the gospel!
 - iii. And that's from God! It can't be taken away. It can't be shamed out of you, beaten out of you, or killed out of you!
 - iv. We can expect opposition, but we don't need to fear it. We can face it with faith. Gospel opposition has never achieved its goal! Opposition has never silenced the gospel, but it has advanced it! That's the way of gospel advance!

- III. Suffering for Christ's Sake is the Normal Path (vv29-30)
- a. Paul tells the church at Philippi, "God has a special gift coming your way – a big box of blessing!" Oh boy, I can't wait to see what God is giving us. I bet it's a brand new car, or maybe a new house, promotion, or maybe even the winning ticket to the mega millions jackpot!
 - b. No, it's actually none of those things. God's great gift to you is that it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should suffer.
 - c. We have in our affluent, tech-advanced age developed a modified, diluted version of Christianity that is comfort-full and trouble-free. The only way we know how to define a blessing is either health, wealth, or success. We have lost the concept that more often than not, believing in Him entails suffering with Him!
 - d. When we grab on to the hand of Christ, we cling to a nail-scarred hand! Why do we assume a crown without a cross, when that was the path of the Savior and when He said if you would follow me, deny yourself, pick up your cross and follow me!?!
 - e. But when trouble comes our way, our first inclination is to doubt God, question God, or be angry with God for not keeping us comfortable!
 - f. But the passage is not addressing the general sufferings of life, it is addressing suffering for the sake of Christ. Many of us have experienced the sufferings of this life, hardships and illnesses and so on, but very few of us have suffered for the sake of Christ.
 - g. Do you know how to guarantee a life free from suffering for Christ? Just live your life without Christ. But if you live your life for Christ, you will more than likely face opposition and suffering. It may come from family, you may lose friends, it may cost you your job. To many of our brothers and sisters around the world today, it is costing a lot more! III. My story
 - h. Let me speak to the ones who are living for Christ with all you've got! 2 things to know when you suffer for the sake of Christ. (1) It is common; you are not alone. V30. Suffering has always been the way of gospel advance. The places on the planet today that are experiencing the greatest moves of God are the places that are also experiencing the heaviest persecution. (2) It is a gift. God's

not mad at you, He hasn't forgot you. He's simply found you worthy to suffer for the greatness of His name. You see when we suffer for His name and yet keep praising His name, it shows the world that Christ truly is our supreme treasure! He is worthy and He is worth it! III. Acts 5