

Message Five

Having Fellowship unto the Furtherance of the Gospel and Preaching the Gospel in the Way of Life

Scripture Reading: Phil. 1:5-6, 19-21a, 22-25, 27; 4:22; Acts 1:8; 1 Thes. 1:3, 5; 1 Cor. 15:58

I. God's intention is that a local church would have fellowship unto the furtherance of the gospel, not only for one period of time but continually, until the day of Christ Jesus, that is, until He comes back—Phil. 1:5-6:

- A. The Christ-experiencing and -enjoying life is a life in the furtherance of the gospel, a gospel-preaching life, not individualistic but corporate; hence, there is the fellowship unto the furtherance of the gospel.
- B. The more fellowship we have in the furtherance of the gospel, the more Christ we experience and enjoy; this kills our self, ambition, preference, and choice.
- C. The move of the preaching of the gospel must be a matter in fellowship because it is a matter of the Body:
 1. As the branches of Christ, the true vine, we must love one another in order to express the divine life in fruit-bearing; no branch of the vine bears fruit individually—John 15:1-5, 12, 17.
 2. When we live by Christ, in Christ, with Christ, and for Christ, Christ is expressed through us as love for one another, and this mutual love becomes a strong testimony to the people of the world that we are the disciples of Christ—13:34-35.
 3. Our preaching of the gospel is by the Body life and in the Body life; how fruitful we are in our preaching depends on how much of the reality of the Body of Christ we have.
- D. Paul charged the saints to conduct themselves “in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ” and to “stand firm in one spirit, with one soul striving together along with the faith of the gospel”—Phil. 1:27:
 1. When all the members in the church are “in one spirit, with one soul,” this oneness will be convincing, subduing, and attractive to others for their salvation; if there is no harmony among us, this will kill the saving Spirit.
 2. The word *together* has the sense of “as one man, shoulder to shoulder in absolute cooperation” and the sense of “contending as a team of athletes do, in perfect co-operation with one another” (Wuest).
 3. The phrase *striving together* indicates that the gospel is a matter of labor and endurance; the vital groups should press on according to Paul's prayer in 1 Thessalonians 1:3 concerning the work of faith, labor of love, and endurance of hope:
 - a. The work of faith is the foundation of our Christian life and service, the labor of love is the key of the fruitfulness of our work of faith, and the endurance of hope is the long life of our work of faith.
 - b. The endurance of hope subdues all kinds of disappointments, discouragements, and impossibilities and overcomes all kinds of oppositions, obstacles, and frustrations—1 Cor. 15:58; 2 Thes. 3:5.

II. The genuine preaching of the gospel is in the way of life; the gospel is not only the preaching of the word but also a life of enjoying the supply of the Body, the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, to live and magnify Christ—Phil. 1:19-21a; Acts 5:20:

- A. The preaching of the gospel is the expression of Christ, and bearing fruit is the outworking of the inner experience of life—John 15:5; Acts 16:23-25, 30.
- B. When Paul wrote to the Philippians, he was living in prison and not outwardly working; his speaking of “fruit for my work” indicates that his work was actually his living—1:22:
 - 1. The fruit for Paul’s work was Christ being lived out, magnified, ministered, and transfused into others through him.
 - 2. Paul’s living work was to minister Christ to others and to transfuse the Christ whom he magnified into them; through Paul’s magnification of Christ, even some in Caesar’s household were saved—4:22.
 - 3. Paul told the Philippians that his imprisonment would also work to the advancement of the gospel—1:12, 18.
- C. Paul fed his spiritual children with his own living of Christ; the best way to shepherd people is to give them a proper pattern—1 Thes. 2:1-12:
 - 1. Paul and his co-workers were a pattern of the gospel that they spread—“you know what kind of men we were among you for your sake”—1:5b.
 - 2. The apostle Paul stressed repeatedly their entrance toward the believers; this shows that the apostles’ manner of life played a great role in infusing the gospel into the new converts—vv. 5, 9; 2:1, 11a.
- D. Acts tells us that the preachers of the gospel are the Lord’s witnesses, His martyrs; this means that we testify to others at a cost, even at the sacrifice of our life—1:8:
 - 1. To live a clean and upright life (1 Thes. 2:3-6, 10) and to love the new converts, even by giving our own souls to them (vv. 7-9, 11), are the prerequisites for infusing them with the salvation conveyed in the gospel that we preach.
 - 2. Paul was willing to spend not only what he had but also himself, his very being, on behalf of the saints—2 Cor. 12:15.
- E. Because of Paul the churches could have the growth in life and could be filled with the enjoyment of Christ; this should also be true of us today—Phil. 1:25:
 - 1. Because Paul lived and magnified Christ to the uttermost, he could transfuse Christ into the saints and minister Christ to all the churches.
 - 2. Paul’s consideration to either depart and be with Christ or remain in the flesh was not selfish but was for the saints’ sake; he was absolutely occupied by the Lord and the church—vv. 23-24:
 - a. It should matter to the church whether we remain in the flesh or go to be with the Lord, but this depends on our living Christ, magnifying Christ, ministering Christ, and transfusing Christ from the depths of our being into that of the saints.
 - b. In the Body life there is the urgent need for the Lord to gain us to be channels of supply for the furtherance of the gospel.