

Live a Gospel Life

Philippians 1:27-28

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If our lives are not about the gospel, then what are our lives about? That is the question for this morning. That is the question for every moment of every day. It is a great pleasure to be with you at home, at Hardin Baptist where I grew up and to share with you a little bit about what God is calling our family into and what God is calling you, as a body, into. Whether you realized it or not before this moment, you are a part in founding Gospel Life Global Missions, who has a desire to serve the country of Malawi and serve pastors in Malawi. If you are not aware of where Malawi is, it is in southern Africa. In terms of the area, it is about the same size of the commonwealth of Kentucky, yet it has four times the population of Kentucky, at about 17 million people. It is one of the poorest countries in the world, especially if you measure it by the GDP and the thing economists do, but it is a place where God is working richly at this moment.

Our missionary partners went there and started partnering in two churches in the city of Zomba, Malawi. They had a vision of just doing what they did in the book of Acts; going to villages, going to cities, preaching the gospel and seeing people saved, and churches started. Now, about 10 years later, there are about 150 churches, an amazing movement of God just through the preaching of the gospel. Now, we get to come in and we get to serve those 150+ churches and those pastors by giving them what they most desperately need—training for their pastors in the Word of God so that they can preach and teach their people for decades to come.

I love that I get to do this and I want to tell you about one of those pastors that we serve there, his name is Friday. I asked Friday, “Why is your name Friday? That is an odd name?” He told me that his family had so many kids that by the time he came along they just named him Friday

because he was born on a Friday and they had run out of names. I have five kids and we are going to do that if we ever have another one (pray for me that we do not, alright). Friday is this wonderful person who always has a smile on his face from one ear to the other. In the past, when I have been to Malawi it has been for modular trainings of pastors. We are there for a week at a time, at a location, and we go early in the morning until late in the evening, just teaching all day long. It is exhausting, it is tiring, and yet there is Friday. It doesn't matter if it is first thing in the morning or last thing in the evening...he has that same smile from ear to ear.

I do not know about you, but I am a morning person. I wake up at 5:30 a.m., I have eight ounces of coffee, and I am ready to go. My wife does not want me to talk to her for the first few minutes of the day because I am ready to go and she is not. By 7 p.m. in the evening, I am done and ready to go to bed because I am not an evening person, I am a morning person. For Friday, it does not matter what time of day it is, he has that same smile on his face and so I asked him, "Friday, why is it, how is it, that you can always have this smile on your face?" He said, "It is because I was a drunk. I was not the husband I should have been. I was not the father I should have been. My family was falling apart. My wife was under so much pressure because I was not the man I should be and then somebody told me the good news about Jesus Christ and it changed everything for me. It changed who I was. It changed my life. It made me born again. How can I not have a smile on my face?" The thing I love about Friday, and the thing I love about so many of our pastors in Malawi, is that internal joy that they have that shows up on their faces. It does not just stop there; that internal joy has transformed the way they look at the world around them.

Friday lives in this village on the main highway that runs through the southernmost part of Malawi. It is the village where he grew up. It is a village where he has lived all his life. And yet now, as a believer it has changed the way he sees where he lives. He loves on his community because he pastors the church in his community. As he pastors this tiny little church—the building would fit just on this stage—he serves his people faithfully. Then he walks out the door and stands there right beside the highway. He looks to the south and he looks to the north along the

highway. He looks at all the gravel roads that branch off in every direction off of the highway. He looks across the river valley that he lives in and he sees the mountains in the hazy distance that are just across the border in Mozambique. When he looks at those places, he sees the people that live there, the people who need the good news desperately. He takes his two greatest possessions, his Bible and his bicycle, and he gets on his bicycle and he rides to those places. He has ridden to those mountains and villages. He gets out and he preaches the good news and people are saved and churches are started. Friday alone has started about fifteen of those churches because of his faith in Jesus Christ.

So when I see that smile on Friday's face, it does something for me. You see, like most of you, my life is complicated, my life is complex. My five kids are always running from here to there, from this activity to another, from this school thing to another, and everything is going on all the time. I have to carry around a little external brain, this little device that my wife programs for me. She puts in the times and the places I am supposed to be and then I am able to pull it up and follow her instructions. Does anybody have one of those? They are pretty neat. But the amazing thing is when I see that smile on Friday's face, all that complexity, all that stress, it is like it just fades away and I am reminded again that life is really just about one thing.

I love the book of Philippians because it does the exact same thing for me. If I had to pick, I think Philippians would be my favorite book of the Bible. I love Philippians because Philippians has a tone of urgency to it. You see, in the background of this situation is the Apostle Paul who is under house arrest in the city of Rome, probably during the same time period and situation that we read about at the very end in the book of Acts. He tells us early on in chapter 1 of Philippians that he is awaiting trial before Caesar and he does not know what is going to happen. He says "for me to live is Christ, but to die is gain." He is saying...*I would rather die and be with Christ—that is far better for me, but I am inclined to believe that He wants me to stay here for your sake and serve you longer and so I think I'm going to live.* But that situation in which he is awaiting his trial before Caesar, he does not know if he is going to live. He does not know if he is

going to die, so it makes this letter just completely urgent in its tone. He cuts to the chase; he gets to what is most important and he does so nowhere more than in verses 27 and 28.

Scripture

"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. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God."

That tone of urgency just jumps off of the page in the very first word of verse 27. The ESV says, "ONLY..." "Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ..." It is as if Paul is writing this letter, talking about his situation, and then all of a sudden, he presses the pause button and he says...*I do not want you to miss it. I do not want you to skip over this. This is the most important thing I am going to tell you. In fact, everything in this letter comes back to this one main idea; there is just one thing that you need to know church at Philippi.* The Holy Spirit is saying the same thing to us this morning, there is just one thing you need to know Hardin Baptist Church. What is that? This command: Let your manner of be worthy of the gospel of Christ. If I can summarize that even more it would be this: Just one thing, live a gospel life. Live a gospel life.

Manner of Life Worthy of the Gospel

Let's look at it in a little more detail. Paul talks about your manner of life. The Greek word behind this comes from the word 'polis' which means city. So Paul is not talking about a general way of life for all humans, generally, he is talking about the way of life you have that is based on where you are from. We all know this, if you have traveled especially, even if it has just been across the country. You know that different people live in different ways based on where they are from. In Malawi, they eat Nshima (pronounced 'see-ma'). Unless you have been on a mission trip, you probably have not had Nshima. Nshima is corn flour mixed with water and salt and it makes a pasty stuff that they eat which is their main diet. They

have never heard of biscuits and gravy. What a shame! Oh my, we need to do some mission work and teach people about biscuits and gravy, amen? They are from a different place and, therefore, they have a different way of life. Now, I was born just down the road at the Murray Calloway County Hospital. I do not know if they gave me an injection for this when I was born or if it is something I just caught in the air, in the atmosphere, but there is something that happens to me about this time every year. In fact, I think it will probably start happening this evening as I start to get a little twitch in my right hand, begin searching for the remote control, turn on the television, and try to find out if the Kentucky Wildcats are on ESPN, or the SEC network, or ESPN 2, or CBS. Then, for forty game time minutes, I am going to be yelling at that television screen. Why, because I know Coach Cal needs my help if he is going to know what plays to call, who to put in, and what the referees are doing wrong. Why, because I was born and raised in Kentucky and that is part of who I am, that is the way of life where I am from.

In Philippians chapter 3, Paul is going to remind the church at Philippi that their citizenship really is not in the city of Philippi; their citizenship is in Heaven. Paul is reminding us here that we have a way of that is based on where we are really from, not West Kentucky, but from Heaven. So therefore, our way of life is determined by something else—let your manner of life be worthy of, in other words, let your manner of life correspond in value to something else. What is the other thing on the other side of that equation? It is the gospel of Christ. Wow. Just let that hit you. Let the way you live correspond in value to the gospel of Christ. Where do you even start? Where do you even begin to understand that command? It just knocks the air out of you. I am supposed to live in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ? If you are not having this reaction to this command, maybe it is because you do not fully understand yet what Paul means by the gospel of Christ.

The gospel of Christ is the good news of who Jesus is and what Jesus has done. It is the good news that the second person of the Trinity, the eternal Son of God who created everything you can see and everything that you cannot see, left the glory of Heaven and entered into the womb of a virgin

named Mary, becoming not only fully God but also fully man, was born in a stable in Bethlehem and laid in a manger. Then, for thirty years walked this Earth just like you and I walk—not in some privileged position, but suffering every temptation that you have ever faced. But He suffered it even more, because when you gave up, He kept resisting until Satan gave up. He earned for Himself a perfect righteousness under the law. He deserved the reward of eternal life with the Father forever and ever, yet He voluntarily went to the cross where God the Father poured out the wrath that He had against your sin and against my sin. He poured it out on His own Son. Just think for a moment of the wrath of God that you would have endured (if you are a believer) in Hell for all of eternity being poured out on Jesus in those few hours on the cross, and He died. And then three days later He was raised. He was raised in power, He was raised with the resurrected body; He was raised to show that the payment He had made for sin was accepted and sufficient. He was raised to eternal and abundant life that He shares with us if we will repent of our sins and trust in what He has done. He ascended into Heaven and is at this very moment seated at the right hand of God. At any moment, He will return to judge the living and the dead and bring about a new creation without sin or suffering or death. That is the good news of who Jesus is and what Jesus has done, and we have just been commanded to live a manner of life that corresponds in value to that. Wow!

Loving the Gospel

Where do you even start? How do you even do it? I do not think I know all the answers to that question, but I do think I know one answer. It starts with not just knowing the gospel but loving the gospel. I grew up in this wonderful church with wonderful, godly parents who taught me the Word of God. I grew up with a godly pastor who preached the Word of God week after week. Some of you that I am looking at right now were my Sunday school teachers and you taught me the Word of God as I grew up here. From the time I was a little boy, I could have told you all those things about Jesus, maybe not all the details, but the basic story of who Jesus is and what Jesus had done for me, I knew it, but it was not until I was fourteen years old that God opened my eyes and I saw what was there the

whole time. I saw it in a way that I had never seen it before, that this was about Jesus! That this is not just about having an answer about how I could go to Heaven when I die, but this is about Jesus! He is real and He is worth everything! That moment when I was fourteen and my eyes were opened by the Holy Spirit, being born again by the Holy Spirit, I saw Jesus in such a way that I had to have Him. I would give up anything and everything if I could just have one thing, which was HIM. Has that ever happened to you? Not just praying a prayer, but being born again, needing and having Jesus? That is where it begins. That is where *we* begin, by living a gospel life—not just knowing the gospel in our heads, but loving the gospel because it is everything.

Living a Gospel Life

So, what does it look like to live a gospel life? Paul helps us out here. In verse 27, Paul is saying only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I get to come and I get to see it firsthand or I just hear about it secondhand, this is what I want to be happening at Philippi if you are obeying this command. It is three things:

1. Standing firm in one spirit, with one mind
2. Striving side by side for the faith of the gospel
3. Not frightened in anything by your opponents

❖ Stand Firm

All three of these descriptions are actually one because they all describe aspects of the life of a soldier. Living a gospel life means living a soldier's life. Notice how he puts it, "standing firm." In ancient warfare, which was hand to hand, you had to make sure you were standing firm, that your feet were planted, because if you were not you were either on your back about to get killed or you were running away. We are called to stand firm in the face of this gospel fight that we have. We are reminded here that we are soldiers, and the job description of a soldier is that soldiers fight. I learned this as a kid here. I learned that I may never march in the infantry, ride in the calvary, shoot the artillery, but I am in the Lord's army. It is amazing

how as adults we forget that. We begin to think that church is not about being in the Lord's army, but it is an all you can eat buffet where you just come with your tray and if you want some Sunday worship once a month, maybe you will get some of that. If you want to go to Sunday school, maybe you will get some of that. If you want to serve others, maybe you will get some of that—or maybe you will not, it just depends on your appetite and what you want and how you are going to get satisfied out of the experience. We are called to be soldiers of Christ in this gospel fight, and soldiers fight, they don't just sit on the base and eat Cheetos. They get out there where the enemy is.

❖ **Strive Side by Side**

The second thing adds to this. Paul says not just standing firm but striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel. He is reminding the church at Philippi, and he is reminding us, that soldiers do not fight alone. Soldiers always fight together. The last four years I pastored a church outside of Elizabethtown, Kentucky. If you know anything about Elizabethtown, it is the bedroom community of Fort Knox. We got to meet and befriend a lot of people who serve in the military, especially in the army, as they were based there and coming back and forth. This is what I learned about our friends who are in the military...they are always a part of a bigger structure. They are always part of a platoon and a battalion. They have a structure of authority above them that goes all the way up to the commander in chief, the President of the United States. We do not just drop people into Afghanistan and say, "Good luck, buddy!" No, we send people into where the enemy is, in the groups and the structures meant to fight that enemy. So often as churches of Jesus Christ, we are too busy shooting at one another to think about the fact that God has put us together as Hardin Baptist Church, has put other churches together in their locations. Why? Because churches are units in Christ's battle against the enemy and the proclamation of His victory over sin and death and Hell.

❖ **Be Fearless**

As we strive side by side for the faith, Paul tells us that we are not to be frightened in anything by our opponents. There is an enemy out there and

he is out there seeking to destroy. He is seeking to destroy the lives of people we love, family members, neighbors, people in our community. Their lives are being destroyed because they have been told a lie by Satan, that if they just follow whatever their inclinations are, whatever they want to do at the moment, then they will find the satisfaction and the happiness that they have always desired. Satan is leading them into the trap with that lie and then he is destroying them. He is eating them up and spitting them out, and they are more broken and lost than they have ever been before.

So many of us sit around and we are afraid of what is happening in our communities, we are afraid of how things have changed, and we are just griping and whining about it. He says don't be afraid. Why? Because the very fearlessness you have, the courage you have in the face of Satan's attacks in this world, is based on the fact that you have the truth while he is selling the lies. You have the good news of who Jesus is and what He has done. The satisfaction, the joy, the peace, the forgiveness that they are looking for, it is all right here, and so you are fearless in the face of Satan and everything he is doing. As you do that, it is a sign, a double-sided sign. To the enemy, it is a sign of their destruction, and to us it is a sign of our salvation. Your courage, your gospel courage in proclaiming the good news and laying everything on the line for Jesus Christ, is a sign of the future reality coming back into the present. It is a sign of what has already been decreed by God, that Satan is destroyed, that he is being cast into the lake of fire, and that we are awaiting the day when the hope of new creation will come. Right here in this present evil age, in this broken world, where do you see it? You use it in the fearlessness of the saints as we go forth with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Just One Thing

You are called to be a soldier of the gospel and to give everything for the gospel. This is not a side show, this is not a hobby, this is not something you just do because it is fun. No! This is life, and it is death. It is everything, because it is Christ. It is all about Christ and living for Him—just one thing—live a gospel life.