
Open – Relied heavily on Tony’s notes

Pray

Opening Illustration – Rifleman – Growing up we used to watch a show with our dad called the Rifleman. I liked the show for a couple of reasons: 1) the guy had a rifle and always took down the bad guys … 2) the main actor Chuck Connors at one point played professionally in football, basketball, and baseball – I wanted to be the 2nd guy to ever do that, didn’t realize that in most of those sports there wasn’t much demand for 5’11 white guys!

- As I reflect more and more on that show it is amazing that there was American TV like that – you see we live in a world of two extremes particularly when it comes to men – we either have men who move towards extreme passivity and even what I might call Sissyness (who likely wouldn’t defend the 75 yr old man) - or on the other hand move towards abuse and dominance! I doubt one could hardly describe men better these days!
- This should be no surprise to us, way back in our ancient parents it was said that this would be so! Our ancient father Adam was told in the garden that he would either be an overbearing dominant man, or that he would be passive
- This even plays out in modern Television – Just look at the so-called Modern Family where you have dad’s like Phil who are these passive, almost dim-witted characters, or the patriarch who is seen as tough, and controlling, and overbearing.
- The Rifleman was strikingly different – here you had a man who was tough and yet loving! Who was strong and yet humble! You had man that could whip someone’s butt and fight for justice and yet weep with his son!

That is what we will see in this passage today, the gospel makes us (both men and women) that are courageous and yet compassionate – the gospel frees us up to live without fear because we have no condemnation and there is a resurrection but it also humbles us as we realize that we are unworthy recipients of grace!

Main Idea – The text is all about unity, unity against external pressures and unity against internal ones – so what we see is that the Gospel unifies us to make us courageous against external foes and humbles us so that we can be unified against internal struggles like division and rivalry!

Transition to the text – Paul gives here one overarching purpose to his letter – Just one thing as HCSB states it!

(READ 27a) Just One Thing– Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ!

As one commentator put it – it’d be like Paul putting up a warning finger, here is one thing I want you to go get – Live worthy of the gospel!

- This is like a heading that captures chapter 1 moving into chapter 2 – it is the heading that the exhortations he is about to give live under, only possible for those that are in Christ – This is how Paul exhorts towards godly living – he reminds the Christian of the gospel (where their power comes from) and then he gives exhortations or imperatives! (The Imperatives are always rooted in the gospel because we do not do the exhortations to be accepted, we have been accepted by God and we can now live out the exhortations by the power of the Spirit we have been given in the gospel!)
- Believing the gospel doesn’t just mean knowing the right words and doctrines – believing the gospel must mean transformed life! We don’t just speak gospel with lips, we put the gospel power on display by our lives
The gospel is about love – so we are loving people! The gospel is about justice so we are people who fight for justice! The gospel is joyous and so we are a joy-filled people! The gospel is about reconciled relationship with God so we are a people who reconcile to one another played out in how we value one another in the church! The gospel is about grace toward the undeserving and so we are a humble people!

So essentially we can land the plane here – the gospel is to be the center of your life shaping everything that you are, how you think and how you live!

- So let the gospel imbed in you – remember the joy and excitement you had when you first hear the gospel in power that there was forgiveness and no condemnation and relationship with the King – since that is true live a life that looks like that, as though good news was normal to you! That sort of news can change us and unify us! We can unify around that as God’s forgiven ones!

This produces a different mindset, the verb here in the actual Greek may be better translated “behave as citizens worthy of the gospel” – which Paul will also highlight in chapter 3

- Paul is writing to a city that had such great pride in being a colony of Rome (A mini-Rome) and Paul is essentially saying to them you have such great pride when people visit because they think they are in a little Rome – and I am saying to you that you are citizens of a different country so live in light of that!
  - When people see you they are to get a glimpse of the coming Kingdom – they are to get a glimpse of that other country – you here are not a little outpost of Rome but of the Kingdom let your life reflect that, let it reflect that there is another King than Caesar!

Questions to consider:

- Do we see ourselves as citizens of a different world altogether?
- Christian, are you living as though you have been transferred Kingdoms and this world is not your home? (Only then can we give up everything and go to places like India or Saudi Arabia because this world aint our home, we just traveling through!)

In verses 1:27b-2:4 – Paul now gives them two ways in which to live out this citizenship that is worthy of the gospel, both of them center around UNITY! (TELL WHY UNITY IS SO IMPORTANT…forwises and reconcile us to Him, but not to one another! Doesn’t matter what’s in our doctrinal statements!)

- In 27-30 he focuses on unity in the face of external pressure and in 2:1-4 he exhorts for unity because of potential internal pressure – and so in rest of passage we want to be exhorted to stand together against external opposition or pressure and to serve one another with humble compassion to guard against internal strife! These are lives worthy of the gospel!

(READ 1:27b-30) Stand Together Against External Opposition – Paul exhorts them to teamwork, fearlessness, and willingness to suffer, as they stand unified against opposition

Teamwork (1:27b) – Paul exhorts the church to live consistently on mission together

- Paul is emphasizing here that they can do this whether he is there or not – either way you have what you need to press on!
- What Paul is stressing here is not superficial unity (based on liking a ball team or some such nonsense) but this is a spiritual unity – A unity that centers around “one spirit” and “one mind” one common aim: that together we would live lives that put the gospel on display!
- We have a unity that is deeper than blood and certainly deeper than age, preferences, class – a unity around the Son by the bond of the Spirit – Christian which is why you have more in common with a Sudanese Christian who cant speak English than you do with someone who likes the same TV
shows that you do – I have more in common with a 75 year old Saudi believer than I do with a 30 year old non-believer who likes the TV show Psych!

Paul provides two word pictures here to illustrate our teamwork – our teamwork looks like soldiers and athletes!

- **Soldiers – Stand Firm** – the Greek word here means to stand firm and hold one’s ground – it was a military term highlighting the determination of a soldier who stands his ground not budging an inch
- **Paul wants them to see this is war** – they will come under attack and they need to stand side by side and not falter in the face of the opposition – Christian we can stand firm because our King is a warrior (he doesn’t stay at the back of the battle) who went to war with Satan and 3 days later there was only one standing! And that same power and that same resurrection He gives to us!

Athletes – the word he uses here for Strive is the Greek word *synathleo* and we get our word athlete from it – giving the idea of a team contending together in athletic games to the Philippian hearers! (tired of sports illustrations yet?)

- Many commentators believe Paul had in mind here the gladiator arena and the sport of wrestling (but not WWF) instead the real stuff (sorry to burst bubbles) – where a team would wrestle another team all at the same time – might in our day think of football and linemen standing side by side blocking, laboring together so pretty boys like Tom Brady don’t get hurt!

Implications regarding teamwork

- **Remember you are in a war** – when you think of a Christian what do you think of? (A monk, a guy buried in books, a weak, passive person?) Paul thinks of athletes and soldiers, this is why men ought to love Paul!
- Just like war or athletics it is a life of perseverance, mission, battle, tenacity… Christian this is you! Even if you can’t walk and chew gum at the same time, you are an athlete... come on some non-athlete give me an Amen!
  - Why do athletes practice and practice, and go on disciplined diets, through so much training – because the prize is worth it – and our prize (Christ) is worth it
  - So remember when you are on a mission trip with harsh conditions, potentially parasite infested food, Christ is worth it! When you leave a place of comfort to take a risk to go to places you would never want to go, like Buffalo, Christ is worth it! Remember when you continue to labor for that wayward brother who doesn’t seem to care; Christ is worthy of it all!
- We aren’t alone in this war – Christ has given us His church, where we can be in accountable relationship as members of one body to carry out this mission together – Not snipping or fighting one another in the barracks but shoulder to shoulder in the fox hole! Don’t be a church hopper (or ninja as Tony says), settle in with a family to wage war with!

(1:27c-28) **Purpose and Fearlessness** – Paul gives here two way we contend, one speaks of our purpose and the other of our attitude in our contending, namely as courageous soldiers

- The purpose of our contending is the Faith once for all delivered to the saints – our purpose is the advance of the gospel (which Paul has been speaking of throughout the letter) – we are unified by the gospel and then for the gospel! (We are not to get sidetracked in our mission)
- Question: In what ways are you striving to make the gospel known? Inviting people? Sharing with neighbors? Giving out books? How are you striving for this main purpose we have?
What’s our attitude in this? How are we to do this? Courageously! (We are not to be frightened in any way by our opponents) – the term Paul uses here gives the idea of a horse being startled!

- Who are these opponents? I think there are several possibilities and all may be right – some inside the church who threaten the gospel, some outside the church who hate the gospel and seek to persecute it (authorities), and unseen powers (ultimately not against flesh and blood!)

There is only one we should fear, the one who can cast our soul into outer darkness – we don’t fear even the sword because we know that in death we only get more of what we want – Christ!

- If you are in Christ, what do you have to fear? Condemnation? That’s taken care of? Death? That’s taken care of… live free Christian you have been accepted by the only one who ultimately matters and he has promised you resurrection!

But why are we so frightened and why do we fret so much when the gospel is under attack by outsiders? (Darwin Fish – we see people taking an ancient symbol of our faith and drawing legs out from it and putting the word “Darwin” on it and we get mad and so we try and out Darwin them with a bigger fish!)

- Why do we see ourselves as losers? Why do we feel so threatened? The Darwin fish is no threat to the gospel! Islam is no threat to the gospel! We are not losers – this doesn’t mean that we are arrogant and that we should not defend the gospel, but we shouldn’t fear!

- Ultimately when we see that person with the Darwin fish we shouldn’t see them as an enemy at all – instead we should be reminded that we were just like them – it may not have been Darwinism that we hid behind to not deal with God, it could have been Moralism, it doesn’t matter – we see them as someone who needs to know the peace available in the gospel! And we are not threatened!

Brothers and Sisters, let’s never go to despair or fear when we are under attack or the gospel is under attack – ultimately no “ism” threatens the gospel or our standing before God. We are not losers! So lets speak boldly!

(28b) The outcome of this courage is a sign – a sign to them of their destruction but your deliverance!

Paul encourages them in their boldness as he warns opponents – as we are fearless in the face of suffering the enemy is confronted with unbelief and the judgment that follows, that don’t have what we have – but for the believer it is a sign that you really do value Jesus and fear God and that you will be saved on that day!

- When an opponent attacks the gospel it is a sign of destruction for them because they are attacking their only hope, they are rejecting God’s man – (squishy Christianity doesn’t really like to read a verse like this) – but its clear here that we all don’t believe the same things and there will be a great divide in eternity! - the question is what will you do with Jesus? You are on the wrong side if you are against God’s man – On that day it’ll be much like Caesar in the Gladiator games – Thumbs up for some and thumbs down for others that are opponents of the King and His Gospel!

And in contrast suffering for the believer is a sign of the genuineness of their faith – reminded of the Beatitudes that we are blessed when we suffer for Christ’s sake!

- And why is this sure, well Paul reminds them of the source of their salvation! “from God!” – God begins the work in us, sustains us in suffering and opposition, and keeps us till the end… so don’t fear!
(1:29-30) Suffering – Paul finishes up his thoughts on standing firm in face of external opposition by turning to nature of Christian Suffering – again not likely one of those verse you are going to frame and send to a friend

- Paul is teaching here that yes as we already know salvation/faith are a gift, but so is suffering for Him - WHAT?
- Paul says, as do the early apostles, that suffering for the name is a privilege – and this is no surprise to us, the symbol for the Christian is not one of ease, its not a building, its not first class, it is a Cross – and we are told we will have to walk the Calvary Road if we will follow Jesus!

This flies in the face of American Christianity (prosperity gospel) – Suffering the mission is not a sign of Jesus’ displeasure with you, but of his pleasure with you!

- There is jacked up teaching in the church that if you don’t have money, health, wealth, signs of favor (how we define that), then God is not for you – and the problem is I so often I (We) believe them, now this doesn’t mean we are buying Osteen’s greatest hits or that we cant clearly debunk the prosperity gospel – its that we functionally believe it, when we get sick or lose our job we are tempted to think God is against us and when we get a raise we are tempted to think God is for us!
  - This passage says something much different – it is a gift, why? Because it is a sign of our salvation and it is working for us in an eternal weight of glory!
  - The problem with the prosperity gospel is that it is not prosperity enough – teaching that says you will get wealthier and wealthier and healthy and healthier doesn’t work, why? Because everyone that teaches that and embraces that ends up dead and their Mercedes end up in junk piles!

Brothers and Sisters we are told we will suffer – only difference will be degree, whether like our brothers in the Sudan who are being crucified, or those of us in this room who will be mocked, insulted, ostracized, war wth sin – it is a gift that is preparing us to be the Kings and Queens of the universe!

- You may be thinking you don’t understand I had an appointment Monday and the doctor said its cancer, you don’t understand I have a meeting with the boss on Monday to see if I still have a job, my life is tough, YOU ARE BLESSED Future King and Queen, what is meant for evil God is working for your good and for eternal glory!
- (V. 30) Paul reminds them he has suffered in this way and is still suffering in this way (Philippi and Rome) and says they will be engaged in the same things!

Implication – you are not a loser – don’t live like a beaten down coward tucking your tail in the corner, we win! So let’s live worthy of the gospel King and Queen – realizing that both belief and suffering are gifts preparing us for an eternity of glory!

Paul now focuses on internal unity – unity that wars against division in the body as we stand side by side for the gospel

- Paul gives the basis for this unity and the expressions of this unity as they/we are called to Serve One Another with Humble Compassion (READ AND GO QUICKLY 2:1-4)

(2:1) The Basis for Unity – four statements that give the basis

Paul begins with a series of 4 “if” statements but most commentators point out that they are better understood as “Since” or “Because” statements – the “ifs” are to provoke them to reflect on their lives and the realities of these truths – but they are not possibilities but certainties for those in Christ and they give the motivations to remind believers as to what binds them together as the people of God
- All of this is made possible as we are In Christ and have the Spirit – from that union these blessings flow and make it possible for us to be unified with people we may not even like, or who pull for Duke or the Redskins!

- “There is encouragement in Christ” – If we are in Christ than we are encouraged people because we are no longer condemned, we should be the most encouraging people then towards others!

- “We have Comfort from love” – The love of Christ comforts us – So our mutual love for one another flows from the love we have been shown in Christ, we in turn love as we were loved, even when we were unlovely!

- “We have Participation (or Fellowship) with the Spirit” – The word “fellowship” (koinonia) is the same word as Partnership in 1:5 – The Spirit unites us as family, brothers and sisters, who are partners in the gospel – so as we have fellowship with the Triune God (1 John) that now plays out in same fellowship/partnership with one another! (Bonhoefer – incomparable)

- “We share affection and sympathy or mercy” – Again as those that have been shown mercy and affection in our union with Christ in turn are affectionate and merciful towards others – in gospel we have been objects of God’s compassion which should engrain in us to show others compassion

A word for us from Paul’s approach – he mentions the blessings of the gospel before moving to the exhortations – we too should be quick to remind people of the gospel and it’s blessings before moving to exhortation – we cannot just be those that give the what’s without the why’s!

The Expressions of Unity (2:2 - 4) – (V. 2) To be unified the church must have the same mentality, like a good sports team (yeah we get it you like sports, a lot about sports today because its one of best sports times of the year, no baseball highlights yet, march madness!) – but to be a unified we have to think the same, love the same, feel the same, value the same with the same mission! (V. 2) – this is not uniformity but unity with a common disposition and mission (gives idea of Acts 2, all things in common)

In Verses 3 and 4 he speaks of what this will look like with some negatives and positives which revolve around humility – to be unified we must pursue Christ-Like Humility because the humble person avoids rivalry and conceit!

- You will avoid being like these preachers in chapter 1 because rivalry can distract from the Mission (I Hit that before, but danger for all of us and an ever present reality, because we have to war to not seek for our own glory – maybe tony can hit more of this next week!)

- The way this plays out is in Selfish Ambition – I must have what I want and Vain Conceit – I deserve what I want! – Do we really want what we deserve? Instead the gospel should root these things out in our lives – we have been given a glorious gift we don’t deserve – and the only one who deserved everything willingly laid that aside to be brutalized so that we can have a gift we don’t deserve! A gospel person is humble thankful that he gets what he doesn’t deserve!

In addition, to be Unified we must live with sensitivity toward others – he tells them to not just consider their own interests but the interest of others – this should hit close to home: how often in conversation and social settins are you thinking about yourself and your interests? I’ve got to have that last piece of Pizza!

- This is our culture, the “Selfie” culture – Tony had in his notes “Self-Photos”

As some have pointed out – Humility is not thinking less of yourself but of yourself less – only then will the needs of others become a priority for us!

- We should outdo one another in showing honor – I think this particularly pertinent for us as Elders and those of you that desire to be elders that we would constantly think of you and not ourselves or our right
(be weary of pastors who talk inordinately about their rights!)

- **Marriage** – My father loves to read these verses in premarital counseling, he says if you will work hard or make it your ambition to see your bride’s interests (and vice versa) over your own – then you will find the joy that God intended for the marriage covenant in bringing Adam and Eve together

So we if we are to be unified and to serve one another with compassion we will need to cultivate humility – how can we do any of this?

**Conclusion** – We have to look to another and to the gospel to embed these truths in our hearts – how can we be bold and unified in face of opposition, look to the resurrection!

- Do not see your life in terms of 50, 70, 80 years – if you are in Christ you see your life in terms of trillions of years... if so then Tony’s aunt’s cancer, or a loss of job, or tragedy is just a blimp on the radar and then its gone...
- Don’t view your life in terms of what you determine as blessing, look to the resurrection – God is telling you that you do not know enough to know what true blessing is! And so for a little while I am going to walk with you through this because I have something unimaginable planned for you!
- And don’t fear or fret, we are not losers – we are to inherit the entire universe

**Brothers and sisters, lets not live in fear, we are not losers** – the Bible says that everything that is true of Christ is true of us – you are seen as the beloved Son in Whom the Father is well pleased – **Do you want to know if God is pleased with you don’t look** to cancer reports, pink slips, preaching evaluations, bank accounts, or family photos – **look to Christ who isn’t dead anymore and is seated by the Father’s side!**

**That’s how pleased He is of you!**

- So Let’s in light of the resurrection – cause a trillion years from now we will still be brothers and sister (better like each other now) **and a Trillion years from now we will still be undeserving recipients of grace** – we will be those whom Christ has set his tender affection on and so we can now in love do for each other what we will be doing for each other a billion years from now!

**Appeal:**

- Unbeliever – **our appeal to you is to surrender to this King, the Bible is clear that if you are not in Christ you are on the wrong side** – And the world paints a picture of Jesus that is not accurate that He is almost a bearded woman, He is not, He’s even tougher than the Rifleman and when He returns it says His enemies will cry for rocks to fall on them… but if you will surrender to Him now, instead of rocks and judgment your judgment will have already been taken care of at Calvary

And Believers — Let’s stand shoulder to shoulder in the battle and war… realizing there is a day when the war will be over –