

PP Alien Invasion: We Come in Peace

Part 6-Philippians 2:12-18

5/15-16/2016

Illus England's Queen Mary hated Protestantism and did all she could to return her country to Roman Catholic rule. Bibles were removed from churches, married clergy were forcibly separated from their wives, and protestant leaders were put to death. Two of them were the famous preacher Hugh Latimer and the Bishop of London, Nicholas Ridley. Ridley and Latimer were burned together at the end of Broad Street in Oxford, roped to an upright wooden stake, back to back, with tinder and wood piled around them and a bag of gunpowder tied around their necks. Latimer, almost 80 years old was the first to die, shouting through the flames, *"Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man; we shall this day light a such a candle, by God's grace, in England, as I trust shall never be put out."* Unfortunately for Ridley, the wood had been badly placed so that he suffered terribly, his legs burning off before the rest of him was touched. It was so gruesome, that Mary soon had executions done away from the public eye

The candle was lit on that day, shining a light into a terrible time of darkness in Europe
The time is coming-for many parts of the world it already is here-when we may be asked to die for Christ, but right now, we are being asked to live for Him...but how?

As we get ready to answer that question, let's return to our beginning text for this sermon series

PP *"Beloved, I urge you as sojourners and exiles ['Aliens and strangers'-NASB] to abstain from the passions of the flesh, which wage war against your soul. Keep your conduct among the Gentiles honorable, so that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day of visitation."* 1 Peter 2:11-12

As we have in this series, we will see how to live in a way that can move people to glorify God

PP 1-The Christian life is a cooperative, responsibility

"Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" 2:12

This might seem as if Paul is saying that we are to save ourselves through sheer effort
But notice Paul didn't write *work for your own salvation*, but *'work out your own salvation'*
What is in view here is not the point in which I am justified, declared innocent through Christ, saved, but what theologians refer to as *sanctification*

PP Sanctification is the process by which God is increasingly freeing us from sin, to become increasingly like Christ

While we have no part in accomplishing our salvation, we must cooperate in our sanctification
And that cooperation proceeds from an attitude or disposition of *'fear and trembling'*

You might wonder why any child of God should fear their Heavenly Father?

PP Especially as we've seen *"There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment" 1 John 4:18*

Yet this fear and trembling is not a cringing fear, terrified at the prospect of punishment
It is conscious awareness of our own weakness and sinfulness producing zero confidence and reliance in our own strength

Yet it doesn't produce despair because the gospel's power in us is convincing us that God is relentlessly loving to His children and His power is able to give us the strength we need

What emerges in the fearful and trembling heart of the Christian is adoration and love for Christ
 Paul is telling the church: *Keep growing in Christ, Who was obedient to the point of death,
 confident in the gracious working of God in you*

There always seem to be two extreme views to sanctification

One is called quietism, which sees the Christian as basically doing nothing in the process

Slogans like, *'Let go and let God'*, or *'I can't, God can'* are common to this view

One author famously taught it in her book, Hinds Feet in High Places, perhaps you've read it

Those who practice quietism believe in the mystical, contemplative, experiential approach of
 loving Jesus and resting and abiding in Him

They believe striving against sin and practicing self-discipline is futile and unspiritual

The other extreme has been called pietism, which sees the Christian as having to do everything
 in sanctification

With strong emphasis on bible study, holy living, and practical Christianity, it often leads to
 legalism, moralism, self-righteousness and a judgmental spirit

One criticism of pietists is, they are so heavenly minded they are of no earthly good and tends to
 fill a person with self-righteousness

Sanctification is a process of cooperating with God in response to His power at work in us

"for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure." 2:13

PP Sanctification is *obeying what God is enabling*, a response to what He is doing in our hearts

God is giving the Christian *the want to, to do what we ought to*

This is no *let go and let God* or *pull yourselves up by your own bootstraps*

There is no progress in spiritual maturity without our effort, but our own effort alone will
 accomplish nothing...there is a cooperation of responsibility between us and God

We see this cooperation all through the bible and let me give you four examples:

PP ***"But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain. On
 the contrary, I worked harder than any of them, though it was not I, but the grace of
 God that is with me."*** 1 Corinthians 15:10

PP ***"For this I toil, struggling with all His energy that He powerfully works within me."***
 Colossians 1:28-29

PP ***"Now may the God of peace...equip you with everything good that you may do His will,
 working in us that which is pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom be
 glory forever and ever. Amen."*** Hebrews 13:20-21

PP ***"So also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead."*** James 2:17

PP William Booth, the founder of The Salvation Army, once said *"Faith and works should
 travel side by side, step answering to step, like the legs of men walking. First faith, and
 then works; and then faith again, and then works again -- until they can scarcely
 distinguish which is the one and which is the other."*

PP 2-The Christian life is one where we shine as lights in the world

***"Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent,
 children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among
 whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life..."*** 2:14-16

Would you turn the page of your bibles to **4:2** for a moment?

Two ladies, *‘Euodia and Syntyche’*, were quarreling and it was affecting the whole church

Their quarrel wasn’t over doctrine, or Paul would have cleared it up with teaching

Instead, he *‘entreats’* them, pleads with them, to agree in the Lord

And their conflict was spreading, which is the cancerous power of grumbling and disputing

‘Do all things without grumbling and disputing’

PP Grumbling is complaining and *‘Every complaint a believer makes is against the Lord and is one of the ugliest sins.’* John MacArthur

A grumbling heart is one dissatisfied with God, a heart filled with unbelief

PP *“All the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron...then all the congregation said to stone them...and the LORD said to Moses, ‘How long will this people despise Me? And how long will they not believe in Me, in spite of all the signs that I have done among them.’”* Numbers 14:2, 10-11

James tells us how horrible it is when Christian complains against another Christian

PP *“Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door.”* James 5:9

PP Grumbling Christians cause *‘disputing’*, a word that means passing judgment on another’s opinions causing dissension, or disunity

Grumbling has more to do with emotions, while disputing is essentially intellectual

These are each as well as together, a *‘blemish’* upon the church, making us blend in looking no different from this *‘crooked and twisted generation’*, the ways of the world

Grumbling Christians are blemishes in the church

Christian, we cannot live this way, and we have God’s help to live for His good pleasure

God will never command the Christian to do what He does not promise to make possible

PP *“His divine power has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of him who called us to his own glory and excellence”* 2 Peter 1:3

‘Through the knowledge of Him’ is the Scriptures and Paul says this same thing in our passage

“holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.” Philippians 2:16

Once again we see the essential discipline of having God’s Word thoroughly in our hearts

Paul pleads for them to not drift from God’s Word, not let go of their confidence in the Bible

God is powerfully working in our hearts, so that we have the will and desire to live for His pleasure...meaning that He enables us to live for His glory

The church brings God glory and shines as light to the world when we refuse to grumble and dispute with one another

And we have two powerful examples that encourage us onward in love and unity

PP 3-The Christian life is encouraged by the power of example

In dropping our son Aaron off at the airport this past week, knowing that he will be, in a matter of days deploying to Afghanistan, we experienced the gamut of emotions

Everyone in our family handles that difficulty differently

My way is to retreat inwardly while I work through the emotions, meditating on scripture through prayer

Always, in my thoughts, are many of you who have already walked this road ahead of us Christian, do not ever underestimate the power of your own example of faithfulness to Christ

PP 17th Century Thomas Brooks wrote that, *'Example is the most powerful rhetoric.'*

The most powerful example for us is detailed right before this passage: ***"Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus"*** 2:5

Paul then describes the humility of Christ Who was obedient to death on a cross, ***'...to the glory of God the Father.'*** 2:11

Then, though lesser of course, he points to his own example

"Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me." Philippians 2:17-18

In each we see the power of example as we are encouraged to live for God's *'good pleasure'*

'Even if am to be poured out' is better translated in the present tense, *'Even if I am being poured out'*, something already occurring

He is, I believe, not talking about his eventual martyrdom, but his present sacrificial service

It is his living for Christ he is referring to, not his eventual dying for Christ for he believed he would be coming to visit them soon (2:24)

A *'drink offering'* was a lesser offering, the animal sacrifice being the main

The priest would take wine (sometimes honey or water) and pour it onto the sacrifice or ground in front of the altar, and it would provide a pleasing aroma to the sacrifice

In this imagery, the drink offering of Paul's life, was done *'upon the sacrificial offering of your faith'*, the sacrificial partnership of the Philippian church

PP ***"I will most gladly spend and be spent for your souls."*** 2 Corinthians 12:15

Illus I told you about the martyrdom of Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley. Ridley's awful death moved hundreds to tears, but it moved the ousted Protestant Bishop Thomas Cramner to fear and trembling. Just before this time, under threat of death, he signed papers renouncing his protestant faith. Even still, Queen Mary sentenced him to burn and five months after Ridley and Latimer, on the same exact spot he was tied to a stake. Standing in the middle of that woodpile, Cramner refused to read out his recantation, instead boldly stating that he was a Protestant, though a cowardly one. He declared that *'for as much as my hand offended, writing contrary to my heart, my hand shall first be punished.'* True to his word, as the fires were lit, he held out his hand that had signed that recantation and let the flames burn it away before his own life was consumed in a blazing light to all England!

"I am glad and rejoice with you all. Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me."

17-18

Cramner was emboldened by the glorious deaths of Latimer and Ridley

The power of example takes place within redemptive community

In the ESV, we see the word *'you'* 5 times, NIV, 6 times, and *'your'* a couple more times

Paul is not writing to an individual, but to a church, a community of believers

We become more like Christ together, as we teach, admonish, encourage, sharpen one another

And once again, as we have seen throughout this series, we must learn to live this Christian life together

For all you on the fringe of the church, come on inside, where it can be a little messy at times
But it's where we learn to become like Christ!

God wants us to live in a way that glorifies Him, His good pleasure
He knows we need help, so He is working in us with His great power, changing us day by day
We are to respond to His power with obedience, refusing to complain against each other,
refusing to bring about disunity and prove to be a blemish on God's glory
Instead, encouraging each other by being examples of selfless service to one another
We will shine as lights in this world, aliens and strangers, beacons for our great and glorious God
Amen

Pray