

STRIVING TOGETHER FOR THE FAITH OF THE GOSPEL - PHIL. 1:27

Introduction

- A. Text: **Phil. 1:27**.
- B. Among the many unfortunate results of divisions in the church at Corinth, one of the saddest was the obstacle this would have presented to the work of the congregation in *evangelism* and *edification*.
 - 1. "For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you. Now I say this, that each of you says, 'I am of Paul,' or 'I am of Apollos,' or 'I am of Cephas,' or 'I am of Christ'" (**1 Cor. 1:11,12**).
 - 2. "For you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? For when one says, 'I am of Paul,' and another, 'I am of Apollos,' are you not carnal?" (**1 Cor. 3:3,4**).
- C. When people are working at "cross purposes," there can be little productive result.
- D. In one sense, we need to "strive" in the Lord's work.
 - 1. "Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (**1 Cor. 15:58**).
 - 2. "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (**2 Tim. 2:15**).
- E. But we need to *strive together*: "Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, **with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel**" (**Phil. 1:27**).
- F. What does it mean to strive together for faith of the gospel, and what does it require of us?

I. THE MEANING OF STRIVING TOGETHER FOR THE FAITH OF THE GOSPEL

- A. In general, we probably pay too little attention to the "together" aspect of Christianity.
- B. To be a Christian is to be involved in a "fellowship." A "horizontal relationship" with other Christians cannot be separated from a "vertical relationship" with God - **1 Jn. 1:3; 5:1**.
- C. We participate in a "common salvation" (**Jd. 3**) and we have obtained a "like precious faith" (**2 Pt. 1:1**).
 - 1. We are workers in *a common cause*.
 - 2. We have *a common enemy*.
 - 3. We need *unity* . . . in general.
 - a. "Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (**1 Cor. 1:10**).
 - b. "With all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (**Eph. 4:2,3**). Cf. **Jn. 17:20,21; Col. 3:14**.
 - 4. But especially, we need a unity of spirit *in regard to our work*. Cf. "So we built the wall, and the entire wall was joined together up to half its height, for the people *had a mind to work*" (**Neh. 4:6**).
 - 5. We are to think of ourselves as "fellow workers." Cf. "We therefore ought to receive such, that we may become fellow workers for the truth" (**3 Jn. 8**).
- D. We are to have a spirit of camaraderie. Paul often spoke of his brethren in the language of comradeship:

1. "Titus . . . my *partner* and *fellow worker*" (**2 Cor. 8:23**).
2. "Your *fellowship* in the gospel from the first day until now" (**Phil. 1:5**).
3. "Epaphroditus, my *brother*, *fellow worker*, and *fellow soldier*" (**Phil. 2:25**).
4. "These women who *labored with me* in the gospel . . . and the rest of my *fellow workers*" (**Phil. 4:3**).
5. "Tychicus, a beloved *brother* . . . and *fellow servant* in the Lord" (**Col. 4:7**).
6. "Aristarchus my *fellow prisoner*" (**Col. 4:10**).
7. "Timothy, our *brother* . . . and our *fellow laborer* in the gospel of Christ" (**1 Thess. 3:2**).
8. "Philemon our beloved *friend* and *fellow laborer*" (**Philem. 1**).
9. "Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke, my *fellow laborers*" (**Philem. 24**).

II. SOME REQUIREMENTS OF STRIVING TOGETHER FOR THE FAITH OF THE GOSPEL

A. Together, we must:

1. Be "sanctified" or "set apart" in God's truth - **Jn. 17:17**.
2. Grow toward spiritual maturity - **Eph. 4:11-16**.
3. Have a sensitive regard for each other's conscience - **Rom. 14:1-3,10,19; 15:1,2**.
4. Be dedicated to the work of mutual burden-bearing - **Gal. 6:1,2**.
5. Eliminate self-centeredness, pettiness, jealousy, envy, gossip, factiousness - **Rom. 12:10; Phil. 2:3,4**.
6. Have a proper orientation toward congregational leadership - **1 Thess. 5:12,13; Hb. 13:7,17**.

B. Together, we must be motivated by a common vision of our work.

1. Those whose imaginations are not fired by the common vision probably will not "put their shoulders to the work of their Lord" (**Neh. 3:5**).
2. But those who are willing to work together will do great good. Cf. "And I told them of the hand of my God which had been good upon me, and also of the king's words that he had spoken to me. So they said, '**Let us rise up and build.**' Then they set their hands to this good work" (**Neh. 2:18**).

Conclusion

- A. Whatever other benefits there may be to striving together, there is certainly a *strength* to be found that we cannot have any other way. Cf. **Ecccl. 4:9-12**.
- B. May we work toward having a conduct "worthy of the gospel of Christ . . . stand[ing] fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel" (**Phil. 1:27**).