**Lesson 5: Joy in Striving Together for the Gospel**

Text: Philippians 1:22-30

**Introduction**

During WWII General Creighton Abrams found himself and his troops surrounded on all sides. With characteristic optimism, he told his officers, “For the first time in the history of this campaign, we are now in a position to attack the enemy in any direction.” Paul realized that as believers they were in a spiritual battle. They had to stand together against a common enemy. He exhorted the Philippians to stand fast and strive together for the faith of the gospel (v. 27). We should do the same as members of Hillcrest Baptist Church. In this lesson, we will consider how we can make the most of our time on earth and discover the joy that accompanies spiritual teamwork for Christ.

1. Paul wanted to make the most of his time on earth for Christ. (v. 22-26)
   1. Paul was between two very good options: being in Christ’s presence in heaven and a fruitful effort in advancing the message of Christ on the earth. (v. 22)
   2. On the one hand, he was ready to depart for heaven. (v. 23)
      1. The word “depart” was used by the military to refer to taking down one’s tent and moving to the next location.
      2. It was also used by sailors to refer to loosing from the shore to set sail.
      3. It was used in agriculture to refer to removing the yoke from an ox that finished it’s day’s work.
      4. Paul was ready to go and believed that being with Christ in heaven was far better!
   3. On the other hand, Paul concluded that continuing in his earthly ministry was more needful for the Philippians. (v. 24-26)
      1. He was confident that the Lord wanted him to continue at this point.
      2. He wanted to enhance their spiritual growth and joy in the faith.
   4. God has a purpose for your life!
      1. You are needed in His service.
      2. You can help others grow in Christ.
      3. It should be our desire to be productive in serving Christ as long as we are on this earth.
2. Paul wanted the Philippian believers to make the most of their time on earth for Christ. (v. 27-30)
   1. They would make the most of their time on earth by living a godly life. (v. 27a)
      1. Their “conversation” has to do with the way in which they lived.
      2. He exhorted them to conduct their lives in such a way that reflected their faith.
      3. “The most important weapon against the enemy is not a stirring sermon or a powerful book; it is the consistent life of believers.” (Wiersbe)
      4. We must behave what we believe!
      5. They were to lead godly lives whether Paul was present or absent. (v. 27b)
   2. Paul exhorted them to stand firm in one spirit. (v. 27c)
      1. We cannot be on and off in our service for the Lord.
      2. Steadfastness gives credence to the gospel.
   3. He wanted to hear that they were “striving together for the faith of the gospel.” (v. 27d)
      1. “Striving together” means to toil side by side in a common cause.
      2. We derive our English word “athletics” from this word.
      3. This conveys Paul’s desire to hear that they were working together as a unified team for the sake of the gospel.
      4. Corporations, athletic teams, and other entities strive together for temporal causes. How much more should we strive together for an eternal cause!
      5. They were to strive together, not against each other.
   4. They had nothing to fear from their adversaries. (v. 28)
      1. “Whatever oppositions we meet with, we must not be frightened at them, considering that the condition of the persecuted is much better and more desirable than the condition of the persecutors.” (Matthew Henry)
      2. Confidence gave witness to their salvation and to the condemnation of the lost.
   5. They were to count it an honor to suffer for His sake. (v. 29-30)
3. Central Idea: Paul and the Philippians could make the most of their time on earth by striving together for the faith of the gospel.
4. Application: We can make the most of our time on earth by striving together for the faith of the gospel.
   1. The faith is under attack.

“The Christian life is not a playground; it is a battleground….If Satan can only rob believers of their Christian faith, the doctrines that are distinctly theirs, then he can cripple and defeat the ministry of the gospel….Each local church is but one generation short of potential extinction. No wonder Satan attacks our young people in particular, seeking to get them away from the faith.” (Wiersbe)

* 1. You are not alone in the battle since God has placed you in a church family.
     1. We must stand together for the sake of Bible doctrine.
     2. We must strive together for the sake of the gospel.
  2. There are many ways in which we can strive together at Hillcrest Baptist Church.
     1. Take your place alongside another believer in prayer.
     2. Serve in a ministry of the church that allows you to impact lives for Christ.

**Conclusion**

God has a purpose for you as long as you are on this earth. We are truly blessed. We have it good here in this life and even better in heaven! Some day we will see the Savior who loved us and gave Himself for us. Until then, let’s make the most of the time He gives us on earth by striving together for the faith of the gospel.