



GracePoint: A Weekly Sermon Discussion

7 - Conflict

8/20 @6:30

Grace Group at
the Church

8/22 @6:00

Grace Group at
2070 Corley Dr

8/22 @6:30

Grace Group at
1710 Mariposa Dr

ICE BREAKER: Are you a lover or a fighter? Why?

REVIEW: Was there anything covered or said on Sunday that you had any questions or comments about?

READ: Philippians 1:27-30

Here in the first portion of Philippians Paul has been simultaneously very positive and also painfully honest about the difficulties that he is facing. He is imprisoned, but that is good for the gospel. He is sure that he will not be ashamed, but that will happen either in his life or death. And here in the end we have a clear view of God's grace, but even that is seen in "conflict". Today we will be spending our time talking about that last one, the conflict that we are in.

At the heart of this is a question that we need to wrestle with: what is the nature of the conflict that we are engaged in? In particular I would like to note TWO particular ways that we see this. The first is what I would call the "external" conflict. Most famously Paul talks about this in Ephesians: "For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places." (Ephesians 6:12) In other words, we need to be certain that we know that there are "cosmic powers" and "spiritual forces of evil" all around us. However, we should not ever be timid or afraid in this conflict. For in Christ we are "more than conquerors". Having already purchased the victory Jesus rules and reigns. Even right after the above passage in Ephesians Paul encourages us to "stand firm" because we will be "able to withstand the evil day" because of the armor of God that all who are in Jesus possess. In other words we start by seeing that we are in a conflict, but paradoxically it is a conflict that we are in, that we have also already won!

DISCUSS: What do you think of when you think of this "external" conflict? What are the dangers of ignoring it? What are the dangers of over emphasizing the enemies that we face?

But then I would like to move on to what I call the "internal" conflict. This one is summed up with one word: sin. And before you think: "Wait! Isn't sin external" The answer is yes... And no. For those in Christ our sins are forgiven; they are as far from us as the east is from the west (and that's pretty external if you ask me!). We are viewed with the righteousness of Christ. But on the other hand the epistle of James makes it clear that our struggles with sin come, not from the outside, but from a much more personal source: our own hearts. "But each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by *his own desire*. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin, and sin when it is fully grown brings forth death." (James 1:14-15). To put fancy words on this, our internal conflict is one of our sanctification. But I have some good news for this conflict too: if you are hid in Christ, then you have already won this one too! But you don't have to take my word for it...

READ: Romans 8:29-30

DISCUSS: This passage is often called "The Golden Chain of Salvation" because each step is linked together to show what God has done and will do. How does this show us our victory? How can this empower us to fight in the conflict we find ourselves in?

READ: 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24

DISCUSS: Here Paul shows us that our victory comes through who God is. What particular trait of God shows us that we have won in this passage? What about this trait is so good at showing us this? What (if any) other thoughts of who God is can lead us to this confidence?