

BY VAL OBIOHA

THE DEFENSE & CONFIRMATION OF THE GOSPEL



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Published as an E-book

By **GOSPEL ALLIANCE LIBRARY**

(Author: Obioha Val)

Email: info@gospelalliance.org.ng

gospelalliance2016@gmail.com

Website: www.gospelalliance.org.ng

PRAYER AND WORD CONFERENCE 2022

THEME: THE DEFENCE AND CONFIRMATION OF THE GOSPEL

TALK 1: THE GOSPEL AND SPIRITUAL WARFARE

Last year the Lord spoke to us from 2 Timothy 1:8 “be not thou therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord...”. We did say that “the testimony” refers to the covenant of God borne subjectively. In the Old Testament it is related to the tablet of stone in the ark. We showed that the ark typify the church, the bearers of the New Testimony or covenant. Of course the New Testimony is Christ as we noted (see Matt. 26:28), and him borne subjectively.

Reading 2Tim.1:8 closely, you will find the relationship between this testimony and the gospel. The second part of that verse reads: “but be thou partaker of the affliction of the gospel...”. That is to say, the bearing of the testimony implies (or will lead to) being partaker of the affliction of the gospel. If the testimony is the life of Christ in the believer, the gospel is the proclamation or the exhibition of that life. A further study of 2Tim.1:9-10 showed this to be so (compare with Rom.1:16-17).

The word “gospel” means good news or announcing a good news. What then is the good news? Let us note some interesting phrases from 2Tim.1:9-10 and Rom. 1:16-17:

1. “who hath saved us”: It is the news of our salvation (read Romans 1:16) salvation refers to our Deliverance from the fallen human nature, and a restoration to God's eternal purpose and glory (see Romans 3:23-25)
2. “and called us with an holy (special, sacred, separated unto God) calling in line with his purpose and grace” (see Romans 8:28-30, 1Peter 2:9). Beyond Deliverance from sin, the gospel keeps in-view God's eternal purpose (i.e., His purpose before the world began and his purpose in the ages to come), and the grace (i.e., the means to realize that purpose).

3. “which was given in Christ”. This plan, this purpose is in Christ alone, and Christ is also the means (the embodiment of the grace) for coming into the blessings of the gospel. This tells us that the gospel wholly focuses on Christ. He is the conception, the means, and the end of the gospel. We are told in v.10, “but is now made manifest (i.e., God's purpose and Grace), by the appearing of our Savior Jesus Christ”. This is the summary of the gospel: **the manifestation of God's purpose and Grace through the revelation of Jesus Christ**
4. “abolished death and has brought life and immortality (incorruptibility) to light through the gospel.” This speaks of the effect of the gospel; the achievement of God's purpose. What is death? It is the grand enemy of creation. It speaks of that which seeks to bring an end to God's purpose, a defeat to God's plan, and represents the grand enemy of the gospel. The gospel then is the good news of triumph: **“the triumph of life over death”** It speaks of the Resurrection of Jesus, and all that it means for us who believe. This is what the letter to the Philippians is all about: a celebration of triumph of life over death. What does the prison, the suffering, the misrepresentation, the giving up of all things, mean but death? What comes out of it all? Life, exaltation, glory! We see that in chapter 2: the exaltation of Christ, and in chapter 3, the apostle pointed to our hope of Heaven. This triumph of life over death is seen all through the scriptures and is worth our deepest meditation (see Romans 5:12-21, 6:23, 8:21,35-39, 1Cor.15:22-26, 52-57, Heb.2:14-15, Rev. 20:14)

Have you experienced that triumph? Do you have a foretaste of that life? Can it be truly said of you in the words of Col. 3:3 that Christ is now your life, or as in Gal.2:20 “it is no longer I that live”? If that is not true of you, don't leave this conference without an experience of that life. To the degree to which this principle of the triumph of life over death is operating you, to that degree we could say you are experiencing the gospel.

5. It is the revelation of the power and wisdom of God (Romans 1:16, See also 1Cor. 1:18-29, Eph.1:15-23). In the gospel we see the power of God over the host of darkness, over sin, and over death. We see the power of God, as against the power and strength of man, the wisdom of God as against the wisdom of man (Genesis 3:6) and other spiritual intelligence (1Cor.2:6-8, Eph.3:10-11)

6. It is the revelation of God's righteousness (Rom.1:17, 3:25-26). It shows us God's righteousness as against human self-righteousness, and religious system. The only ground upon which God could justify the guilty is the gospel. Ordinarily it will be unrighteous for God to pass over the sins and guilt of the wicked, but the gospel made this possible.
7. It is an announcement of the arrival of a new kingdom (Matthew 4:23, c/f 1 Cor.4:20, 1Thess.1:5, Col.1:13). Study the history of nations and of revolution, no kingdom comes except by a fierce battle, and of the kingdom of God Jesus says it violently advances (Matt.11:12) This was said in relation to John the Baptist, the first announcer of the messiah. Jesus was saying in effect that he should realize that the bringing in of the Kingdom, the proclamation of the gospel is a spiritual warfare a violent spiritual warfare.

As we draw this charge to a close may I ask you frankly:

1. Have you experience the gospel? Have you experienced that spiritual emancipation from the kingdom of darkness, from the fear of death, from the grip of sin? Do you want to experience the peace, the goodwill, the mercy and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ? Go humbly to him, and asks of him that life that triumph over death. Survey his cross before you, and lay down your pride so you might have the Resurrection Life.
2. For those of us who are already Christians, how much of the blessings of the gospel are you experiencing? How much of this triumph do you have daily? Oh that a desire be stirred in you to come into God's full purpose in the gospel. Are there still ground of deaths that you are yet to triumph? Why not bring them before the cross? Why not cry out like the apostle "that I will know the power of his Resurrection having been made conformed onto His death"?

THE COSMIC AND SPIRITUAL WARFARE AGAINST THE GOSPEL

The pagans have the idea that there is a conflict between Good and Evil. That idea is not just philosophical, but a real fact. However, the conflict is between the devil and his host, against the purpose and kingdom of God. (Eph.6:12, 2:2, C/f Jn.12:31, 14:30, Luke 22:53).

The history of the world is a history of a spiritual battle against God's purpose. We see that in:

1. **The fall of Man (Genesis 3):** Behind it all, was a personality represented by the serpent. We know later that this is the devil himself from the book of Revelation. Not long after, we see the fight against the seed of the woman in the death of Abel. He is the sin that entered Cain's heart. He would later perpetuate his seed into the new crop of humanity God was raising (See Genesis 6), and bring the entire world to a deluge. However, God's purpose cannot be defeated. God preserved the race through Noah.
2. **The battle against the nation of Israel:** The nation of Israel was born through God's covenant with Abraham (Genesis 12). This is perhaps the beginning of God's redemption plan. Here we have the blessings of Abraham also referred to as the blessings of the gospel because it is a blessing that relates to the entire world: "I will bless thee and thou shall be a blessing, in thee all families of the earth be blessed" (Genesis 12:2-3). This blessing is the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ (see Luke 1: 54-55, 72-75, Acts 3:25-26 and Galatians 3:8). The nation of Israel were to be the carriers of this blessing, they were to be a kingdom of priests through whom the nation's were to be enlightened. But what did we see? A fierce onslaught against the nation of Israel. This came in form of bareness for Abraham and Isaac, famine; to the point they almost compromised. What about the conflict between Esau and Jacob?

Finally, Jacob went into Egypt. The nation increased, and Egypt felt threatened and made Israel slave for 430 years. Egypt represents the prince of the world, the devil. The Lord took them out of Egypt by a mighty hand into the wilderness. He renewed his covenant with them, and sought to renew their mind,

and reconstitute them into a new nation separate from every other nation, called and holy unto the Lord. He promised to give them the land of Canaan for an inheritance. As far as we know scripture, this is the Old Testament typology of the gospel (see Hebrew 4:2, c/f 1st Corinthians 10:1-4). What became of this nation? They became the object of a great spiritual battle. The enemy intend to:

- i. Make them like every other nation
- ii. Dispossess them of the inheritance or at least disquiet them in it.
- iii. Get other things to Lord over them.

This was the case from the time of the judges to the Kings. Finally, they were put out of the land, out of the inheritance. Even at that, the enemy sought to totally annihilate the nation, but for Esther and Mordicai.

In the land of their captivity, we see Daniel - a man of desires (Daniel 10:15) waging strategic spiritual warfare for the restoration of the Kingdom. Here more than any other place, it became glaring that it was a spiritual and cosmic warfare that was ongoing (Daniel 10:13,20,21; Gabriel represents the gosseller). Daniel saw in his vision something far beyond his imagination. He realizes that the kingdom is of a great spiritual dimension (a Stone from a mountain, not of this earth, cut off without human hand) a kingdom set up by God, and that shall uproot all the kingdoms of this world (Daniel 4:44 – 45). It is against this, that all the forces of the enemy were raging. One king rises after another, the next always greater than the former, all with the intention to see that God's purpose is not established. (see Daniel 8:11-14, 9:24 -27). Jesus Himself related the proclamation of the gospel to this vision of Daniel. (see Matthew 24:14-15). As we seek to establish God's purpose, to bring in the Kingdom through the gospel, the enemy will fight to make a desolation. Our consolation is in the fact that our victory is already assured (Daniel 7:9-14)

TALK 2: THE BATTLE FOR THE GOSPEL

(Read Matthew 16:13-19)

Jesus was going to plant His church in the enemy's territory. We must understand what the church means, it is the seat of the government, what you call senate today. He is confident that the gate of hell (the Greek use the word "Hades"; not just a place but as a principality in charge of death) shall not prevail against it. The reason is obvious, the church is founded on men with a revelation of who Jesus is. The church is founded on the revelation of Jesus. They were going to proclaim a gospel that have a basis in their lives. Something to which their lives were conformed to (see Acts 4:19-20, 2Peter 1:16-19. 1John 1:1- 3).

No sooner had the church been born, than we see the confrontation of the gates of hell. We see the visions of Daniel crystallizing in reality. The devil has done his worse to the physical Israel, but not before God achieved His purpose with that nation. The stone has been cut off from that mountain without hand, the rod of Jesse have come forth and with him the fruit of Resurrection: the church. Now the kings of the earth rage (Ps.2)

We see this in:

1. The persecution from the Jews, and Herod,
2. The persecution of the Roman powers and pagan worshippers
3. The infiltration of false gossellers
4. Satan himself (1 Thess. 2:18): If he could, he would have sniffed out the life of the apostle through shipwreck, snake bite, and imprisonment.

The second missionary journey of Paul is nothing but a major spiritual military campaign. It was what one will call a deadly mission. The first battle ground he faced was Philippi - and that is just what the city represented a battleground, and here is where his battles began.

It was:

- A battle for spiritual discernment
- A fight to hold onto the place of prayer
- A battle to repudiate the promotion driven by the spirit of this world; what we will innocently call publicity
- A battle to discourage his newly recruited team

We see him flogged and imprisoned, what was his conclusion? “we were shamefully entreated at Philip” (1 Thess.2:2)

Then to Thessalonica and Berea, the battle was against false religion and religious fundamentalist. They were forced out of the cities by the Jews. From here they went to Athens and to Corinth. The battle there was against the wisdom and philosophies of this world - an intellectual, yet spiritual battle, and a fight against high moral depravity. Finally, he stepped into the coast of Asia. In Ephesus he waged a war against magical art and the goddess Diana. The result was that the word of God grew mightily, and prevail. Recounting that expedition he wrote: “I fought with beasts in Ephesus” (1Cor. 15:32-32). In one campaign, Paul and his team had touched three major Roman provinces: Macedonia, Achaia, and Asia minor, but not without deadly battles and bruises. They have planted the kingdom, they have recruited an army from the nations. In Acts 20:4 we find the first ever racially, and ethnically diverse mission team. Finally, he took the battle to the very Pretorium, and there established a church!

All these are only on the surface. We must have to look deeper to see how they fought this battle for the gospel, and how they stood in the various battlefield and against the various strategies of the enemy. This we shall do under the following consideration:

1. The attack on the ministers of the gospel
2. The attack on the corporate existence of the church

3. The ideological warfare
4. Unstable society

THE ATTACK ON THE MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL

(Read Matthew 11:12-14)

Here, we see John the Baptist, having proclaimed Jesus as the Messiah, stands in doubt of his own conviction, and message. The man was under the attack of the prince of this world's power. The primary goal was to make him renounce his gospel! John was not a small man, nor was he a chicken-hearted fellow. We are told he was strong in spirit (Luke 1:18). But now, we see the pressures of the powers of darkness pressing upon his spirits. In relation to this, Jesus told us that the kingdom of God suffers violence. That is, the kingdom is brought in by only a violent advancement. The least of those who must be part of it must face up with a conflict greater than what we see John facing. The forces against this Kingdom, and its gospel will only mount greater and the heart of course will be on the ministers of the gospel.

How does the attacks come, and how are we to put up with it? We will consider three things in this regard?

- i. The attempts to discredit the minister.
- ii. The attempt to distract the minister.
- iii. The attempt to discourage the minister.

The Attempt To Discredit The Minister

Satan's foremost strategy against the gospel is to discredit the ministers of the gospel. He has won the battle cheaply if he could make the minister a hypocrite. The apostles understood these, and through the holy spirit they ensure to maintain their integrity and credibility (read 2Cor.1 :12-20, 4:1-2, 6:3-10 and 2Thess. 2:3-12). We see in these scriptures various areas the enemy seek to discredit the ministers of the gospel:

1. **Through Scandals:** A scandal caused by covetousness, or lack of self-control in a minister, is a big blow to the gospel he proclaims. Therefore, we see how the apostle ensured that his integrity is not in question in handling of money or material goods (see 2 Cor.8:16 -23, Acts 20:33), and his resolve on his sexual conduct (1Cor. 6:12-20). How many have been discredited in this area of sexual misconduct! Young ministers should pay particular attention to this area. Remember the entire purpose of God as it concerns you, and those in your circle of influence is at stake.
2. **Through Misrepresentation:** Read through the letters to the Corinthians, nowhere else was the apostle so misrepresented like in that church. His good intentions were misjudge as infidelity. His gentleness was taken as weakness. He needed to prove to them again that he was a genuine apostle. What was his reaction in all these? One will actually be tempted to assert self. Indeed, the apostle was tempted in that line (2Cor.10:7-12), but he refrain and chose to simply rely on the Holy Spirit (1Cor. 2:1-5, 10:1-6). He pointed to his suffering, deprivation, and rejection as the mark of his apostleship, rather than his wealth, commendation, and recognitions which the Corinthians supposed to be the mark of true apostleship (2Cor. 6:3-10; 2Cor. 11). We can't help being misrepresented, and slandered, but our reaction to these things will truly prove that we are set for the defense of the gospel (see Phil.1:14-18).

The Attempt to Distract the Minister

We shall consider just two major things that the enemy uses to distract a minister:

1. **Distraction through self-promotion:** (See 2Cor.3:1-6, 4:5, Phil. 2:1-5, 2Thess.2:6). The enemy knows that if he could get the minister to focus on himself, to preach himself, to pursue popularity amongst men, to promote his own works and denomination, he is sure to put out the gospel. Sometimes the devil uses even well-meaning brethren to bring these distractions; they flatter the minister, they become his sycophants. He uses fellow ministers to get them into a kind of competition. What was Paul's reaction to all these? First, it was to have the mind of Christ (see Phil.2:1-5, 1Cor. 2:16-3:5 – 10; 10:32-33)

Secondly it was to focus on carrying his cross (Gal. 6:14). He was contented to be unpopular, and never attempted to join in the competition (1Cor.4:8-13, 2Cor.10:12). For him, recommendations were nothing. What matters, what authenticates his ministry were the conformity of the lives he meets to the image of Christ (2Cor.3:1-5, 2Cor.10:13-16). What a revolution it will be for the church, if this becomes the focus of many a minister.

2. **Distraction through earthly cares:** (Philippians 3:18-21; 4:12-13). A veteran missionary once said: “if God called you to be a preacher, don't stoop to become a king”. How many have become terribly distracted from the call by pursuing money and other necessities of life (1Timothy 6:9-10). The cares of this life will always be there, but our reaction to material needs, or our attitude to material abundance will promote or endorse the gospel. How did the apostle faced up in the face of needs? First, we saw that he engaged in a modest job that will allow him time for the ministry, and give him a front for the gospel (Acts 19:12, 20:34). He would not burden the church with his material needs, but stayed contented with what he had. He suffered hunger and nakedness if need be. Honestly, these things are not easy to face, but may the Lord grant us Grace.

The Attempt to Discourage the Minister

This seems to be the deadliest attack. We saw the attack on John the Baptist earlier, and of course Paul faced it many times. Two key reasons for discouragement for ministers are:

1. **Desertion:** This comes when friends who believe in you no longer do; when you are left in loneliness. Missionaries, especially faces this. Paul had it also (see 2nd Timothy 1:15, 4:16)
2. **A sense of under fulfillment:** We see Paul concern least he had run in vain (Phil.2:16 2Cor. 11:22). This he said was his greatest burden (2Cor. 11:28-29, 2Cor.7:5-6).

How did the apostle face this down times? He drew strength from Christ (2Cor.4:7-11). He kept his focus on the high calling of God in Christ (2Cor.4:14-18 Philippians 3:20-21). He sought fellowship with saints when possible (2nd Corinthians 7:5-6, 2Tim. 4:21). He gave himself to Prayer, and equally asked for prayer (Ephesians 6:18-19, Philippians 1 :19). Our victories lies in standing through all these attacks (Ephesians 6:13). May we be able to say like Paul none of these things move me!

THE ATTACK ON THE CORPORATE EXISTENCE OF THE CHURCH

There are at least three strategic areas the enemy attack the church in order to undermine the progress of the gospel:

- i. An attack on our unity and fellowship.
- ii. Introduction of false apostles, false gospel, and false practices.
- iii. Persecution from without.

i. An Attack on our Unity and Fellowship:

A lot is tied to our unity as far as the progress of the gospel is concerned. (Read John 17:21). No single individual or team can drive the progress of the gospel. Therefore, the strategy of the enemy is to put a wedge in our fellowship. This would repudiate the very fact of the gospel. At the basis of the gospel is resurrection, the triumph of life over death. What is death, but separation, disunity, and disintegration? Therefore, a disunited church have no gospel to preach. Such a Church cannot grow into the measure of the fullness of the height of Christ (read Ephesians 4:14-16). This was the case with the Corinthian church, they remained spiritual babies (1st Corinthians 3:2-3). We see how that affected their fellowship and led to death (1st Corinthians 11:17-29). It is not enough to idealize the “one mystic unbroken body”, to claim to believe in “one holy catholic, and apostolic Church”, we must have a practical expression of it in our local assemblies. It must of necessity lead into the Communion (fellowship) of the saints in a real way. It is on this practical side that the devil focuses on attacking, to make it difficult

to get along one with another. He brings in the pride, the touchiness, intolerance, slander, bitterness, etc. at individual level. He simply will have us to be cold one towards another, as against “having fervent charity” as word of God commands.

What are we to do? We are to endeavor (put up a fight) to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3-10, Phil. 1:27, 2:1- 5). This is done by identifying with the condescension of Jesus. The one who has ascended up, first descended, that he may fill all things. Paul says He “humbled Himself”. How? Through the cross! We must embrace the cross, this means to die to personal ambitions, opinions, and rights. Then we must realize that we have been raised with Christ in one body; one new man. In this resurrection we are told, “he gave gifts unto men”. Therefore, we must recognize the value, the ministry, the need, we have of each one. An independent, self-sufficient spirit, will only hinder our unity. God’s gifting is meant to unite us (1Cor. 12:12-14).

Beyond the individual level, beyond the attack on the local assembly, the enemy carry on this battle to a larger scale. We see the competition between denominations and the wastage of God's resources. We cannot partner with one another for the progress of the gospel, like Paul will say all seek their own.

ii. **Introduction of False Apostles, False Gospel, and False Practices:**

a). False Apostles: (see 2Cor.11:13-15, 2Tim.3:5, 2Peter 2:1-3, 13-22). This seems to be the most dangerous weapon against the gospel. A false apostle does not necessarily mean one who preaches false doctrines or errors, though many times, they graduate to that point. One who even though he preaches the fundamental truths of the faith, but does not have the life, is a false apostle. Such is not born again, or is a backslider. He lives in hypocrisy, in lust, covetousness, and wickedness of all kinds; and these he does deliberately. Such may preach powerfully, their ministries seems promising, but they are clouds without water, they are unstable in their personal life. You cannot find an anchor in them. For such, we need spiritual discernment; we need to look carefully if they have a mark of the cross: Dead to self and personal interest. We need to simply pray for deliverance.

b). False Gospel: (Galatians 1:8-9). This is a perversion of the gospel, a deviation from the truth. Sometimes, this could be so obvious, at other times it could be so subtle. The devil uses this to:

- ✓ Cause division in the church. The word heresy actually means sect, or divide. It is usually a divide on doctrinal ground.
- ✓ Draw away disciples. (see Acts 20:29-30). The church gets distracted, unstable souls are led astray.
- ✓ Misrepresents the true Church. Those who embrace false gospel, will always claim to be the true church, and seem to be more ardent in preaching or even charitable works. This is only so that the devil may confuse the world out there. They are nothing but the devil's own planting - the tares. Here are simple tips to help identify some:
 1. They often venerate their leaders or founders almost at par with Jesus. Even though they do not openly say it, most times they consider their leaders inerrant.
 2. They often make claims to extra revelation (mostly esoteric) other than the simplicity of the word of God. Often, they have writings which they hold as being equal in authority to the Bible.
 3. They positively disagree with at least one fundamental and clear teachings of the scripture, e.g. the person of Jesus Christ, salvation by grace alone, the authority of all scripture, etc.
 4. They practice exclusiveness. They preach that only their group, or through their group alone can one obtain true salvation. They claim to be the sole custodians of the true message of God.

How can we deal with this issue of false teaching:

1. Be a thorough student of the Bible (Acts 20:20)
2. Ascertain the credibility of your source of learning (2Tim.3:10-15)

3. Read a lot of Christian and Church History (Phil. 3:17)
4. Be filled with the holy Ghost. Have spiritual discernment (Phil.1: 9 -10)
5. Live true to the light you now have (2Thess.2:9 -12, Rom.1:21 Phil.3:16)
6. Remain within the boundaries of Christian orthodoxy (2Tim. 2-15). This point is perhaps the most important. The word Orthodoxy refers to “adherence to correct or accepted Creed... especially in religion acceptance of the doctrine defined by various creeds and ecumenical councils in antiquity” (Wikipedia). It is from the Greek word “Orthos” which means right, erect, straight. This word is the base of the word translated “rightly dividing” the word of truth as used in 2nd Timothy 2:15. It means maintaining a straight course, cutting straight, staying true to the standard, not deviating. It is the same word used in Hebrews 12:13 and Proverbs 4:26 (Septuagint). There is a body of doctrine that has been handed down to us from the Canon, there is a Christian tradition, a heritage, a value. They are embedded in our fellowship, our hymnody and our history. They put the fine boundaries between errors and right. Beware of so-called novelty, and charming revelation.
7. Avoid pride and covetousness they will surely lead into heresy and errors (1Tim. 6:3-5)

c). False Practice: Closely related to false teaching is false practice. There are three ways this is done:

1. **By total or partial rejection of Christian orthodoxy.** This is when anything can come into our church life in the name of liberty. The culture or a standard in public worship is thrown overboard. For example, no sense of awe, no discipline, and worship is more like a worldly amusement. This is also seen in the compromise of simple Christian modesty in speech, and in dressing. Worst of all is the lack or neglect of standards in our discipleship, in calling and training men for the ministry. Often, when you speak up for

orthodoxy, you are termed legalist, an extremist, and such names. Well I know there could be “dead orthodoxy” we will talk about it in a moment.

2. **Syncretism:** Often when the gospel is taken to a place, there is the tendency to mix it up with the existing cultural and religious practice. The aim of the enemy is to make the people see nothing really different in the message we proclaim, and to put a hindrance to that message by giving it an ethnic or racial coloration. A typical example were the Judaizers in Paul’s days. They failed to see the difference between the Jewish religion which was but a shadow, and the reality which Christ has brought. Another instance was the Colossian church, where Paul warned them of carrying over pagan practices (Col 2:20-23). Until today, we still have one of the longest practiced syncretism of Roman paganism with the Christian Faith. What a terrible institution is produced, and still holds many in darkness today. More unfortunate is the syncretism of African Traditional Religion in the Nigerian church.
3. **The Problem of Dead Orthodoxy:** The devil’s aim is either to get the orthodoxy out of the church, or to make it a dead one. It is to get the church to mistake lethargy for liturgy. We could go through the forms, recite the great old creeds and hymns, attend the catechism and baptismal class, just to fulfill all righteousness. When we could do all that without our heart in them, without the fire of the Holy Ghost in them, then we have come to the point of dead orthodoxy, dead fundamentalism. This leaves an empty and powerless church, a caricature of the church!

The only solution to this is a heaven-sent, Holy Ghost revival; a disturbance from the sleep of death, a baptism of fresh fire. It was the fresh fire that kept the apostle ever-burning; we see in his heart a fresh desire for Christ, for greater experience of Christ (Phil.3:10), he was pressing on (Phil. 3:14). He could write to the Romans: Not lagging in zeal, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord”. There was no place for lethargy in this man.

iii. **Persecution from without.**

Persecution is one of the last tools the devil uses when he has run out of options and is frustrated. When he strikes with persecution, it is an evidence that we are winning the warfare (see Phil.1:28). Persecution is only deadly and harmful to the church when:

- There had been no correct discipleship.
- We do not respond rightly to the persecution. Example, when we fight back or use carnal weapons or begin to negotiate with the enemy. Imagine the apostles negotiating with the Sanhedrin?

The apostle made it his aim to prepare the church to go through persecution. He made them see that it was normal, and told them how to react to it (Phil.1:29-30). It is equally of utmost importance that those who may not be going through persecution at the moment provide needed help and support to those who are. If one part of the body suffers, all suffers with it. If we face persecution this way, it will serve to promote the gospel rather than hinder it. This was exactly what the Philippian church did for Paul.

THE IDEOLOGICAL WARFARE

(Read 2Cor.10:3-26, Eph.2:2-3)

This is another realm outside a direct attack on the ministers of the gospel and on the church, where the enemy wages the war against the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Here the enemy influences the culture, education, the economic ideology, and the government against the gospel.

Examples include:

1. **The interfaith ideology.** I am not talking of an organization, it is beyond that. It is an ideology being promoted in our schools and society in the name of religious tolerance. It preaches that all faiths are equally valid, we all serve the same God in different ways. To insist that Jesus is the only way is therefore termed bigotry, intolerance, and insensitive.

2. **Humanism:** This is one of the oldest ideology in the devil's arsenal. "Ye shall be like God", he said to the woman. The summary of humanism is that it places man and his well-being at the center. It preaches the innate goodness of man as against the total depravity of man and his need for a Savior. It preaches self-development or the development of an autonomous man (exploring his own idea and creating his own world) as against conformity to the image of Jesus Christ. It preaches self-actualization as against living for the glory of God. it is today at the center of our education. It controls the economy, and it informs government policies. Above all, this preparing the highway for the Antichrist.
3. **Cultural Mutation:** Closely associated with humanism is the creation of a culture of liberalism and relativism. It is covered by very beautiful names like human rights, women and child right, democracy, etc. Today we Have such abominations as the LGTB community, the nude culture, abortion rights, and other violence against human soul. Marriages are no longer sacred, child discipline is outdated, and the result is a broken society.

The ideology and culture a person is born into usually forms his world-view and thinking pattern. He interprets everything against that background; it becomes a stronghold. With the present cultural revolution, true preachers of the gospel in the near future we'll have a lot of stronghold to deal with. It is only through the power of the Holy Ghost we can pull down the stronghold. Therefore, our only hope is an anointed preaching back by sound theology, the kind we saw Paul demonstrated in Mars Hill (Acts 17:22-31). We must also be very strategic in re-engineering the society by being intentional with the education system. This was Paul style in Ephesus (Acts 19:9-10). If this is not done we will at best raise proselytes, not disciples. We may even be forced by the tide of the culture to shift our own ground or change our messages. We must therefore stand strong against the tide, be ready to stand alone when you see your close friends and family members being swept away. You have need of faith, you have need of solid conviction to face the flattery of the prince of the power of the air (Daniel 11:30-32).

UNSTABLE SOCIETY

(1Tim. 2:1-4)

The last but not the least in our list is “instability in the society” - the wars and rumors of war. The devil uses these to impinge the gospel; to cause men's hearts will fail them, to make life look meaningless and miserable. At such time, people question the very existence of God, they questioned His goodness, and they wonder if He has abdicated the government of this world. What should be our reaction as such time? First, it is to pray for peace. Second, is to seek to promote the gospel in the midst of it all. At such times, the peace of the gospel must be seen in our composure. Jesus said: “see that your heart be not trouble” (Matthew 24 vs 6). At such times we should give hope, we should present Jesus as the only answer. We should not join the bandwagon of those looking for another messiah; be it political, military, or religious leaders. Our hope must be in Christ alone.

ABOUT GOSPEL ALLIANCE

Welcome to Gospel Alliance, the Christian body that aims to raise mature and balanced Christian workers who will lead reformation and revival in the Church. Our vision is for the Church to fulfil her vocation in this age, and we believe that this can be achieved through prayer, fellowship, training, and a strong emphasis on family life.

Our mission is to provide a platform for Christian workers to come together in fellowship and receive ministerial support. We believe that through this, we can labor for the reformation and revival of the Church, as we seek to align ourselves with the Word of God.

As part of our mission, we are committed to mobilizing the Church to take responsibility for evangelism and missions in all its various forms. We believe that the Church has a vital role to play in bringing the good news of Jesus Christ to a lost and hurting world. Join us on this journey as we seek to make a difference in the world, one life at a time.

Send us a mail at info@gospelalliance.org.ng or gospelalliance2016@gmail.com or call **08163331057, 08160530658 or 08137048222** or visit our website now at www.gospelalliance.org.ng.