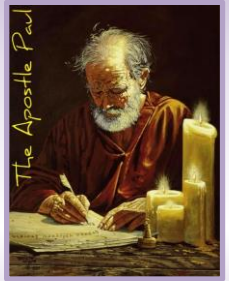


PHILIPPIANS

Joy In Christ



Lesson 11: The Joy of Maturity ... [PHILIPPIANS 3:15-21]

PREVIEW

Paul now addresses the walk of mature believers, the ones who stay in the Word of God constantly striving to do His will. Mature believers are to be consistent in their walk, holding to the standard set by the Word. To make this easier, Paul says to emulate those who are godly examples but to beware of those who are ungodly examples. He ends with a joyous statement on the eventual glorification of each believer.

GOALS FOR THE CHURCH: (3:15-16)

SAME MIND (3:15)

THE COMMAND

Three features of this command are set forth. **First**, it includes both Paul and his readers. The exhortation, “LET US ... HAVE THIS MIND”, shows that the apostle identified himself with the church and needed to be stimulated to further growth just as they did.

Second, Paul’s directive could be obeyed only by those who were mature and were maturing. The phrase, “AS MANY AS”, shows that only a select group of believers would respond to the appeal. Mature believers are always conforming to the image of Christ; striving to attain the mind of Christ.

Third, the command to be like minded was directed toward one purpose, Paul’s intent of pressing toward the goal and of believers doing all God planned for them to do and becoming all that God has designed for His children.

THE CORRECTION

Some Christians blindly think they do not need to improve or they can mature through legalism (“AND IF IN ANYTHING YOU THINK OTHERWISE”). They take a position other than that lived or prescribed by Paul. After all Paul taught in this epistle and after describing his own spiritual condition that still needed improvement, what more could the apostle say to change his readers’ wills? In this situation, he simply turned them over to divine convictions (“GOD WILL REVEAL THAT ALSO TO YOU”). The

means of illumination would be the teaching of the Holy Spirit, the observation of the growth of mature believers in grace, and the rod of chastisement.

SAME WALK (3:16)

God has only one way of salvation, and he likewise has only one means of salvation. Both Jews and Gentiles alike are saved by faith alone in Christ alone, and they become holy by total submission to the Holy Spirit who produces His fruit through them (Galatians 5:16, 22-23). The standard of the Christian walk is here described as “BY THE SAME RULE.”

The two verbs argue for constant obedience to Paul’s directions. First, he wanted the Philippians to walk according to the same principles he had just discussed. A Spirit-controlled walk is void of dissention and jealousy; rather, it is marked by love and concern for others (Galatians 5:22-6:5). Second, Paul desired them to be of the same mind (2:2). There can be no joy if there is static immaturity and selfish competition within the bounds of legalism.

OUR CITIZENSHIP IN HEAVEN: (3:17-19)

THE STANDARD OF ORTHODOXY (3:17)

Apostasy is a departure from a moral and doctrinal standard. Paul established himself as the spiritual yardstick by which the apostate legalists were to be measured.

PAUL

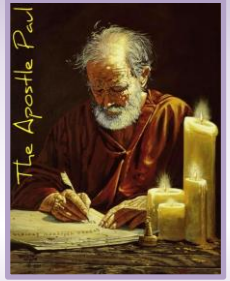
With all humility, the apostle could confidently exhort, “JOIN IN FOLLOWING MY EXAMPLE.” He wanted the Philippians to become what he was. He knew that God had done great things in his life, that his theology and practice were sound, and that the Philippians needed an objective, visible, human goal. Paul could make this declaration with all authority because he knew he was following Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1).

OTHERS

The charge “NOTE” calls for careful scrutiny. Paul wanted them to follow such men as Timothy and

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Epaphroditus, the godly bishops and deacons in their assembly (1:1), and dedicated men and women within the congregation. Paul offered his associates and himself as a pattern by which others should be tested. The Greek word for “**PATTERN**” is normally translated “type”, the impression of stamp made by an industrial die. It was used of the nail prints in Christ’s hands (John 20:25). Paul and his associates thus became a mold into which the lives of others could be poured.

THE VIOLATION OF ORTHODOXY (3:18-19)

Imitation and vigilance were needed because many false teachers were present. Whenever Paul was in their church, he told them about the imminent invasion of heretics (“**OF WHOM I OFTEN TOLD YOU**”). Paul then describes this unscrupulous group of false teachers in **five (5)** ways.

(1) Enemies of the cross of Christ

They manifested their hostility to the redemptive message of Christ’s death and resurrection by insisting that faith alone in Christ alone is not sufficient to save. They expressed faith in the person of Christ but not in his finished work.

(2) Their end is destruction.

These legalists are lost and destined for perdition. The “end” refers to the conclusion of the acceptance of the legalistic message. When persons who have embraced legalism die, they go to Hades to await the final resurrection, the Great White Throne Judgement, and consignment to the eternal lake of fire.

(3) Their god is their belly.

These false teachers were in the ministry for what they could get out of it. Both Paul and Peter warned against greedy elders (1 Timothy 6:3-10; 1 Peter 5:2). Their belly became their god in that they served their worldly appetites (Romans 16:18).

(4) They glory in their shame.

The false teachers gloried in things of which they should have been ashamed. They boasted in the flesh, in the physical rite of circumcision, and in the legalistic efforts of self.

(5) They mind earthly things.

The Judaizers attempted to spoil the church by human traditions and worldly religious concepts (Colossians 2:8). This legalistic conformity replaced grace and faith as the basis for justification and sanctification.

GLORIFICATION OF BELIEVERS: (3:20-21)

Legalism may tell people how to live, but it cannot prepare them for death. Since it is based on self-effort, it is powerless to raise people out of death. It is at this very point that the insufficiency of legalism is laid bare. In contrast, believing sinners have put their trust in Christ, who conquered death and hell through His resurrection. Christians can look forward to new bodies that will be both immortal and incorruptible.

OUR CITIZENSHIP IS IN HEAVEN (3:20)

Our citizenship literally is “**IN THE HEAVENS.**” In a general sense, the Philippians were heavenly citizens, but specifically their residency was the Holy City (Revelation 21:2, 10). People of faith, like Abraham, have looked for this city built by God (Hebrews 11:10). Jesus Christ has prepared rooms for believers within this city (John 14:2-3; Hebrews 11:16).

OUR CHANGE WILL COME FROM CHRIST (3:21)

The present nature of the human body is suited to temporal life on this planet. This must therefore be changed before it can function properly in the eternal state (1 Corinthians 15:50). This change can occur in one of two ways. **(1)** The bodies of believers alive at the time of the rapture of the church will be glorified (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). **(2)** The bodies of believers who die before Christ’s coming and the Rapture will be raised from the dead and be made immortal and incorruptible (1 Corinthians 15:51-57).

The divine power that enabled Christ to conquer death through His resurrection and that will enable Him to force all of His enemies into total submission is the same power that will change the bodies of believers.