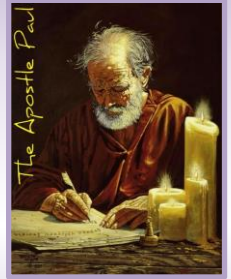


PHILIPPIANS

Joy In Christ

Lesson 05: Challenge to the Church ... [PHILIPPIANS 1:27-2:4]



PREVIEW

Paul urges the Philippians to remain firm in one spirit and to strive for the faith of the gospel. He reminds them that they were called to believe and suffer for Christ and to experience the conflict that comes in regard to the truth. He calls on the Philippians to remain united, avoid selfishness and empty conceit, and maintain humility of mind.

CONDUCT WORTHY: (1:27-30)

DEFINITION OF A CITIZEN (27A)

THE BELIEVER IS A CITIZEN OF HEAVEN.

The exhortation “**LET YOUR CONDUCT**” is better translated: “Behave constantly as citizens.” The Philippians understood this term well because they were free Roman citizens possessing all the rights and privileges of being a Roman (Acts 22:28). In his defense before the Jerusalem council, Paul used this term of himself (Acts 23:1). All believers have heavenly citizenship (3:20).

THE BELIEVER MUST BE A WORTHY CITIZEN.

Paul elsewhere encouraged believers to walk worthy of the divine calling (Ephesians 4:1), and worthy of their God (1 Thessalonians 2:12), and to please God in all respects (Colossians 1:10).

THE BELIEVER MUST REPRESENT THE GOSPEL.

The behavior of a heavenly citizen must be worthy of “**THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST**.” All Christians are Christ’s ambassadors to bring the good news of Christ’s divine reconciliation to a lost and hostile world (2 Cor. 5:20).

THE BELIEVER MUST BE A DEVOTED CITIZEN.

A good citizen will behave properly with or without supervision. Therefore, Paul’s presence (“**WHETHER I COME AND SEE YOU**”) or absence (“**OR AM ABSENT**”) should have nothing to do with the way the Philippians live.

GOALS OF CITIZENSHIP (27B-30)

The aim of heavenly citizenship is steadfast living on earth. The verb “**STAND FAST**” indicates that the Philippians were the true church (1 Corinthians 12:13) and

were to maintain their stand throughout their earthly residency. Paul provides five characteristics of the God-pleasing stand.

1. **STAND IN UNITY.** The Philippians were to stand “**IN ONE SPIRIT**”. The “**SPIRIT**” refers to the Holy Spirit. There can be no unity within the brethren apart from the sovereign control of the Spirit. All believers have been baptized in that one Spirit into the body of Christ, the true church, and they have drunk by faith of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:12-14). They are indwelt by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19-20), and they have access by Him unto the Father (Ephesians 2:18). They must endeavor “**TO PRESERVE THE UNITY OF THE SPIRIT IN THE BOND OF PEACE**” (Ephesians 4:3). That unity is marked by one body, one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of all (Ephesians 4:3-6).

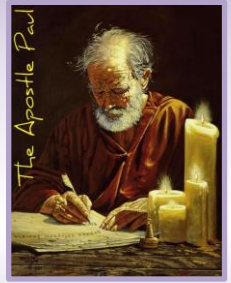
2. **STAND IN SINGLE PURPOSE.** Paul gives **THREE** marks of this stance. **FIRST**, they needed to be of “**ONE MIND**.” **SECOND**, they needed to strive together, to cooperate as teammates. **THIRD**, their goal was “**FOR THE FAITH OF THE GOSPEL**.” The phrase “the faith” points to the specific body of spiritual truth the local church must preserve and propagate (1 Timothy 3:15). The entire phrase “**THE FAITH OF THE GOSPEL**” points to all the truth necessary to be understood and believed for salvation.

3. **STAND WITHOUT FEAR.** The manner of the Philippians’ stand was to be without fear (“**IN ANY WAY TERRIFIED BY YOUR ADVERSARIES**”). Inner fear is usually caused by an outside stimulus. A believer is in the kingdom of God but also lives among the kingdoms of the world that are ruled by Satan (Luke 4:5-6). The “**ADVERSARIES**” included the Judaizers, the self-righteous legalist who had invaded the church (3:2), pagan idolaters, the evil world system, Satan, and demonic spirits.

4. **STAND IN SUFFERING.** Persecution by the world affords believers the blessings of being able to suffer for the sake of Christ and for divine righteousness (Matt. 5:10-12). Such opposition should not be viewed as a

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punishment but as a gift (**"FOR TO YOU IT HAS BEEN GRANTED FOR CHRIST'S SAKE"**).

5. **STAND WITH PAUL.** The church was experiencing **"THE SAME CONFLICT"** they saw in Paul. All believers are engaged in spiritual conflict with the demonic forces of Satan (Ephesians 6:11-12). To stand, they must put on the defensive armor of God (Ephesians 6:10-18).

UNITY THROUGH HUMILITY: (2:1-4)

CONDITIONS FOR JOY (2:1)

Joy is based on attitudes and relationships. He set forth four ground rules for joy.

1. ENCOURAGEMENT IN CHRIST.

The word **"CONSOLATION"** can refer either to an **EXHORTATION** or to the **COMFORT** produced by that appeal. As **COMFORT**, it is both an attribute of God and a gift from Him (John 14:16; 2 Corinthians 1:3-4). As **EXHORTATION**, it becomes the basis of appeal for Paul. There can be no real joy when disputing believers fail to obey Christ's command to be one (John 17:21).

2. COMFORT OF LOVE.

The **"COMFORT OF LOVE"** will produce joy and unity when believers love Christ as they should and when they love one another as Christ has loved them (John 13:34-35). The term **"CONSOLATION"** conveys the idea of persuasive address, incentive, or stimulus. Acting out of love, believers should encourage other with their words of comfort, their friendship, and their deeds of mercy.

3. FELLOWSHIP OF THE SPIRIT.

All believers share in this communion. The Holy Spirit dwells in each of them, and He joins them all within the one body of Christ. Genuine submission to Him will produce the 9-fold fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23).

4. COMPASSION.

The two sides of brotherly compassion are seen in the phrase **"AFFECTION AND MERCY"**. The term **"AFFECTION"** refers to the seat of human emotions. The concept of **"MERCY"** points to outward deeds of mercy caused by inner concern. **MERCY** is the opposite of indifference.

Where there is no compassion, there can be neither love nor joy (1 John 3:16-18).

NATURE OF JOY (2:2-4)

Paul admonishes the church to increase his joy. Three of joy's essential qualities are expressed in this passage.

1. UNITY (2:2).

Four descriptions of unity are given. **FIRST**, believers are to be **"LIKE MINDED."** The phrase literally reads, **"THAT YOU KEEP ON THINKING THE SAME THING"**. **SECOND**, the believers needed to have **"THE SAME LOVE."** They must love whom and what God loves. They must love each other with the same love. **THIRD**, believers are to be **"UNITED IN SPIRIT."** This phrase literally means **"JOINT SOULS"**. **FOURTH**, believers must be **"INTENT ON ONE PURPOSE."** Literally, this translates, **"THINKING CONSTANTLY THE ONE THING"**.

2. HUMILITY (2:3).

Humility has both a **NEGATIVE** and a **POSITIVE** quality. **NEGATIVELY**, believers should not possess a selfish, competitive spirit. The opening words read, **"LET NOTHING BE DONE THROUGH SELFISH AMBITION OR CONCEIT"**.

POSITIVELY, believers should have a high opinion of others. This does not mean that Christians should have poor self-image; rather, they should try to lift others up without exalting themselves. They must have a servant mind, humbling themselves in order to serve others. They must not think of themselves more highly than they ought to think (Romans 12:3). They should recognize that they are what they are by the grace of God (1 Corinthians 15:10).

3. CONCERN FOR OTHERS (2:4).

The verb **"LOOK"** is the basis of the English word **"SCOPE"**. It means to keep one's eye constantly focused on an object. Believers should not merely look out for their **"OWN INTERESTS."** Believers should ask "What are the needs of my brother/sister?" "What can I do to help them?" "We should please others for their edification (Romans 15:1-2).