

PHILIPPIANS

LESSON FIVE JOY IN UNITY (1:27-30)

Overview

- I. The Context
 - A. Paul is in prison for preaching the Gospel of Christ
 - B. He has kept in touch with the church at Philippi (2:25-26)
 - C. He has learned of certain dangers facing this faithful congregation
 - D. One such danger was division (1:27; 2:1-4, 14; 4:1-2)

- II. Personal Responsibility
 - A. Their love for and attachment to Paul was good.
 - B. However, they had the responsibility to serve God faithfully whether Paul returned to them or not.
 - C. Living the Christian life is an individual responsibility.
 - D. Working together in unity is an individual responsibility.
 - E. Conquering fear with faith is an individual responsibility.
 - F. Enduring persecution with joy is an individual responsibility.

- III. Mutual Benefit
 - A. Though each Christian is responsible for his or her own faithfulness, there are mutual considerations that affect all.
 - B. Individual Christians must stand together in unity.
 - C. Individual Christians must strive together in work.
 - D. Individual Christians must persevere together in faith.
 - E. When there is unity, the individual Christian and the entire congregation will benefit.

1:27 **Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel**

- A. The conversation of a Christian is intimately related to the Gospel.
 1. The phrase "let your conversation be" comes from one word in the Greek.
 2. The root is the word *polites*, meaning "citizen" or "townsman."
 3. The word in this verse means "to behave as a citizen" or "to conduct one's self as pledged to some law of life."
 4. The Romans understood and valued citizenship.
 5. As citizens of the world, Christians are to live in a way that is worthy of the Gospel of Christ (cf. Acts 23:1).

6. In reality, the Christian's citizenship is in Heaven (3:20), and we should conduct ourselves accordingly.
- B. This instruction from Paul was true, whether or not he was able to return to Philippi.
 1. Certainly, they rejoiced at Paul's confidence that he would see them again (1:25-26).
 2. However, their faithfulness must not be viewed as depending upon Paul or his presence.
- C. Paul's desire was for them stand and work in unity.
 1. "Stand fast" means "to persevere, to persist; to be stationary, not to be moved."
 2. It is the idea of holding one's ground against enemies.
 3. But, that did not mean they were to be inactive.
 4. Instead, they were to "strive together" – literally, "wrestle in company with, strive at the same time with another." (4:3)
 5. The root of this Greek word is *athleo*, from which we get our word "athlete."
 6. In other words, they were to stand and fight together as a team.
 7. Yet, their struggle was for the faith of the Gospel – they were soldiers for Truth.
- D. This unity is essential to the success of the Lord's church (Psalm 133:1; Mark 3:24-25; John 17:20-23; 1 Cor. 1:10; Eph. 4:4-6).

1:28 **And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God**

- A. As they labored together in unity, they were not to be afraid of their opponents.
 1. The word for terrified was used of a startled horse who would run off course during a race.
 2. They were not to let fear drive them off course.
- B. Their bold conduct would become an "evident token" to the world.
 1. This word means "indication, proof, demonstration." (Cf. Romans 3:25-26; 2 Corinthians 8:24)
 2. Literally, it means "a pointing out" and was used in the Law of that day for a writ of indictment.
- C. The Christian's lack of fear was proof to his enemies of their own loss and defeat.
- D. But, to the faithful, it was proof of salvation – given by God.
 1. Lightfoot sees a comparison here to the gladiator games.
 2. Life or death for the gladiator was determined by a "thumbs up" or "thumbs down" vote.
 3. The Christian has received the sure token of salvation – the "thumbs up" from God Himself.

1:29 **For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake**

- A. The Philippians had been given two wonderful gifts.
 1. The opportunity to believe on Jesus
 2. The opportunity to suffer for His sake (in His behalf)

- B. Paul was able to find joy in life because he understood that suffering for the sake of Christ was a gift.
 - 1. Vincent wrote: "Suffering was the marriage-gift when they were espoused to Christ."
 - 2. It is not just suffering in general that is so precious.
 - 3. Rather, it is being able to suffer for the sake of Jesus (Acts 5:39-41; 1 Peter 4:13, 16; 2 Thes. 1:5; 2 Tim. 3:12).

1:30 **Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me**

- A. Their suffering was not only for Christ, but it was in imitation of both Jesus and Paul (Acts 3:18; Romans 8:17; Galatians 5:11; 6:12).
- B. The Philippians had seen Paul's suffering firsthand (Acts 16:22-24; 1 Thessalonians 2:2).
- C. They had also learned of Paul's present suffering in prison.
- D. Paul's point was that their suffering for the faith was not unique; rather it was just a part of living the Christian life.