

PAUL'S RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE PHILIPPIANS

BIBLE TEXT : Philippians 1:1-7, 27-30; 2:1-30

LESSON 405 **Senior Course**

MEMORY VERSE: "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves" (Philippians 2:3).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Philippians 1:1-7

¹ Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:

² Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and *from* the Lord Jesus Christ.

³ I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,

⁴ Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy,

⁵ For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now;

⁶ Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform *it* until the day of Jesus Christ:

⁷ Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace.

Philippians 1:27-30

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;

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.

²⁹ For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to

BIBLE REFERENCES:

I Words of Affection

1. Paul addresses the Philippian believers and gives thanks for their fellowship, Philippians 1:1-5.
2. He has confidence that the work of Christ will abound through them, Philippians 1:6, 7.

II Steadfastness Enjoined

1. He encourages them to live consistent Christian lives, Philippians 1:27;

1 Timothy 4:12

¹² Let no man despise thy youth; but be thou an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity.

2. The victorious Christian walk is their joy and not the burden their adversaries would suppose, Philippians 1:28-30.

III Love, Unity and Humility

1. Paul's joy was that these Christians live in harmony and unity, Philippians 2:1-4;

Ephesians 4:1-3

¹ I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

² With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;

³ Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

2. They are to have the mind of Christ and walk humbly, as Christ did, Philippians 2:5-8.
3. Because of humility and obedience, God has exalted Christ, and will cause every one to worship Him to the glory of God the Father, Philippians 2:9-11.

IV Obedient Christians As Lights

1. God works out His pleasure and salvation in the faithful, obedient Christian, Philippians 2:12, 13.
2. The Christian's living testimony shines as a light in a darkened world, Philippians 2:14-18;

Ephesians 5:8

⁸ For ye were sometimes darkness, but now *are ye* light in the Lord: walk as children of light:

1 Thessalonians 5:5

⁵ Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.

V Messengers

1. Timothy is faithful, but others seek their own welfare, Philippians 2:19-24; 2:4;

1 Corinthians 10:24

²⁴ Let no man seek his own, but every man another's *wealth*..

2. Epaphroditus, a faithful fellow-soldier, was sick but God spared him, Philippians 2:25-28.
3. He is to be received with gladness as one who has given his all for the course of Christ, Philippians 2:29, 30.

believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;

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

Philippians 2:1-30

¹ If *there be* therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies,

² Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind.

³ *Let* nothing *be done* through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

⁴ Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

⁵ Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

⁶ Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

⁷ But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

⁸ And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

⁹ Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:

¹⁰ That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of *things* in heaven, and *things* in earth, and *things* under the earth;

¹¹ And *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

¹² Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

NOTES:

Paul's concern for and his exhortations to this Philippian church spring from a heart of concern just as a father has for his children. This church had its beginning in the conversion of Lydia, the seller of purple. Paul had a vision in the night of a man of Macedonia saying, "Come over into Macedonia, and help us." He believed this was of the Lord, and immediately left Troas to go into Macedonia where Lydia became Europe's first convert to Christianity and the beginning of the church there (**Acts 16:9-15**

⁹ And a vision appeared to Paul in the night; There stood a man of Macedonia, and prayed him, saying, Come over into Macedonia, and help us. ¹⁰ And after he had seen the vision, immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia, assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us for to preach the gospel unto them. ¹¹

Therefore loosing from Troas, we came with a straight course to Samothracia, and the next *day* to Neapolis; ¹² And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, *and* a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days. ¹³ And on the sabbath we went out of the city by a river side, where prayer was wont to be made; and we sat down, and spake unto the women which resorted *thither*. ¹⁴ And a certain woman named Lydia, a seller of purple, of the city of Thyatira, which worshipped God, heard *us*: whose heart the Lord opened, that she attended unto the things which were spoken of Paul. ¹⁵ And when she was baptized, and her household, she besought *us*, saying, If ye have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house, and abide *there*. And she constrained *us*.) The young woman with the spirit of divination was soon healed and converted, as was the Philippian jailer and his family. No doubt these few people made up the nucleus of this body of believers. This epistle was written from Rome while Paul was imprisoned there.

Salutation

Paul salutes the saints in Philippi, as well as the bishops and deacons, indicating that the church there was well organised and prosperous. Every time his thoughts turned to them he rejoiced because of the work God had done among them. He had confidence that God would finish the work that he had started. His prayers could be prayers of thanksgiving and praise because of the fellowship he enjoyed with the saints at Philippi. True fellowship in the Gospel is not based on persons being at the same place at the same time, but it is a spiritual relationship. The people who are one with God and obey His Word has fellowship with God and with God's people.

Steadfastness

Paul's advice to the Philippian Christians was that their conversation, or their conduct, be a credit to the Gospel of Christ. He knew that some men would profess to be Christians whose lives would prove otherwise. He did not want them to depend upon his presence, but whether he was present or absent they would be living testimonies to the keeping power there is in the Gospel. It has been true down through the ages that some have followed God quite faithfully when they had strong spiritual leaders over them, but when the leaders were gone their faith faltered. God wants us to stand even if we stand alone. There may come a time in our lives when we will be far away from the best of Christian influence, but may it be said of us also that we stand fast in the faith.

The very fact that the Christian does not retaliate under persecution may seem an indication of weakness to the adversaries of the Gospel. But to stand still and see God work for us is the victory. Even in times of persecution or trial our part is not to fight back but to remember that the Word says: "And shall

¹³ For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure.

¹⁴ Do all things without murmurings and disputings:

¹⁵ That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;

¹⁶ Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.

¹⁷ Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.

¹⁸ For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me.

¹⁹ But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state.

²⁰ For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state.

²¹ For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.

²² But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel.

²³ Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me.

²⁴ But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly.

²⁵ Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants.

²⁶ For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick.

²⁷ For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on him; and not on him only, but on

not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you that he will avenge them speedily" (Luke 18:7, 8). We read in the text that suffering for His sake is as much a part of the Gospel as believing on Him. Paul knew whereof he spoke, for he had suffered many things and even then was a prisoner in Rome.

Unity

The Christian's warfare is fought on a different plane from what the natural man would think. In the estimation of the worldly person, humility would not win many battles. In the business world of everyday commerce, man is expected to radiate self-confidence and his own ability. Paul's purpose was not to teach lessons in daily commerce but a far more important lesson of dwelling together in unity in the fellowship of the Spirit. The lessons he taught them we take for our lessons today and apply them to our fellowship in our church. Even at the hazard of having the worldly-wise out-bargain us, we must live soberly, righteously and godly in this present world. Strife or vainglory has no place in the Christian, but he is to esteem his brother better than himself. He is to be concerned about his brother, and not to be always arranging things to his own advantage. His brother's gain and welfare is of great importance to him.

Mind of Christ

Christ is our example. He left all in Heaven and made Himself of no reputation, came to earth, and lived and died that we might have life. We are to follow by applying all that we have to the furthering of the Gospel that men may be saved. Our reputation, our chance for fame or fortune, we must gladly set aside that we might be used of God in reaching the lost. The one who is hungry for God will see in the humble servant of the Cross the beauty of Jesus and will be attracted to Him by the Spirit of God. The man who has no thought of God nor concern for his own soul may count the Christian as the off-scouring of the earth, but such was the fate of the Apostles. Whether men hear or forbear the instructions, the Word of God is the Christian's chart and compass by which he lives and which guides him to eternity.

Christ Exalted

God has exalted His Son and given Him a name above every name. Isaiah the Prophet spoke of that wonderful Name when he said: "For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The might God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace" (Isaiah 9:6). Every name that can be applied to God, as Deity, can also be applied to His Son Jesus. He was with the Father in the creation and we read: "All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made" (John 1:3).

Every knee will bow to Jesus some day. They who bow to Him now and let Him receive them and be their Saviour obtain His salvation. But there is coming a time when all who have failed to bow will yet have to do so to the glory of God but it will be after all hope of salvation has passed. To honour the Son and to worship Him is to honour God; and to refuse to honour Him is to dishonour the Father also.

The tendency in many circles seems to be to downgrade Jesus the Son of God. Some deny His divinity, and in doing so they deny themselves any hope of eternal salvation. "There is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). Jesus Christ was no impostor. He declared Himself to be the resurrection and the life. Our hope of

me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.

²⁸ I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful.

²⁹ Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation:

³⁰ Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.

QUESTIONS

1. What was Paul's feeling when he remembered the Philippians?
2. What did he say their conversation (conduct) was to be?
3. What mind did he want them to have?
4. What did he say that Christ had done for them?
5. What did he say about bowing to Christ?
6. How were they to live that they might be lights in the world?
7. Whom did Paul propose to send unto them?
8. What did he say about the supply of Gospel workers in that day?
9. Why had Ephaphroditus been full of heaviness?
10. How had Timothy served with Paul in the Gospel?

salvation rests upon His divinity and upon the truth of God's Word. If one allows himself to entertain a doubt about any part of the Bible he may soon lose all faith he has in any part of it. The King James Version of the Bible is the best translation that has been offered to the English-speaking world and is still our best hope of finding our way from earth to Glory. The Revised Standard Version of the Bible was edited by men, most of whom entertain doubts as to the divinity of Jesus; and we know that such doubts would not lead one toward Heaven, but would close the door forever in his face. Jesus is the Door, and if we cannot find Him, what hope would there be of our salvation? The very same persons who today deny the virgin birth of Jesus or His divinity will one day bow their knees and confess Him, but that will come too late for salvation. Today is the day of salvation, and now is the accepted time.

Christians As Lights

The Apostle says, "**Do** all things without murmurings and disputings." This would indicate that the Christian is to be a person of action; he is to do things — not that he stirs up or looks for controversy, but he stands for the truth. To remain inactive or to fail to let his light shine to avoid opposition would be cowardly compromise. The more vile and sinful the surroundings, the more dire the need for the light. By obeying the injunctions of this lesson we will be lights that penetrate the darkness around us and we will "be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world." If we had to shut ourselves behind some great wall to keep from being polluted with the sins of this world, what hope would the world have of seeing the light of the Gospel through us? Rather, Jesus has left us to occupy until he comes back to earth again. He has gone to Heaven and we are left here to shine for Him. When He was here he declared Himself to be the Light of the world, and now that He is at the right hand of the Father we are His lights shining in this world.

Many people have ruined their testimony and even lost their soul after having been used of the Lord. They did not keep themselves in the love of God nor did they obey His Word. They murmured, they complained, they disputed in direct violation of what the Lord has told them to do. We are free moral agents and have the power of choice all the days of our lives. If we choose to obey the Lord He will make us to shine more and more unto that perfect day.

Messengers Sent

Paul, being imprisoned in Rome, was unable to visit these Christians whom he loved so dearly. He sent Timothy and Epaphroditus. They had proved their worth and faithfulness. They helped Paul bear the burden of the Gospel work in those days. Even at that early date Paul said that he had no other who stood with him, for all "seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's." What a responsibility rests upon Christians to stand true to the Lord and be faithful! If men fail, God has no other plan. May the reader, if he is a Christian, take the exhortation to heart to be able to shine as a light in this world. And to the unsaved, may these wonderful words of the Apostle Paul cause a hunger to spring up in your heart. "Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6).