

STUDY GUIDE

PLEASANT RIDGE BAPTIST CHURCH
PHILIPPIANS: CITIZENS OF HEAVEN LIVING ON EARTH
WALK WORTHY
PHILIPPIANS 1:27-2:4
09/24/2017



MAIN POINT

Living out the gospel in our daily lives and in our relationships with other believers opens doors for believers to spread the gospel.

INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

What is the most demanding task you have ever attempted? Why was it important for you to complete that task?

Do you think people view living the Christian life as a difficult task? Explain.

Many are curious about Christianity, eager to see how being a Christ follower makes a difference. Fortunately, the grace of God shown to believers, and the Spirit of God living in believers, truly ushers in significant change in Jesus' followers. Not perfectly so, but definitively so. The call to live according to the gospel to a watching and unbelieving world is not new, as our passage today illustrates. The believers in Philippi were facing opposition and Paul urged them to stand together as one as they lived out their faith for all to see, especially their opponents.

UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ PHILIPPIANS 1:27.

What characteristics would you identify as evidences that a person or group is walking in a way that is worthy of Christ's gospel?

How are the phrases "stand firm" and "stand side by side" related to walking worthy? Are these qualities or behaviors that you associate with a worthy walk with Jesus? Explain.

How do our leaders hold us accountable today? What makes it so important for believers to be reminded that they are accountable for how they live as individuals and as a group?

Paul called on the Philippian believers to live out the gospel as individuals and as a church. When a group of believers

consistently live out the gospel, they impact their larger community. Believers are to live lives that are different from those who reject Christ. In doing so, believers demonstrate the worthiness of Christ.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ PHILIPPIANS 1:28-30.

How can we word Paul's directive in verse 28 in a positive way? What role does confidence in Christ play in facing opposition?

How does adversity serve to encourage believers?

How does expressing confidence in Christ serve as a sign of destruction to those who oppose Christ?

Paul called on the believers to boldly declare their confidence in Christ when facing opposition to the gospel. Paul assured believers that they would face opposition in some way, just as he was imprisoned by some who opposed him. We can stand with confidence knowing that our salvation is an invaluable gift of God's grace that is greater than any opposition faced.

ASK A VOLUNTEER TO READ PHILIPPIANS 2:1-4.

How do the actions Paul identified build unity with other believers? How do the actions Paul told his readers to avoid work against unity?

In what ways do uniformity and unity differ? How can one tell the difference between uniformity and unity?

Paul called on the Philippian believers to give priority to their unity. Our behavior and attitude toward other believers demonstrates this priority and our understanding of God's grace in our lives. We must be aware of how our behaviors and actions build or destroy unity with other believers for the sake of the gospel.

APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What in your life needs to change to more clearly demonstrate Christ to others? Who can hold you accountable for living the Christian life in a worthy way?

What opposition are you facing for your belief in Christ? How can you stand with confidence, representing Christ to those who oppose Him?

How are you contributing to your church's unity? In what additional ways can you build unity within your church and with other believers?

PRAY

Thank the Lord for providing you salvation through the sacrificial death of His Son. Ask Him to help you live a worthy life, standing with confidence and unity for the sake of His gospel.

COMMENTARY

PHILIPPIANS 1:27-30

Paul wanted his friends to demonstrate exemplary Christian conduct (v. 27). For Paul, the matter of believers' deportment as Christ's followers was of utmost importance. The phrase let your manner of life carries the idea of behaving as a good citizen, of living according to a government's laws. In a broader sense, it refers to conduct in general. As citizens of God's kingdom, the Philippian Christians' daily conduct was to evidence the gospel; they were to incarnate the good news of Christ. If Paul were able to visit his friends soon or if he were delayed, he wanted them to remain steadfast and unified as Christ's followers. The Greek term rendered standing firm has the sense of persevering or enduring. The phrase in one spirit could refer to a shared attitude or disposition or to the Holy Spirit. If Paul intended the latter, the Spirit would be the sphere in which believers maintained their faithfulness.

The Philippian Christians were to persevere with one mind (literally, "soul"). That is, they were to be unified in their loyalty to Christ, their grasp of what was involved in living for Him, and their purpose as a church. The Greek word translated striving side by side was an athletic term that conveyed the sense of strenuous teamwork toward a common goal. Paul's use of the term may have been a subtle reminder that believers were not to contend with one another but were to be unified in presenting the gospel. The words for the faith of the gospel could refer to the gospel's content the believers were to teach or to the act of proclaiming the gospel.

Paul knew that the small pocket of Christians in Philippi faced ongoing opposition. He exhorted them not to be frightened by their opponents (v. 28). The word frightened literally described a horse's being startled and bolting in terror. It carried overtones of panic or dismay. Paul did not want believers to recoil in fear as they faced harassment. With the word this, Paul likely referred to believers' courageous refusal to allow their opponents to intimidate them. Christians' perseverance would give a sign (proof) of the opponents' ultimate destruction (eternal ruin) and of Christians' ultimate deliverance—their salvation's completion or fulfillment. The phrase and that from God most likely is a reference to God's sovereignty in pronouncing ultimate judgment on the gospel's opponents and bringing believers' salvation to completion. Paul viewed suffering on Christ's behalf to be a grace gift (v. 29). The opportunity and capacity to believe in Christ issued from God's grace. Accepting God's grace gift carried with it the privilege of enduring hardship and opposition because of their faithfulness to Christ. Note carefully that suffering per se is not a privilege; the key words are for Him (Christ).

Opposition should not have surprised the Philippian believers. When Paul planted the gospel in Philippi, he experienced persecution (see Acts 16:16-24). As believers there continued to advance the gospel, they could expect no less. They were engaged in the same struggle Paul waged. The Greek word translated conflict is the basis of our English word agony. It described intense exertion in athletics and gladiatorial combat. The Philippian Christians had seen the conflict Paul endured. He and they shared the common experience of suffering for Christ. Such suffering was not payment for salvation but arose in the course of their loyal service in the gospel (v. 30).

Max Anders, Galatians-Colossians, vol. 8, *Holman New Testament Commentary*

1:27–28. God was in control of the situation. Paul could be released from prison or killed by the Romans. Just as he wanted to maintain his testimony for Christ, he longed for the Philippians to remain faithful, too. They would show faithfulness by living a life worthy of the gospel of Christ. Such a life would not just be legalistic, obeying moral laws. It would show forth the spirit and love of Christ in every human relationship. Paul had faced opposition to his efforts for the cause of Christ without fear. He exhorted the Philippians to do the same even as they faced opposition. They could do so but only if they did so together. The world must see a united front defending and proclaiming the gospel. No longer would divided motives of love and selfishness do. The church must face the world in one spirit. A fearless, unified church will astound the world. They will see the truth of the gospel. Opposing the gospel, the world faces God's destruction. Proclaiming the gospel, the church waits for God's salvation.

1:29–30. Adversity is a part of the Christian life and should come as no surprise. Those that follow Christ should expect opposition. Believers have two privileges: to believe on him and to suffer for him. Both are an integral part of Christian living. The apostle had faced opposition on many occasions throughout his ministry. The Philippians had to face the same struggle and wanted to know how Paul had coped with these difficulties. He encouraged them to face their adversity in the way that he had, in Christ with joy.

PHILIPPIANS 2:1-4

Paul built his challenge for unity on the reality of Christ within each believer. The phrase encouragement in Christ refers to encouragement that comes from Christian commitment. That Christ lived in the Philippians' hearts was indeed a great blessing for them. The term comfort from love refers to Christ's love for them. Believers are the eternal recipients of God's tender affection not because they deserve love, but because it is God's nature to love. The participation in the

Spirit emphasizes the shared nature of the Christian life. The presence of the Holy Spirit makes possible the proper functioning of the body of Christ. With the expression affection and sympathy, Paul pointed to the mercies the Lord had given the believers at Philippi. The Holy Spirit provided rich fellowship among them (v. 1).

In verse 2 Paul shifted from the spiritual blessings the believers enjoyed together to their responsibility to him. The Philippian believers had a heartfelt concern for Paul. He planted the church at Philippi. They watched as he invested his life in their lives. Now he called them to continue what they started.

In contrast to his positive instructions, Paul also detailed for the Philippians what attitudes to avoid in pursuing unity. The word nothing (v. 3) emphasized Paul's conviction that rivalry or conceit should not taint any aspect of the church's life. The term rivalry implies a selfish ambition that causes disputes and divisions. The sense is that the problems facing the Philippians caused members to choose sides. Paul saw schisms in the church as contrary to the testimony of Christ and dishonoring to God's name. Also the word conceit describes what is vainglorious or groundless pride. The cornerstone of Christian faith is that humans are powerless to save themselves and must trust Christ to provide all that is necessary for salvation. Thus the believer has no basis for arrogance toward others. Furthermore, arrogance strikes at the heart of Christian unity, spoiling the testimony of the faithful.

To avoid such a destructive mind-set, Paul directed the believers to consider fellow Christians and their needs as more important than their own interests and concerns (v. 4). The church's antidote for selfishness and divisions is an abiding concern for the welfare of others. Paul called the believers to take careful note of the concerns others hold. Such willing consideration of others erases the gaps between individuals and builds a strong unity.

Max Anders - Galatians-Colossians, vol. 8, *Holman New Testament Commentary*

2:1. In chapter 1, Paul speaks of his joy in prayer and joy in adversity as a Christian serving his God. He could rejoice in almost any circumstance. The key to this joy is a relationship with Christ. In chapter 2, Paul explains how joy comes through another aspect of the believer's life—humility toward others. He begins his appeal for humility by referring to the Philippians' experience. Because they are united with Christ, believers are members of his body. We have special bonds to one another due to our relationship with Christ. Our attitudes toward one another are important. The reality of our oneness in Christ is based on being encouraged by:

1. comfort from his love
2. fellowship with the Spirit
3. tenderness and compassion

2:2. Paul instructs his readers to make my joy complete in practical responses with the following outlook toward one another:

1. being like-minded
2. having the same love
3. being one in spirit and purpose

These sentiments are viewed by Paul as being normal for Christians. Being united in Christ, believers work together for the same purposes rather than seeking areas of disagreement and division.

2:3. After revealing the positive way for believers to behave toward one another, Paul gives negatives to avoid. Unity in love means selfish ambition and vain conceit have no place in the Christian life. Such characteristics rise from pride, not from love. Instead, humility is to characterize the Christian. We are not to exalt ourselves above others.

You are probably thinking that this is easier said than done. Yet, Jesus, himself, said: "A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. All men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:34–35). Biblical love is selfless. The opposite of this kind of love is selfishness. Humility does not mean putting ourselves down but rather lifting others up.

2:4. Looking out for our own interests comes naturally. We need, and receive, no instruction for that. We are instructed to look out for the interests of others. We are to keep an eye out to discover ways we can help others even when they do not see they need such help. The apostle stated in Galatians 6:2: "Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ."