

CHURCH LIFE
PHILIPPIANS 1:27-30

So far in Chapter 1 we have seen Paul write about the what we as Christians share or have in common:

A COMMON BIRTH...Born again into the Family of God!

A COMMON BLESSING...Grace and Peace

A COMMON BURDEN...Burden of Prayer, Praise, and Partnership!

We have also seen in verse 6 how that GOD IS AT WORK in the life of every believer:

IT IS GOD'S WORK...God began, continues, and completes the work!

IT IS A GOOD WORK...God makes us new!

IT IS A GOAL-ORIENTED WORK...Conform us to Christ's image!

IT IS A GUARANTEED WORK!...God will finish what He started!

Then last week we saw six essentials to living a joyful life!

We Need To View And Live Our Lives From The Lord's Perspective!

We Need To Live Our Lives With The Lord's Priorities!

We Need The Prayers Of Fellow Believers In Our Lives!

We Need To Access The Lord's Power In Our Lives!

We Need To Live Our Lives With God's Hope!

We Need To Both Find And Live Out God's Purpose For Our Lives!

Now Paul moves to some things that needed to be found in the life of this Church if they were going to be a cohesive group that affected their world for Christ! I'VE ENTITLED THIS **CHURCH LIFE!**

I. THERE NEEDS TO BE CONSISTENCY! (1:27a)

The old English word "conversation" there is speaking of much more than our TALK, it is speaking of our WALK!

i.e. Paul is saying...WATCH YOUR TESTIMONY and conduct your lives in a manner that is worthy of the Gospel of Christ!

Paul is suggesting that we Christians are the citizens of heaven, and while we are on earth we ought to behave like heaven's citizens.

He brings this concept up again in **3:20**.

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This would have been very meaningful expression to the people in Philippi because Philippi was a Roman colony, and its citizens were actually Roman citizens, protected by Roman law even though they did not live in Rome!

The Church of Jesus Christ is a colony of heaven on earth! And we ought to behave like the citizens of heaven that we are!

A good question to ask ourselves on a regular basis is "Am I conducting myself in a manner worthy of the Gospel?"

Ephesians 4:1—"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,."

Ephesians 5:8—"For ye were sometimes darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord: walk as children of light:"

Colossians 1:10—"That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God;"

1 Peter 2:11-12—"Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul; 12 Having your conversation honest among the Gentiles: that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation."

We do not behave in order to go to heaven, but we behave BECAUSE our names are already written in heaven, and our citizenship is in heaven!

Matthew Henry summed it up well when he wrote "Those who profess the gospel of Christ, should live as those who believe gospel truths, submit to gospel laws, and depend upon gospel promises."

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It is worth remembering that the world around us knows only the Gospel that it sees in our lives!

*"You are writing a Gospel, A chapter each day,
By the deeds that you do, And the words that you say.
Men read what you write, Whether faithful or true:
Just what is the Gospel, According to you?"
(source unknown)*

We know that *"The Gospel"* is the Good News that Christ (who was God in the flesh) died for our sins, was buried, and rose again!
(1 Corinthians 15:1-8)

There is only one *"good news"* of salvation; any other message is false! (Galatians 1:6-10; Acts 4:12)

The message of the Gospel is the Good News that sinners can become the children of God through faith in what Jesus Christ, God's Son, has done for them! (John 3:16)

To add anything to the Gospel is to deprive it of its power! We are not saved from our sins by faith in Christ plus something else; we are saved by faith in Christ alone!

We have a tract table there where you enter the Church. But listen, the best literature in the world is no substitute for your own life!

We need to let folks see Christ in our behavior because that is what will open up opportunities to share Christ's Gospel with them!

A local Church that practices the truth, that "behaves what it believes," is going to be more effective than one that does not!

THERE NEEDS TO BE CONSISTENCY...

II. THERE NEEDS TO BE COOPERATION! (1:27b)

The word translated *"striving together"* is the same word that we get our English word *"athletics"* from.

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Paul pictures the Church as a team, and he reminds them (and us) that it is teamwork that gets things accomplished!

(e.g. Tonight two teams are playing the Super Bowl. Who will win? Most likely the team that gives the best "team effort!")

Keep in mind that there was some division in the Church at Philippi. For one thing, there were two people mentioned by Paul in 4:2 that were not getting along with each other!

Apparently the members of the fellowship were taking sides, as is often the case, and the resulting division was hindering the work of the Church.

The enemy is always happy to see us get our focus off of Christ and on to internal divisions in a local ministry. Satan knows that if he can divide us, he can conquer us! Could I tell you that way too often he has his way!

It is only as we stand together as a team that we can overcome the wicked one and be effective in the work we have been called to do!

The Apostle John, wrote in his third epistle about having to deal with a man in a Church named Diotrephes who was not a team player! He was causing problems in a Church because he *"loved to have the preeminence"* (3 John 9).

Who is supposed to have the preeminence? Jesus Christ!
*Colossians 1:18—“And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; **that in all things he might have the preeminence.**”*

The important words there in the last part of verse 27 are *"one"* and *"together"*.

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It would not be difficult to expand this idea of the local Church as a team of athletes. Each person has his assigned place and job, and if each one is doing his job, it helps all the others.

Not everybody can be captain or quarterback! The team has to follow the rules, and the Word of God is our *"rule-book."* There is one goal—to honor Christ and do His will!

If we all work together, we can reach the goal, win the prize, and glorify the Lord. But the minute any one of us starts disobeying the rules, breaking training (the Christian life does demand discipline), or looking for glory, the teamwork disappears and division and competition take over.

In other words, Paul is reminding us again of the need for the single mind—The Mind Of Christ!

There is joy in our lives, even as we battle the enemy, if we live for Christ and the Gospel and practice *"Christian teamwork."*

THERE NEEDS TO BE CONSISTENCY...COOPERATION...
But there is a third essential in our Church life.

III. THERE NEEDS TO BE CONFIDENCE! (1:28-30)

The word *"terrified"* that Paul uses in verse 28 pictures a horse shying away from battle.

To be sure, nobody blindly runs into a fight; but then, no true believer should deliberately avoid the battles related to the faith of the Gospel!

In these verses, Paul gives us several encouragements that should give us confidence in the battle!

A. The Presence Of Conflict Is A Proof! (Vs 28)

Paul says that our battles prove that we are saved!

We not only believe on Christ but we also suffer for Christ!

Paul calls this *"the fellowship of His sufferings"* (3:10).

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Unfortunately, many new believers have the wrong idea that trusting Christ means the end of their battles. In reality, it means the beginning of new battles.

John 18:33—"In the world ye shall have tribulation"

2 Timothy 3:12—"Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution"

B. The Presence Of Conflict Is A Privilege! (Vs 29)

We suffer *"for His sake."* In fact, Paul tells us that this conflict is "given" to us—it is a provision!

If we were suffering for ourselves, it would be no privilege; but because we are suffering for and with Christ, it is a high and holy honor.

After all, He suffered for us, and a willingness to suffer for Him is the very least we can do to show our love and gratitude.

C. The Presence Of Conflict Is A Partnering! (Vs 30)

Satan wants us to think we are alone in the battle, that our difficulties are unique, but such is not the case.

Paul reminds the Philippians that he is going through the same difficulties they are experiencing hundreds of miles from Rome!

A change in geography is usually no solution to spiritual problems, because human nature is the same wherever you go, and the enemy is everywhere.

Knowing that our fellow believers are also sharing in the battle should be an encouragement for us to keep going and to pray for them as we pray for ourselves!

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Conclusion

Understand that going through spiritual conflict is one way we have to grow in Christ. It is not the way we'd prefer to grow, but nevertheless, God uses it!

As we face the enemy and depend on the Lord, He gives us all that we need for the battle. When the enemy sees our God-given confidence, it makes him fear.

So, as a Church there needs to be a consistency, a cooperation, and a confidence as we strive together for the faith of the Gospel.