

LESSON 4: PHILIPPIANS 1:27-2:30

Advancing the Gospel – Through Us

1. What characteristic of the life worthy of the gospel of Christ is being emphasized by Paul (v. 27)? If unity in the spirit is not present in a congregation, can any of the other marks of the true church (such as love, peace, purity, steadfastness, etc.) be present or practiced as Christ requires? How exclusive and absolute, and how much of an inescapable obligation, is the requirement to live a life worthy of the gospel?
2. The witness of the Church calls for strenuous endeavor and united effort (v. 27). What kind of hard work is required? But, what will such “contending for the gospel” elicit (v. 28)? How will the Philippians know they are on the right path as they actively witness in behalf of the gospel?
3. How did Paul view the suffering that came to him for advancing the gospel (vv. 12, 30)? Can it be that the suffering “granted to you” for advancing the gospel (v. 29) can be a privilege? See also 3:10; Acts 5:41)?
4. What are the inner attitudes of the Christian with which Paul is preoccupied? His vision for unity includes what in each believer? How then are 2:3-4 implicit in 2:2? What is your individual responsibility for promoting Christian unity?
5. Christ Jesus was “in very nature God” (2:6). How great then the contrast with (v. 7)! How great the deprivation, the lessening of himself, the forsaking of what he had before? What is the significance of this, for you? Into what did the Son empty himself (v. 7-8a; see also Isaiah 53:12)? How unimaginable for the Christ to bring all of his divine nature undiminished into a new unimaginable state? How can the constant remembrance of this fact do anything but bring you to your knees in thanksgiving and worship?
6. How did God respond to the decision of the Son (vv. 5-9)? What is the visual demonstration of the Father’s estimate of the Son? What is the value judgment of the Father about his Son? What is it about the Son that causes the Father to lift him to the highest heaven?
7. To what end is all of this leading (v. 10)? What will it be like when the King comes at the end? Will all be saved? Will there be additional opportunities? In what ways will nonbelievers be surprised? Believers?

Imitating Jesus

1. What is the Christian's worthy response to the example of Christ?
2. "Always obey" (v. 12). Obey who, what, and when? Whose obedience is the example for you to follow (v. 8)? Can you be obedient as far as the Son was obedient? Is there any lesser standard?
3. "Continue to work" (v. 12). Who is responsible for your personal spiritual growth? As an obedient Christian, are you continually translating into action the principles of the gospel that you have believed? How?
4. "With fear and trembling" (v. 12). What does the fear of God mean? Is this the fear of a lost sinner before the holy God, or the fear of the true child before the most loving of Fathers?
5. "Do everything" (v. 14). How total is the work of God (v. 13), and how total is your work (v. 14)? What kind of obedience is being talked about in these verses? You are commanded to do "all things," but is there any one thing that you must do first? Rather than a specific course of action, what are you called to? (See John 6:28; Matthew 6:33.)
6. What then is the basis of Christian ethics? Is it a list of do's and don'ts, or a call to be what you are in Christ (v. 15)? What are you to be? As a child of God, what three kinds of characteristics are you to exhibit?
7. How are you to discharge your responsibilities as a child of God (v. 15)? How can you "shine as a star" (v. 15)? What is the "word of life" which as a shining star you are to hold out (v. 16)? How are you not only to hold onto, but also to hold out the word of life?
8. How is the intrinsic life of the believer measured (v. 17)? Is your faith prompting you to sacrifice your life in obedience, holiness, and witness as your priestly service to God?
9. How has all of this been playing out in the lives of Timothy and Epaphroditus (vv. 19-30)? Are their lives worthy of the Gospel, and in what ways?