

Lesson Six

Philippians

Joining In

3:17-4:9

We have now come to a very practical section in our Philippian study. Having been given salvation by God, we realize that we have many things to work out as *citizens of the kingdom of heaven*. Paul addresses several specific issues which existed in the Philippian church of which we can make application to ourselves.

“Brethren, **join in** following my **example**, and **observe** those who walk according to the pattern you have in us.” (3:17)

FOLLOW MY EXAMPLE: *summimetes*; denotes "a fellow imitator", to imitate together with another, as Paul imitated Christ

Philippians 3:18

“For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ.”

Heavenly Citizens

CITIZENSHIP: *Politeuo*; "the condition, or life, of a citizen, citizenship"; it is said of the heavenly status of believers

Key to making application is having an attitude which says, “I will no longer stand on the sideline, but I am going to take an active part in my walk with Christ.” Paul exhorts us to *join in*.

A. BE CAREFUL WHO YOU FOLLOW!

All of us need mentors which serve as faithful examples for us to imitate. As wise Christians, we must be aware that they are those whom we must **follow** and there are those whom we must **avoid**.

1. **Observe** those who **walk** according to the pattern (3:17)
2. Many **walk** who are **enemies** of the cross of Christ (3:18)

Paul models for us how to submit one’s life entirely to Jesus as Lord and how to serve Him accordingly. When we imitate Paul, he says we are imitating Christ.¹ He wants us to **observe**² others who behave according to the same standard. Yet, not all are following Christ. There are those who serve the god of their own desires; they take pride in that which is shameful, and whose end is destruction. Paul weeps over them, for they are enemies of Christ.

So, some key thoughts are in order:

- Pick your examples prayerfully
- Study your examples carefully
- Spend time with them regularly

B. REMEMBER WHO YOU ARE!

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. (3:20)

It is easy to forget that we while we live here on this earth, we don’t belong here. We are citizens of a heavenly kingdom and serve only one ruler, Jesus Christ. Being foreigners, we look and act differently in the eyes of those of this world. How differently? Paul gives the Philippians several imperative commands which will become our list of how we are to look different from the world.

¹ 1 Corinthians 11:1

² GK. skopeo; to look at, behold, watch; root for Eng. word ‘scope’; Used in Romans 16:17 for those we are to avoid

Philippians 4:2-3

I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord. 3 Indeed, true companion, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel.

Unity is a choice!

Philippians 4:4

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!

Happiness – is dependent on external circumstances and conditions (weather, health, finances, etc.)

Joy – is independent of the external, being grounded in one's spiritual relationship with God

LORD IS NEAR: *closeness; of place and position in relationship to the believer.*

1. We get along with each other: 4:1-3

The world is a divided place. This is not to be the case in the Lord's church. We are those who stand firm together in the Lord. Two ladies in the Philippian church were not getting along. Paul exhorts the women individually (4:2) to *be of the same mind* in the Lord. The key to harmony in the church is realizing our common bonds which we all share and hold us together.

- We all share the **same Lord**: *stand firm in the Lord*
- We all share the **same cause**: *share my struggle in the cause of the gospel*
- We all are **workers** in this cause: *my fellow workers*
- We all have share the same **destiny**: *whose names are in the book of life*

Unity in the church does not happen automatically. Unity is the result of individuals choosing to **work out** their salvation together.

2. We rejoice in all things: 4:4

No matter what Christ has done for us, no matter what He currently is doing for us, and no matter what He promises for us, some people are still sad, pessimistic, and negative – a cloud of gloom hangs over the head. Why? Because they **choose** to be such.

Paul speaks imperatively when he says, "Rejoice in the Lord always". To rejoice is first a matter of recognizing what Christ does for us, and then **choosing** to rejoice in Him. The dark world in which we find ourselves must see joy in the lives of Christians. Remember, Paul is chained to a guard in prison when he says *rejoice in the Lord always*. Work it out.

3. The world sees our gentle spirit: 4:5

Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. (4:5)

Remarkably, even in this crazy world in which we live, people are to see us as having a calm gentle spirit. This word *gentle* has been called *sweet reasonableness*.³ It describes the kind and fair way which we deal with others – just as we wish to be treated and just as our Lord dealt with us. The key to such a spirit? – remembering always that the **Lord is near**.

“Be anxious for **nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your **requests** be made known to God.” (4:6)**

4. The world sees us as worry free: 4:6-7

Paul has already stated that we live in a crooked and perverse world. If, as a Christian, we were to live *just like* the world, then the message sent is that Christ has nothing to offer them. The world is

³ Matthew Arnold; as quoted in Thayer's Greek Lexicon; a "sweet reasonableness" that knows when to "relax the strict legal requirements concern-ing others . . . to carry out the real spirit of the law" (G. R. Berry)

ANXIOUS: *mérimna*; "a part, as opposed to the whole" – properly, drawn in opposite directions; divided into parts; "to go to pieces", worry

God's therapy for worry

Philippians 4:7

And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

DWELL: *logízomai*; (the root of the English terms "logic, logical") to compute, "take into account"; reckon (come to a "bottom-line"), i.e. reason to a logical conclusion

PRACTICE: *prasso*; the active process in accomplishing a deed, and implying what is done as a regular practice – i.e. a routine or habit



full of anxiety and constant worry – with good reason. We know that Christ is the answer to all of our needs. So, do you *worry*? Is your life full of constant anxiety just as all the pill-popping, sleepless, self-medicating, worry-warts around us? Perhaps there is something yet to work out about your salvation. Paul's command can be reduced to six simple words:

Worry about nothing;

Pray about everything.

Prayer is the simple solution of God to ending all worry.

- A little worry seems harmless but it is spiritually toxic
- Worry robs us of real joy
- Worry focuses on the wrong thing
- Worry is the result of depending on anything but God
- The prayer of the worrier is the shallow ritual of mere formality

Do you excuse your anxiety by saying, "*I know that I shouldn't worry but I am just a worrier*"? If so, stop. 'How?' you ask. **Stop** worrying by **start** praying. The Lord promises that those who pray in faith will have *the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, and it will guard your hearts and your minds.*

5. We think good thoughts: 4:8

It is a simple truth that we are a product of what we think about. We cannot live a life worthy of our citizenship if we don't think worthy thoughts. Standing firm and rejoicing requires each of us to dwell on things which are worthy of praise. Thus Paul commands the Christian, "*whatever is true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things*" (4:8). The word *dwell* means to *reason* through a topic until it become part of you. People are losing the ability to think critically. Rather than asking if something is *true* or if it is *righteous*, they ask, "*How does it make me feel?*" If we want to live with God, we must be determined to live *like* God now. If we want to live like God now, we must start *thinking* like God thinks. A simple test: *if it is not worthy of praise, don't dwell on it, period.*

6. We live what we teach: 4:9

The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, **practice these things**, and the God of peace will be with you. (4:9)

When all is said and done, the world sees us as being different because we lead different lives. No hypocrisy here! Since we are stand in our Lord, pray to our God, and think pure thoughts, we end up living godly lives. Of course, we can't practice what we don't know, so Paul reminds his readers of things they have *learned, received, heard, and seen* in Paul. They already know, so now they are to live what they know. Likewise, by *practicing these things*, we share a relationship with the God of peace which makes us to shine as lights in a dark world!