

STUDY 5. NOTES FOR LEADERS

Philippians is full of practical advice. The second and third studies dealt with relationships and the next dealt with the down to earth issues of prayer. This week's study will cover some of the more practical aspects of this wonderful letter.

The key verse that launches this study is Philippians 1:27.

"Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel" (Philippians 1:27, NRSV).

The Greek word for "Live your life" is related to citizenship which is interesting in the light that Philippi is a Roman colony. Paul is reminding the Roman citizens that their true citizenship is within the Kingdom of Heaven. In the context of the passage this verse speaks of worthy lives as being related to the unity of the Church and not being daunted by the pressure of the "opponents."

Another key word in the study is "saints", the "hagiois", "the separated ones", set apart for special purposes. This is a frequent designation of Paul for the Church community and in the light of some of his letters, must refer to their potential behaviour.

The concept of holiness is related to the holiness of God who is set apart, (totally other) but holiness has to do with the character, justice and righteousness of God as well.

When you put both those concepts together, Paul could be using the word to say to the people of God, "Do not allow culture to determine who you are and how you behave. You are the people of God so behave accordingly."

Another key word is "politeuesthe" which has as its root "citizenship" or "town". Commentators suggest that Paul may have been mindful that he was writing to a Roman colony where the inhabitants would have been citizens of Rome. So in 1:27 when he says "live your life in a manner worthy of the Gospel" it could be a subtle reminder to his readers that they are citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven and therefore should live accordingly.

SAINTS

1. **See Philippians 1:1.** Paul calls the church "saints".
 - a. From what you have read of the Philippians would you say that they were a saintly church?
 - b. What picture does that word conjure up in your mind?
 - c. Do you think we have any saints in the Doncaster Church?
2. Paul says they were "Saints in Christ". How does that alter the concept of what a saint is?

"In Christ" is a favorite phrase of Paul's particularly in this letter. See 1:29, 2:1, 2:5, 3:3, 4:19. The group may suggest a number of things such as it being the equivalent of "abiding" or "remaining in Christ" (as found in John's writings). The Greek word for "in" can also convey the sense of "in the power of" or "by the agency of" ("instrumental dative").

LIVE A LIFE WORTHY OF THE GOSPEL.

3. **Read Philippians 1:27.**

Which of the following aspects of life would have been most meaningful to the original readers? Why?

a. Think about life.	b. Think about family.	c. Think about work
d. Think about church	e. Think about recreation.	f. Think about money.

The meaning would have been all embracing!

4. a. In which of the above areas do you find it easiest to maintain a consistency with your faith and the way that you behave?
- b. What is the most difficult aspect of taking your faith into the workplace?

STANDING FIRM

5. See 1 Cor. 1:10, Phil. 4:2, Col. 3:13-14, Gal. 3:27-28.

- a. What do these verses have in common?
- b. Why is this emphasized in the NT?

All these verses have to do with the unity of the Church. It must have been a problem because Paul and others mention it so often.

6. Why does Paul need to encourage steadiness? What could cause the early church to get the wobbles? What were the threats?

This could include doctrinal issues (see 3:2) but is more likely, in its context, to deal with the issue of disunity. In another letter it could be “stand firm in the light of persecution”.

7. **See Philippians 1:28-30.**

In the same context Paul tells the church not to be intimidated by their opponents.

- a. Who do you think these opponents were?
- b. Doesn't his advice sound a little confronting? What about grace and compassion?

Paul's approach does not exclude grace and compassion but neither does it encourage weakness in the face of opposition. You can stand firm without being aggressive or confronting.

DON'T BE A MOANER

8. **Read Phil. 2:14-15.**

- a. Do you know people who could have “moan” or “complain” as their middle name? Why are they like that?
- b. Why does Paul encourage people to get on with their Christian faith with a positive outlook? Is he overcoming an authority issue? Is he dealing with a personality problem? Would some people have found their faith to be disappointing?
- c. This verse seems to carry the idea of submission? If this is so, how do you react?

In the context of the passage Paul is more than likely dealing with the issue of authority. The Philippian Church, unlike others, seemed to have no trouble in accepting his leadership but Paul could be putting out a few brush fires.

9. Are there times that you have been a “grumbler”? When you did grumble, was it the situation that was wrong or was it the way that you saw it?

THINK RIGHT

10. **Refer to Phil. 3:7-9.**

We have looked at this passage in a prior study. However, it has a lot to do with the way that we behave.

- a. How do these verses influence the way that we live out our Christian lives?
- b. What happens to our day-to-day Christianity, our ability to stand firm, our tendency to grumble or to be divisive when we think in these terms?

“As we think so we will behave.” Paul here, as elsewhere, here is encouraging positive thinking. The verb for “think” has an applied component and could be paraphrased, “think and do.”

11. Is there any way that our day-to-day behaviour as a Christian has been challenged by this selection of verses from Philippians?