

## 4 - Philippians: I know you stand firm

(Philippians 1.27 - 2.11)

Teaching notes by Tim Isbell are in italics. Type [bit.ly.nlncmu](http://bit.ly/nlncmu) into the address bar of any browser for a series overview and notes to other sessions.

### Getting started

- Let us know your take-away's from today, and any suggestions you have to improve the session. Email Tim or Ryan.
- What is a rhetorical question? Examples? – *Sometimes it's a question without an answer. Often it is a figure of speech in the form of a question that is asked to make a point rather than to elicit an answer. Examples where the answer is "yes": Is the pope Catholic? Do dogs bark? Can we do better next time? ... Examples where the answer is "no": Are you stupid? Are you trying to flunk this class? Are you kidding me?*

### Phil 1.27-30. Lives worthy of the gospel

27 Above all, you must live as citizens of heaven, conducting yourselves in a manner worthy of the Good News about Christ. Then, whether I come and see you again or only hear about you, I will know that you are standing together with one spirit and one purpose, fighting together for the faith, which is the Good News. 28 Don't be intimidated in any way by your enemies. This will be a sign to them that they are going to be destroyed, but that you are going to be saved, even by God himself. 29 For you have been given not only the privilege of trusting in Christ but also the privilege of suffering for him. 30 We are in this struggle together. You have seen my struggle in the past, and you know that I am still in the midst of it.

#### Tim's summary of the passage:

*Paul probably used the political term "citizen" because Philippi was a Roman with a large contingent of proud citizens, devoted to the state and to its emperor. So the people understand this empire viewpoint. They knew what it meant to live out their lives in ways that are shaped by Rome, and Paul was calling them to transfer this to living out their lives to a different kingdom and lord.*

*This means standing firm in the one Spirit of Jesus who unites them, striving like athletes or soldiers engaged in a team effort, exhibiting courage under pressure. This kind of life gets noticed. With this comes the privilege not just of trusting in Christ but also suffering for Christ - together with Paul.*

#### **Questions:**

1. Normally Paul asks his readers to walk the way of Jesus, but this time he challenges them to live out their citizenship as citizens of God's Kingdom. Why do you suppose he did this? – *Because this is a Roman colony where many know what citizenship means. So he's adapting his "ask" to their experience. It's a big shift for people who were ordered to worship the Roman emperor as their god and to live by Rome's rules. He's calling them to commit themselves to the Lord God as the only god, and to conduct themselves according to the ways of Jesus even when they contradict the ways of Rome.*
2. What does it look like to "fight together for the gospel" and "not be intimidated by our

enemies” and at the same time to live humbly and love our enemies? – *Our weapons are different than the world’s. For example, the same Paul who wrote Philippians wrote Ephesians. See Eph 6.10-18: truth, God’s righteousness, the peace that comes from the Good News, faith, salvation, scripture, prayer.*

*Note that our actions may result in the “privilege of suffering for Christ,” see Phil 1.29-30.*

3. Why is “standing together with one spirit and one purpose” important to the spiritual health and growth of the church? – *Both pagan culture and Roman politics influenced the economy and political climate in Philippi. So Christians there would have been shunned, threatened, and perhaps attacked. Living in unity and in community would have been crucial to survival.*

*a. Could that happen in America today? – It’s happening in some places now.*

4. PP info... <sup>1</sup>

## **Phil 2.1-4. Unity through unselfish humility**

1 Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and compassionate?

2 Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose. 3 Don’t be selfish; don’t try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves. 4 Don’t look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.

### Tim’s summary of the passage:

*Paul uses four rhetorical questions, all of which Paul assume they would answer with, “yes”, to remind the Philippians of four benefits for following Christ:*

*Then Paul then instructs them to live in humble unity as they look out for the interests of others in their fellowship, and also to take interest in those outside their fellowship.*

### **Questions:**

1. Why do you think Paul asked the string of questions in v1? – *The questions were rhetorical, intended more to emphasize a point than solicit an answer. Paul asked these questions knowing his readers answer would be, “Yes, of course!”*
2. Let’s read the verse again slowly and ask ourselves how we experience these feelings. –
3. Given that, how does Paul instruct his readers to behave within the church? How about outside the church? – *Within: unity (different from always agreeing), love, unselfish, humble, think of others as better than yourself. Outside: Extend your interests to people outside the fellowship.*

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<sup>1</sup> [Alzheimer Patient Tips](#)



## **Phil 2.5-11. A story of self-giving love**

5 You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.

6 Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. 7 Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form, 8 he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal's death on a cross.

9 Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor and gave him the name above all other names, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

### Tim's summary of the passage:

*In this passage, Paul holds up Christ Jesus as an example of what this kind of life looks like. For more depth, check out [The Humility of God](#).*

### **Questions:**

1. What is the timeframe for v6-8? - *The first century, the incarnation/crucifixion.*
2. What is the timeframe for v9-11? - *Future, the return of Christ.*
3. In light of this passage, how can we compare Christ Jesus' use of his other-worldly power with Satan's use of its other-worldly power?<sup>2</sup> - *Satan used its other-worldly power to try to hijack God's authority, Christ Jesus used his other-worldly power to offer redemption to the world that Satan deceived. It's the difference between a building a world on deception or building it on truth, a world full of pride or one full of humility, a world of hierarchy versus collaboration, darkness or light, greed or generosity.*
4. How is it even possible for us to have the same attitude as Jesus? - *It's not possible to decide to have such an attitude, nor to take some class to develop such an attitude. It is only possible by asking God to transform our attitude to be the same as Christ Jesus' attitude while apprenticing ourselves to Christ Jesus over a lifetime.*

## **What's one take-away insight or thought from today's session?**

We probably won't have time to process this, but it would be great if you'd share it with Ryan and me through email, coping as many of the rest of us as you're willing.

### **Benediction<sup>3</sup>**

May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ Jesus, so that with one heart and mouth you may glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Romans 15:5-6

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<sup>2</sup> check out [The Humility of God](#)

<sup>3</sup> For more, check out [Benedictions](#).

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