

EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS

PASTORAL COUNSEL ON OBEDIENCE, CONTENTMENT AND SACRIFICE, PHILIPPIANS 2:12-18

A. Notes on Christian living

1. A Christian's behavior should be worthy of the Gospel of Christ which is the topic of the entire section.
2. A worthy walk is characterized by humility with Jesus as our example.
3. This section concludes with a focus on Christian characteristics taken directly from the life of Jesus, obedience, contentment and sacrifice.

B. Pastoral counsel on obedience (12-13)

1. Paul encouraged the Philippians to keep on obeying (12a), *Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence,*

a. *Therefore*

- 1) This verse reminds the Philippians of the previous verses that emphasized Jesus' obedience to the Father.
- 2) If Jesus obeyed the Father even to the point of death on a cross, Christians should pursue obedience, as well.

b. His thankfulness for the Philippians was evident as he described them as beloved ones who obeyed their calling as Christians.

- 1) *obeyed*, carries the meaning of *listening which results in obedience*.
- 2) The Philippians listened to Paul's instruction and submitted to what they heard.

c. He reminded them that such obedience should not be motivated by pleasing him but by pleasing the Lord.

- 1) Paul could not guarantee he would be with them again but they had the indwelling Holy Spirit to guide them.
- 2) Motivation to obey depends not on the presence of a human teacher but on the reality of our risen Lord.

2. He called them to trust God and not themselves (12b-13), *work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.*

a. *work out your own salvation.*

- 1) It was not a command to work for salvation.
- 2) Paul was speaking to those who were justified by God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone.
- 3) They were called to live what they believe by participating with the Holy Spirit in personal sanctification, Galatians 5:6, *But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.*

b. They were to have an attitude of *fear and trembling*.

- 1) Thomas Constable, *As we work out our own sanctification, we must remember certain things. We serve a holy God, we have a strong and wise adversary, and we are weak and dependent on God for all that we need.*
- 2) Christians are reminded that they are participating with God Who is holy, Hebrews 12:28-29, *Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.*
- 3) Charles Spurgeon, *Before the Lord we do not tremble with fright, but we are moved even to quaking with a holy awe. Under a sense of the presence of God, we tremble lest we should sin, we tremble lest that presence should remove, lest we should grieve the Spirit and vex the Holy One of Israel.*

c. They were to have confidence because God works in believers to accomplish His will.

1) *to will*

- a) God gives the will to want what He wants even when we lack desire.
- b) Charles Spurgeon, *He works in us to will—the desire after holiness, the resolution to put down sin, the pang of grief because we have sinned, the stern resolve that we will not fall into that sin again.*

2) *to work*

- a) God gives the strength to do His will when we lack energy and ability.
- b) Charles Spurgeon, *He that gave you the will does not leave you there; He works in you the power to do. The power to achieve the victory, the power to smite down the loftiest plume of pride shall come from Him. God is equal to all emergencies, therefore fear not.*

- 3) *for his good pleasure*
 - a) Max Anders, *As Christians mature and allow God to work through their lives, they find God is accomplishing his purposes in them even when they are not aware of those purposes.*
 - b) Charles Spurgeon, *It gives God pleasure to see you holy; it is His delight to see you self-denying. If you conquer yourself it will give Him pleasure.*
- 4) Thomas Constable, *This verse gives us confidence that God desires both to motivate and to enable us.*

C. Pastoral counsel on contentment (14-16)

1. Paul called them to be content because of who they were in Christ (14), ***Do all things without grumbling or disputing,***
 - a. Christians are to be satisfied regardless of the circumstances.
 - b. There is no place for grumbling or disputing in the Christian life. Grumbling starts in the heart and leads to disputes with others.
 - c. The consequences for dissatisfaction for the nation of Israel was forty years of wanderings and loss of entry into the land of promise.
 - d. John Calvin responded to a report that Martin Luther made negative comments about him, *Let Luther call me devil if he please; I will never say of him but that he is a most dear and valiant servant of the Lord.*
2. Christians should starkly contrast the lives of the unsaved (15), ***that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,***
 - a. Christians should think and do what is right so there will be no cause for accusations from the world.
 - 1) *blameless* means *above reproach*
 - 2) It does not mean sinless perfection but striving to live what one believes.
 - b. *a crooked and twisted generation* speaks of unbelievers as a whole, not a specific time period.
 - c. There should be a noticeable difference between light and darkness.
 - 1) Matthew 5:14-16, *You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.*
 - 2) Daniel 12:3, *And those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky above; and those who turn many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.*
 - 3) Quotes
 - a) Max Anders, *Believers are to be so distinct from unbelievers that we stand out as positive models. If God is working in our lives, we are to be unlike the godless society around us. We are to make them curious as to why we are not like them.*
 - b) D. A. Carson, *...Christian contentment...stands out in a selfish, whining, self-pitying world.*
3. Paul encouraged the Philippians to proclaim the same things he had proclaimed to them (16), ***holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain.***
 - a. The Philippians were exhorted by Paul to keep proclaiming the Gospel in word and deed.
 - b. Continued faithfulness would be cause for Paul to rejoice in what God accomplished through him in their lives.

D. Pastoral counsel on On sacrifice (17-18)

1. Paul declared that he rejoiced despite persecution (17), ***Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all.***
 - a. Paul knew his life could end at any time as a martyr, 2 Timothy 4:6, *For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come.*
 - b. *poured out as a drink offering*
 - 1) The priest poured wine beside the altar after sacrificing a lamb, ram or bull as a burnt offering.
 - 2) The pouring out of the wine pictured the completion of Paul's life as a living sacrifice of service.
 - c. *sacrificial offering of your faith*

- 1) It is best translated *sacrificial service arising from your faith*, Romans 12:1, *I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.*
- 2) Paul was thankful for the part he played in the spiritual lives of the Philippians.
 - d. Paul believed spiritual ministry was worth the sacrifice.
2. He encouraged them to rejoice with him (18), *Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.*
 - a. Paul rejoiced in suffering and the Philippians were encouraged to rejoice, as well.
 - b. The rejoicing is for faithful service not the prospect of Paul's death.
 - c. The Philippians were encouraged to rejoice with Paul in his faithful ministry despite difficult circumstances.
 - d. It was an encouragement for them to rejoice in the ministry God called them to, as well.

<i>CONCLUSION</i>

- A. The Christian life is a call to obedience because we have not only a Savior but a Lord.
- B. We are to be content despite difficult circumstances because we have a faithful God.
- C. Sacrifice is a part of the Christian life since Jesus is our example of sacrificial service.