

LESSON THREE
STANDING FIRM
(Philippians 1:27-28)

REFLECTION

There has rarely been a time in the last 2,000 years when Christians haven't been ridiculed and criticized in some way by people. What are some of the most common complaints against believers? Which of these attacks, if any, would you say are legitimate?

SITUATION

Paul's most important goal in life was for the gospel to be proclaimed throughout the world. It didn't matter to him if the motives of the people sharing the message were for envy, or rivalry, or even for love and goodwill. It also didn't matter if he was the one delivering the message—he would continue to rejoice in spite of any hardships or setbacks because he knew God was always in control. In this next section, Paul builds on this encouragement to the Philippians believers by making an appeal for them to live with a steadfast unity, for he knows that this will serve to achieve this same purpose of attracting others to the gospel of Christ.

OBSERVATION

Read **Philippians 1:19-30** (New King James Version).

EXPLORATION

1. Paul said that he could continue to rejoice in spite of his suffering and imprisonment because he knew through the prayers of the Philippians and God's provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, what was happening to him would turn to his deliverance. He also expected and hoped that in nothing would he be ashamed, but with boldness, Christ would be magnified in his (Paul's) body, whether by life or death.
2. When Paul said, "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain," he meant that his life was summed up in Jesus Christ. Christ was his reason for being. Also, he believed that death would relieve him of earthly burdens and let him focus totally on glorifying God.
3. Some actions that would be considered worthy of the gospel of Christ are:
 - a. Believers having integrity.
 - b. Living consistently with what they believe, teach, and preach.
 - c. Christians standing firm in one spirit and striving together (working together) for the faith of the gospel.
4. It is often difficult for believers to "stand firm in the one Spirit" because of unforgiveness, pride, selfishness, and immaturity in the faith. Also, not being rooted in the Word of God can hinder steadfastness.

5. Paul's only real concern for the Philipians was a lack of unity. A couple of the biggest factors that pose a threat to the harmony of a local church are infighting and not having a common purpose in serving God.
6. Not being terrified by adversaries is a behavior that contributes to fearlessness among believers. When believers willingly suffer without being "terrified" by their adversaries, it serves as proof of perdition to the enemies. It is a sign that God's enemies will be destroyed and eternally lost.

INSPIRATION

"Hallowed be Your Name" (**Matthew 6:9 NKJV**). The phrase in Jesus prayer is a petition, not a proclamation, a request, not an announcement. "Hallowed be Your name... do whatever it takes to be holy in my life. Take your rightful place on the throne. Exalt yourself. Magnify yourself. Glorify yourself. You be Lord, and I'll be quiet."

The word *hallowed* comes from the word *holy*, and the word *holy* means "to separate." The ancestry of the term can be traced back to an ancient word which means "to cut." To be holy, then, is to be cut above the norm, superior, extra-ordinary. Remember... the Holy One dwells on a different level from the rest of us. What frightens us does not frighten Him. What troubles us does not trouble Him.

The author of this book says, "I'm more a landlubber than a sailor, but I've puttered around in a bass boat enough to know the secret for finding land in a storm... You don't aim at another boat. You certainly don't stare at the waves. You set your sights on an object unaffected by the wind—a light on the shore—and go straight toward it. The light is unaffected by the storm."

By seeking God...you do the same. When you set your sights on our God, you focus on the one "a cut above" any storm life may bring. (From *The Great House of God* by Max Lucado).

REACTION

7. What are some ways that believers in Christ live "hallowed" or "separate" lives for God?
8. Why is it critical to wholeheartedly pray, "Lord, do whatever it takes to be holy in my life"?
9. What role does the Holy Spirit play in helping preserve unity among God's people?
10. The reality is that people are watching your behavior as a Christian—and this can either persuade or dissuade them from seeking Jesus. What would you say is your reputation as a Christian? What about your church's reputation?
11. Paul challenged the Philipian believers to strive "together for the faith of the gospel" (**verse 27**). What would this look like in the life of your church or small group.
12. When have you struggled or suffered most as a Christian? What helped to get you through that particular time in your life?

As Jesus' earthly life and ministry drew to a close, He spoke urgently and prayed fervently about the unified way his followers should live. In short, Christ wants us to live in harmony (see **John 17:1**) and love one another sacrificially (see **13:34-35**). Such unconditional devotion sets us apart and causes the world to stare in awe. Conversely, when we bicker and feud among ourselves, when churches split, or when we bring shame on the name of Christ, the world mocks. It is only in unity we shine and only together we fully enjoy all the blessings of God. Shared sorrows are halved sorrows. Shared joys are doubled joys. What will you change this week to ensure that your interactions with other believers are worthy of the gospel?

Conduct Worthy Of Christ
Philippians 1:27-30

Put a check by the twelve qualities or practices that you consider the *most indispensable* in living a life worthy of Christ. (Remember, you may only check twelve things.)

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|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> joy | <input type="checkbox"/> theological knowledge | <input type="checkbox"/> compassion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> discernment | <input type="checkbox"/> witnessing ability | <input type="checkbox"/> zeal |
| <input type="checkbox"/> love for Christ | <input type="checkbox"/> love of fellow Christians | <input type="checkbox"/> love for the lost |
| <input type="checkbox"/> wisdom | <input type="checkbox"/> involvement in local church | <input type="checkbox"/> devotion to prayer |
| <input type="checkbox"/> strong faith | <input type="checkbox"/> a global missions mind-set | <input type="checkbox"/> endurance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> peace | <input type="checkbox"/> a desire to be a peacemaker | <input type="checkbox"/> patience |
| <input type="checkbox"/> hospitality | <input type="checkbox"/> a willingness to suffer | <input type="checkbox"/> faithfulness |
| <input type="checkbox"/> a servant mind-set | <input type="checkbox"/> generosity in giving | <input type="checkbox"/> self-control |
| <input type="checkbox"/> a grateful heart | <input type="checkbox"/> a hunger for the truth | <input type="checkbox"/> Other: |

GOING DEEPER

Paul was concerned that Christians not only believe the right things, but that they also behave the right way. Read about expected behavior of believers in **Romans 12:9-21**

DEVOTION

Lord Jesus, you deserve to be represented by believers who are holy and who live in harmony with one another. Today, we make the psalmist's prayer our own: "Test me, Lord, and try me, examine my heart and my mind; for I have always been mindful of your unfailing love and have lived in reliance on your faithfulness" (Psalm 26:2). Show us any actions we need to change.

JOURNALING

What damaged relationships do you have with another Christian that needs attention? What will it take on your part to heal the rift?

Next Week: Lesson Four: All For One—**Philippians 2:1-4**