

Introduction: We are living in a time when our nation and world is fractured into fragments that are fighting with each other. Each segment is convinced it is right and all the others are wrong. Everyone is shouting and no one is listening. *** This all seems new and intense to us; but this has been going on since Yahweh came to earth and caused a multiplicity of languages in order to scatter the people who were trying to build a great city on their own (not God's city), and a tower to reach heaven on their own (not as the gracious gift of God). This happened before Yahweh called Abraham and gave him a seven-fold blessing for all people. We read the accounts of these events from over four thousand years ago in the eleventh and twelfth chapters of The Bible. *** Two thousand years ago God sent His eternal Son to earth as a human baby. He was born of a virgin woman, having been conceived by The Holy Spirit, in 'the house of bread': Bethlehem. *** By His life, death, resurrection, ascension to the Throne of the universe, and His sending of The Holy Spirit, Jesus Christ (THE Savior King-Priest) to give people the ability to be reconciled first to God, and then to each other. What each person must do is to first hear the Truth about Christ. Then, having heard the Truth, he must turn from himself and his ways TO God and His Ways IN humble, submitted and dependent faith in Who Jesus IS and what Christ has DONE. This will lead people to the ability to DO The Instruction Yahweh God gave through Moses. And doing this will put an end to the divisions brought about by God due to the pride of people. *** Today's passage gives commands and guidance to citizens of God's Kingdom who have been reconciled to Him.

I. Strive together for The Gospel, not afraid of opponents; it has been granted to you to believe in Christ and to suffer for Him, as you have seen in me. (1:27-30)

A. Be citizens worthy of The Gospel of Christ, striving together in The Spirit, NOT afraid of opponents, which signals their destruction but your salvation – all from God. (Verses 27-28)

1. Only BE citizens worthy of The Gospel of The Christ. (Verse 27a)

Citizenship in heaven: Later (3:20) Paul reminds these believers their true citizenship is in heaven – where Christ The Priest-King is now reconciling people to God and ruling the universe.

Be worthy citizens of The Gospel of Christ

2. So that, whether, having come, I see you, or remaining absent, I may hear this concerning you. (Verse 27b)

Relationship: Because of his relationship with this church, Paul commands them to live worthy of Christ, so he may hear good things about them.

3. That you are standing firm in One Spirit in one soul. (Verse 27c)

The Holy Spirit: The One Spirit is the Holy Spirit Jesus sent on Pentecost to be in all who humbly submit fully to Him in faith. (Acts 2)

4. Striving together in the faith of The Gospel. (Verse 27d)

Strive as an athlete: The verb used by the apostle Paul for 'striving' is the root for our noun athlete.

5. And not, in nothing, being frightened on account of the enemy opponents. (Verse 28a)

Not frightened: Standing firm in The Holy Spirit will guarantee they can overcome powerful enemies IN Christ. (1 John 4:1-4) Like Paul, they are to consider death for Christ to be gain. (Verses 21-23)

6. This is to them a sign of their destruction, but of your salvation. (Verse 28b)

Sign: The word literally means 'pointing out' in the sense of: demonstration, proof and sign.

Destruction-Salvation: Over and over IN God's Word there are two ways, and people must choose one. This goes back to the first Jesus (Joshua) who commanded the Israelites when he said: 'choose this day whom you will serve'. (Joshua 24, especially verses 14-15)

7. And this (is) from God. (Verse 28c)

From God: Ultimately everything is from God. And all who choose Him will always sing with joy: *To God Be The Glory!*

B. Because it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ to believe in Him and suffer for Him, having the same agony you saw and heard in me. (Verses 29-30)

1. Because you were given on Christ's behalf. (Verse 29a)

Gracious gift: This gift is for all who receive Christ SO they stand with Him and strive with Him to accomplish His Mission.

Christ: For Paul, and all believers IN Christ, He is THE center of everything in their lives. Anything that anyone does, without Christ as THE center of it, is a sin.

2. That you are not only believing IN Him, but also suffering on His behalf. (Verse 29b)

Believe and suffer: God's gift given in Christ has two parts: first, to believe IN Him; but, second, also to suffer (and if need be to die) with Him. This involves taking up their cross. (Luke 9:18-27) But all those who maintain faith IN Christ Jesus will be more than conquerors in the end. (Romans 8:16-39)

Let's unite in faith and suffering IN The Holy Spirit

3. You are having the same agony such as you saw in me, and now are hearing (is) in me. (Verse 30a)

Same agony: This agony is as a mother in labor which Jesus taught will lead to joy. (John 16:19-22)

Saw and hear: Philippian Christians saw Paul put in prison on his first visit. (Acts 16:11-34) Now they are hearing from Epaphroditus what is happening to him in Rome. (Verses 25-30)

Today: In the USA today, Christians should suffer and experience agony over how materialism has come into Christ's Church. And, Christians are dividing over lesser issues that are not part of sound doctrine. (1 Corinthians 11:18-19) What is needed is for all in The Church of Christ to focus on Him for His sake – 'He who loved us all to death'! (Quote from Gordon Fee)

Bottom Line: May we all desire the unity IN Christ necessary to be worthy citizens of His Gospel, to live in His salvation and to accept the suffering that comes with faith IN Him.

II. From the encouragement, LOVE and fellowship of The Trinity, complete my joy having the same mind and love, united in soul, NOT being selfish, but humble. (2:1-4)

A. Therefore, if encouragement in Christ, LOVE, fellowship of The Spirit, affection and compassion: fulfill my joy that you have the same mind and love, united in soul. (*Verses 1-2*)

1. If therefore any encouragement IN Christ. (*Verse 1a*)

2. If any consolation (exhortation) of LOVE. (*Verse 1b*)

LOVE of Father: Yahweh said He chose Israel despite their being very small because He loved them.

(*Deuteronomy 7:7-15*) The apostle John commands Christians to see the LOVE The Father has given them. (*1 John 3:1-3*)

3. If any fellowship of The Spirit. (*Verse 1c*)

Spirit – Trinity: So encouragement, LOVE, and fellowship are all gifts in The Three-IN-One Trinity God. See the Trinity benediction of grace, LOVE and fellowship in the second letter to the churches in Corinth. (*2 Corinthians 13:14*)

4. If any affection and compassion. (*Verse 1d*)

Brothers in Philippi: These relationship attitudes are to be how Christians in Philippi treat each other because they have been reconciled to God through faith IN Christ. This is the beginning of the healing of fragments fighting each other.

Moving through *Philippians*, we will discover these Christians have not perfected reconciliation, but are growing in it.

5. Fulfill my joy. (*Verse 2a*)

Command: Paul will go on to explain how they can obey this command. However, let us never forget that being IN Christ, by receiving salvation IN Him, results in Christians being able to enjoy the amazing LOVE of God on earth now.

This joy in LOVE motivates and enables the obedience of faith of all the commands God has put in His Word.

6. That you think the same. (*Verse 2b*)

Same thinking: We will see next week that Paul commands them to have the same mind as Christ. (*2:5*)

Peter also commanded believers to think as Christ, He who suffered for us. (*1 Peter 4:1-5*)

7. Having the same love. (*Verse 2c*)

Same love: This is done by sharing God's LOVE with each other in The Holy Spirit. The fruit of The Holy Spirit is first of all love. (*Galatians 5:22-26*)

8. United in the soul, thinking the (as) one. (*Verse 2d*)

One soul and mind: It is impossible to understand this passage and still think that being active in a local church is optional!

At all times, all Christians are called to be united in soul and mind with each other in the faith of Christ, even in suffering.

Let's unite in faith and suffering IN The Holy Spirit

B. (Do) nothing from selfishness nor conceit, but in humility of mind, considering one another surpassing themselves, NOT paying attention each to your own, but also each of others. (*Verses 3-4*)

1. (Do) nothing from selfish ambition, nor from empty conceit. (*Verse 3a*)

Brokenness: All humans are broken in some part of their soul. And all people are in some ways selfish and in other ways proud. (*Psalms 14; 53; see also Psalm 10; 36*)

2. But in the humility of mind, one another be thinking surpassing themselves. (*Verse 3b*)

Humility: Christians must be humble. Next week we will see how Christ emptied Himself in order to redeem people. (*2:5-11*)

3. Each considering not his own, but also the things of each of the others. (*Verse 4*)

Each of the others: Each disciple of Jesus must look beyond his or her own interests and consider each of all the other members of His Body – His Church. (Again, 'lone ranger christians' are not Christians.)

Positive: This perspective is needed in the world today. People are isolated, communicating with each other by technical devices; SO, they are no longer interacting face-to-face and in person.

Bottom Line: May we all receive encouragement, LOVE and fellowship from God's Holy Spirit to have the joy of unity that is not selfish and proud. And may we all be united in humility of heart and mind, considering each one of all the others in the church

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Conclusion: The apostle exhorts his brothers in Philippi to be worthy citizens of The Gospel of Christ: standing firm in The Holy Spirit, striving together as one. By NOT being afraid of their opponents they are a sign to them of destruction, and the salvation from God to the brothers. This is because they have been granted, for Christ's sake, to believe in Him AND also to suffer for Him. SO, in the gifts of The Trinity God – encouragement, LOVE and fellowship – they can obey the apostle's command to fill up his joy in unity of thinking, NOT in selfishness and pride (living for themselves); but, instead they live by thinking the same and having the same love, united in humility, considering each of the others.

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