

Philippians Chapter 1
Part 4
The single mind
'Joy in spite of circumstances'

Philippians 1:27 - 30

Now we are getting radical, we are beginning to see that the book of Philippians is not just about Christian behaviour, but about the heart of a radical lover of God. This book could move you right out of your comfort zone as it challenges and inspires you to a closer walk with the God who loves you to distraction.

We have seen Paul's determination to let nothing stop him in his pursuit of God, nothing stop him in his desire to do the will of God. His joy is indefatigable. I suspect he would have been pretty difficult to keep up with!

The Christian life is not a playground, it is a battleground. We are sons in the family of God, enjoying the fellowship of the Holy Spirit, but we are also soldiers, and a believer with a single mind can have joy in the Holy Spirit even in the midst of the battle as we remember nothing can come against us unless God allows it and if He allows it, it must be for our ultimate profit and gain.

2 Timothy 2: 2 - 3 NKJV:

'And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. You therefore must endure hardship as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.'

Every one of us is at least a foot soldier with a responsibility to teach others. A prerequisite of this is that we have the truth ourselves, living in us. It is not sufficient to 'believe', what we believe must be lived out, faith is a lifestyle, not a belief system. Having said that, what we believe will govern how we behave. Perhaps some of the most ill behaved children I have ever seen have been in a Christian environment. What's that all about?

Perhaps the greatest lack of the last century in the church was the absence of inspired Bible teaching together with discipleship; as a result we have a church which is constantly reaching out to fill itself rather than others, an audience not an army.

Every wrong belief leads to a wrong lifestyle. We are responsible for our own spirituality, no-one else. We are responsible for our thought life – we can choose to have another thought. The corporate body of Christ is no stronger than each individual believer and when the chips are down, we stand before God alone to give an account of the life we have lived in the body.

1 Corinthians 3:8-15

This passage is about eternal rewards, or as Roger Price puts it, mud huts or palaces. The life we live in the here and now is our training and proving ground for reigning with Him eternally. We are the

eternal companion of a glorious King. Everything that surrounds our lives is for our profit and training for eternity.

As we surrender ourselves to the executive control of the Holy Spirit He gives us the power we need to transform the way we think. He gets behind our intention to change and makes it real in our experience.

There are four essentials for victory in battle -

- The single mind
- The submissive mind
- The spiritual mind
- The secure mind

The most powerful weapon against the enemy is a consistent lifestyle, lived in Christ.

We war on two fronts, the enemy within – ourselves and our fallen nature and our implacable enemy – Satan. For most of us the hardest battle is the one which rages within our own soul as the Spirit requires supremacy and our soul refuses to relinquish its control.

Philippians 1:27

Paul is here saying behave the way citizens of heaven are supposed to behave.

Consistency:

A consistent life is a life lived from the inside to the outside.

To do this we must develop a powerful *inner* life, a peaceful *inner* life. This takes time to develop, but with faith and patience, the Holy Spirit will enable you to live from the inside to the outside. Everything in the Christian walk is an inside job and the Holy Spirit is the Minister of the interior!

Why not stop just here and ask the Holy Spirit to show you how and where you are not living from the inside out, but from the outside in as you are affected by circumstances, people, things and worry.

Philippians 3:20

What Paul is saying would have had real meaning to the people at Philippi, because Philippi was a Roman colony, and its citizens were Romans protected by Roman law. Paul is saying the church of Jesus Christ is like the Kingdom of heaven on earth and we should behave as befits citizens of that Kingdom. Our walk should be:

Ephesians 4:1-3

Colossians 1:10

We do not behave in order to go to heaven because we are not saved by works; we behave because our names are already written in heaven. It is worth remembering that the world around us only knows the gospel that it sees lived out in our lives. Someone once wrote -

'You are writing a Gospel a chapter each day, by the deeds that you do and the words that you say, men read what you write whether faithful or true, just what is the Gospel according to you?'

The true Gospel is the good news that Jesus died for our sins, was buried and rose again and when we believe this, we have a new start; we are born again from *above* by the Spirit of God. That must mean different values, different goals, and different outlook – all change.

1 Corinthians 15: 1 – 8 (AMP)

¹And now let me remind you [since it seems to have escaped you], brethren, of the Gospel (the glad tidings of salvation) which I proclaimed to you, which you welcomed and accepted and upon which your faith rests, ²And by which you are saved, if you hold fast and keep firmly what I preached to you, unless you believed at first without effect and all for nothing. ³For I passed on to you first of all what I also had received, that Christ (the Messiah, the Anointed One) died for our sins in accordance with [what] the Scriptures [foretold], ⁴that He was buried, that He arose on the third day as the Scriptures foretold, ⁵and [also] that He appeared to Cephas (Peter), then to the Twelve. ⁶Then later He showed Himself to more than five hundred brethren at one time, the majority of whom are still alive, but some have fallen asleep [in death]. ⁷Afterward He was seen by James, then by all the apostles (the special messengers), ⁸and last of all He appeared to me also, as to one prematurely and born dead [no better than an unperfected foetus among living men].'

Paul found it necessary to take the Corinthian Christians back to their roots to remind them of the truth of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ...

A man once said to his Pastor – *'I have some neighbours who believe a false Gospel, do you have some literature I can give them?'* The pastor opened his bible to -

2 Corinthians 3:2

Saying to the man *'The best literature in the world is no substitute for your own life. Let them see Jesus in your behaviour and this will open up opportunities to share the Gospel with them'*.

So, I echo the question – just what is the Gospel according to you? Are you known for uprightness, honesty, integrity in all your dealings, truthfulness, transparency, patience, gentleness, self-control? Do you keep the speed limit and pay your bills on time? If you are a parent are your children well behaved, obedient and 'a credit' to you?

Stop again just here and ask the Holy Spirit if there are any areas where He wants to make a mid-course correction in the way you conduct yourself as a citizen of the Kingdom of heaven.

The greatest weapon against the kingdom of darkness is a godly life. So consistency is the first quality we need to develop closely followed by number two which is – co-operation.

Co-operation:

Philippians 1:27 KJV *‘Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel.’*

Paul now uses an illustration from athletics. The words striving together give us the English word ‘athletics’. Paul pictures the church as a team and he reminds them that team work wins the victory. If you remember there was a division at the church in Philippi –

Philippians 4:2

These two women were not getting on together and members of the fellowship were taking sides, the result was a division that was hindering the work of the church and giving a foothold to the enemy, who is always happy to see believers biting and devouring one another.

¹What leads to strife (discord and feuds) and how do conflicts (quarrels and fightings) originate among you? Do they not arise from your sensual desires that are ever warring in your bodily members? ² You are jealous and covet [what others have] and your desires go unfulfilled; [so] you become murderers. [To hate is to murder as far as your hearts are concerned.] You burn with envy and anger and are not able to obtain [the gratification, the contentment, and the happiness that you seek], so you fight and war. You do not have, because you do not ask. [I John 3:15.] ³[Or] you do ask [God for them] and yet fail to receive, because you ask with wrong purpose and evil, selfish motives. Your intention is [when you get what you desire] to spend it in sensual pleasures. ⁴You [are like] unfaithful wives [having illicit love affairs with the world and breaking your marriage vow to God]! Do you not know that being the world's friend is being God's enemy? So whoever chooses to be a friend of the world takes his stand as an enemy of God. ⁵ Or do you suppose that the Scripture is speaking to no purpose that says, The Spirit Whom He has caused to dwell in us yearns over us and He yearns for the Spirit [to be welcome] with a jealous love? ⁶But He gives us more and more grace (power of the Holy Spirit, to meet this evil tendency and all others fully). That is why He says, God sets Himself against the proud and haughty, but gives grace [continually] to the lowly (those who are humble enough to receive it). ⁷So be subject to God. Resist the devil [stand firm against him], and he will flee from you. ⁸Come close to God and He will come close to you. [Recognize that you are] sinners, get your soiled hands clean; [realize that you have been disloyal] wavering individuals with divided interests, and purify your hearts [of your spiritual adultery]. ⁹[As you draw near to God] be deeply penitent and grieve, even weep [over your disloyalty]. Let your laughter be turned to grief and your mirth to dejection and heartfelt shame [for your sins]. ¹⁰Humble yourselves [feeling very insignificant] in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you [He will lift you up and make your lives significant]. ¹¹My brethren, do not speak evil about or accuse one another. He that maligns a brother or judges his brother is maligning and criticizing the Law and judging the Law. But if you judge the Law, you are not a practicer of the Law but a censor and judge [of it].'

What Paul is talking about here in Philippians 4:2 is – non-negotiable love. The love of God, the agape, uncommon love that Jesus showed for us while we were yet sinners; this is the love that loves 'in spite of'; it is God's love being manifested through us, to others. William Barclay defined agape as 'no matter what any man does to me I will not seek anything but his highest good'. This love chooses to put aside differences of any kind – it is the love of **choice**, because it has nothing to do with how you feel - it isn't an emotion, it is *an act of the will*.

This love does not leave aside wisdom. I am not suggesting that we turn a blind eye to disobedience and bad behaviour, what we do then is tell the truth in love if the Holy Spirit so directs.

It is only as we allow the Holy Spirit sufficient room in our lives, as we surrender to His control in area after area, that His love is shed abroad in our hearts, and we can begin to move in this most delicious of loves, agape. Agape delights to applaud the other person, keeps no record of wrong, thinks no evil, loves the truth, bears all things, and suffers all things – sound familiar?

1 Corinthians 13:4 - 8

Within the church there is always potential for division – it isn't new – consider -

Matthew 20:20-28

James and John in this passage, wanted special thrones above the rest and they sent mum along to put in a word for them; it's the human condition in fallen mankind, the drive for position, possessions and power. But we have been translated from the kingdom of darkness into the kingdom of His marvellous light, if indeed we have believed. And one of the changes that should mark us out is that we are no longer competing for first place, but are happy to become servants to the body of Christ.

We have one goal, to honour Jesus and do His will but the moment one of us breaks ranks and begins to seek our own interests, or look for glory for ourselves, the unity of the body is lost and competition and division take over. This was what Paul was speaking to the Philippians about in chapter 4:2 *'I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord.'* He was reminding them again of their need for a single mind which is focussed on the Lord Jesus Christ and their position 'in Christ'.

The third thing which Paul speaks of is – confidence.

Confidence:

Philippians 1:6 – 8 New International Version

⁶being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. ⁷It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart; for whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. ⁸ God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.'

It is Paul's abounding confidence in the nature of God which keeps him singing all the day. He is confident that the God, who began a good work in the Philippian believers, will continue it until Jesus comes.

Hebrews 10: 22-25 The Message -

'So let's do it—full of belief, confident that we're presentable inside and out. Let's keep a firm grip on the promises that keep us going. He always keeps his word. Let's see how inventive we can be in encouraging love and helping out, not avoiding worshiping together as some do but spurring each other on, especially as we see the big Day approaching.'

And finally the last scripture for this session -

Philippians 1:27-30 New International Version

²⁷Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel ²⁸ without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved— and that by God. ²⁹ For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him, ³⁰ since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.'

Our third essential element for facing the enemy successfully is our confidence in God. Paul tells us not to be *'frightened in any way by those who oppose us.'* This word 'frightened' here used is the one which conveys the picture of a horse shying away from battle. None of us should deliberately run away from the battle, either the internal one or one with the enemy of our souls. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit gives us all we need to overcome ourselves and the enemy.

As we face the enemy God gives us the strength to stand under fire. When the enemy sees our God given confidence, he is the one who is fearful. A single mind and an undivided heart enable us to have joy in the midst of battle and produces in us consistency, co-operation and confidence in spite of our circumstances.

