

The Book of Philippians

Notes: Doug Hamilton

Being a Good Soldier of Christ (Philippians 1:27-2:11)

Philippians 1:27-30 Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; ²⁸ in no way alarmed by your opponents—which is a sign of destruction for them, but of salvation for you, and that too, from God. ²⁹ For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, ³⁰ experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me.

- With the gospel as the base of their lives, Paul reminds the Philippians to "*conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ*". The Greek word for "conduct" is *politeuomai* and means to live as a citizen. It is found only in one other location in the NT (Acts 23:1) and carries the same intention, which is to live up to your citizenship. It was the expected standard of living upright and proper as a citizen of a nation.
 - Rome, where Paul is writing, was the center of all Roman citizenship.
 - Roman colonies were simply little bits of Rome planted throughout the Empire.
 - Philippi, a colony, was only one of five cities in Macedonia to have *ius Italicum*—the right to be governed by Roman law and to be exempt from direct taxation. It was a status bestowed upon only the most faithful citizens and it showed in the Philippian way of life with its military discipline, honor and pride.
- Paul would later connect this theme to the higher level of citizenship of heaven (3:20) afforded to Christians, for our citizenship is in heaven. We must not forget there is a military theme that runs throughout Philippians and with it, all the patriotism a Roman colony could offer.
- There are three areas that Paul define good soldiers of Christ. It would have rung well for the Philippians and will also for us.

1. A Soldier's Passion

Paul said in *2 Timothy 2:4* *No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier*. He compared Christians to being a soldier in the army and advised them to not be entangled in "affairs of this world". We have a higher calling in this army. We should carry the Christian soldier's PASSION in our battles against the world.

A. God's soldiers are to be standing FIRM.

- This word Paul uses for "standing firm" means to make yourself stationary, immovable. When ancient battles ensued, soldiers would line up with shields in front and an anchored foot in preparation for the collision of the approaching army.
- In Christianity, we hold out the shield of faith (Eph 6:10-12) and anchor our foot not in the soil, but in "one spirit" as Paul stated.

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This spirit is not the Holy Spirit, but the common spirit of battle-tested soldiers of Christ.

B. God's soldiers are to be standing in UNISON.

- The word Paul used for "*striving together*" means to work with someone, implying against an opposition or competitive struggle. (Swanson, J. 1997. *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains: Greek*. Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems) When an army is in battle, they must have unison, possessing the same mind and the same goals.
- There is no difference concerning the members of a church family, for soldiers of Christ must arise together in unison against the works of the devil and hell.

C. God's soldiers are to be standing with BRAVERY.

- Paul reminds them they are not to be alarmed against the opponents; they were to be brave. A successful army is one that does not cower in the foxhole, but boldly fights the battle before them.
- There is a story about a veteran French soldier who, in a desperate situation, found a young recruit trembling with fear. 'Come, son,' said the veteran, 'and you and I will do something fine for France.' So Paul says to the Philippians: 'For you and for me the battle is on; let us do something fine for Christ.' (Barclay, W. 2003. *The Letters to Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*. The New Daily Study Bible. Louisville, KY; London: Westminster John Knox Press.) Christians are to be brave in the battle that is set before them. Keep focusing on the fact that the war was won on the cross two thousand years ago and we are simply catching up to victory.

Soldier's of Christ Arise (second verse)

Stand then in His great might, With all His strength endued;
And take, to arm you for the fight, The panoply of God,
That, having all things done, And all your conflicts past,
Ye may o'ercome through Christ alone, And stand complete at last.

As Christians, we can have a soldier's passion in everything we do. We just need to be reminded of this from time to time and we can ignite that passion for the defense of the gospel.

2. A Soldier's Camaraderie (Verses 2:1-4)

Philippians 2:1-4 Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, ² make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important

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than yourselves; ⁴ do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

- From the very beginning in basic training all the way to the battlefield, successful soldiers are taught to think together as a team. The ancients were no different, for a soldier must have a mind to serve others as a team. The success of the military from all generations and cultures is heavily dependent on the ability to work together. This only comes about when they work together.
 - When the ancients maneuvered a military naval ship, they oared together, worked the sailing gear together, floated together and sunk together if that is what it ended in.
 - When the troops on the ground fought an ancient battle, they coordinated together and worked as a team.
 - Archers shot in groups, the cavalry rode TOGETHER, the gladiators attacked TOGETHER, the siege troops carried out the battering rams, built the siege towers and worked the catapults TOGETHER, the supply staff did their job TOGETHER and the officers planned for all of them to work TOGETHER as a team to finish the job. The key is camaraderie among the troops. They are not thinking of themselves, but of the team.
- Lieutenant Paul has a message for the Christian troops and it is "CAMARADERIE, CAMARADERIE, CAMARADERIE". The soldiers of Christ must be working together with a great CAMARADERIE from their very core. He lists four important points of camaraderie for the Christian.
 - A. Consolation of Christ: There is camaraderie in offering a brother or sister consolation in their afflictions of the Christian life. When they are down from their daily battles, a simple reminder of the comforting message of Christ will often regenerate their hearts.
 - B. Comfort of Love: In conjunction with consolation in Christ is the comfort of love. Camaraderie is never so strong as when the constant expressions of love as demonstrated in our actions towards one another.
 - C. Fellowship of the Spirit: True Christians possess the Holy Spirit within them. When they assemble together, it is the fellowship of the Spirit. It is in our daily communal interactions with each other that we can learn so much more about our God. Camaraderie runs strong when fellowship is prominent.
 - D. Affection of Compassion: This is our emotional relationship between one another. If the first three are in place, then we will have the highest level of camaraderie possible as soldiers of Christ.

If lack of these always splits apart a church family, then possession of such will always keep them together. The camaraderie of a soldier is a great thing to have for a church family.

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3. A Soldier's Leader (2:5-11)

Philippians 2:5-11 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. ⁸ Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹ For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

- Any of the great battles or military forces in history had a primary great leader at the top. During the Babylonian era, it was Nebuchadnezzar. For the Medo/Persians it was Cyrus. For the Greeks it was Alexander the Great. For Rome during the time of Paul he was Vespasian. Great soldiers must follow a great leader.
- The great leader before the Christians is the One for whom the movement bears their name, General Jesus Christ.
 - He existed in the form of God, yet He was humble.
 - He had all the power of the universe at His hands, yet He surrendered it out of love.
 - He was completely void of guilt, yet he died for ours by taking it upon His cross.
 - He laid His life down for us on the front line for the salvation of our souls. Greater love hath no man than this that a man lay down his life for another. This is what General Jesus did for us!
- In the midst of this great act of humility, God highly exalted Him through resurrection from the grave and ascension from the earth into heaven. For this every knee will bow down and every tongue will confess that He is Lord, whether saved or lost, either by choice or by force, for He will have His recognition.
 - In the first century when a general would come back from a successful victory, he would be paraded through town on a white horse and dressed in white. His troops would proudly march behind him demonstrating their support for such a great man. As he rode past the crowd, people would bow on their knees and confess with their mouths his greatness, whether they believed it or not based on the fact that he was a proven victor. This is meaning of the beautiful scene carried out in Revelation 19:11-16, General Jesus being recognized as "King of kings and Lord of lords".
- Nothing is greater in generating strong soldiers of Christ that to have Jesus right out in front of the troops and everybody bowing down to General Jesus. When we are following a leader like this, then we can always follow Him like the soldiers we are called to be. Just to hear this

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passage in a military colony church family would have sent chills of emotion down the spines of Christians.

Three things that make good soldiers of Christ:

1. A Soldier's Passion
2. A Soldier's Camaraderie
3. A Soldier's Leader

If we take it serious, then we will be serious about our Christianity.

12 So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.