

CITIZENS OF HEAVEN

THE BOOK OF PHILIPPIANS

Sermon-Based Study Guide
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church
Philippians 1.27-2.4 | September 27, 2020
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I. Introduction to this Study

This week we continue our fall series Citizens of Heaven, engaging Paul's letter to the saints in Philippi. In the verses before us, Paul shifts his focus from his own circumstances to the Philippians' situation. In so doing, the Apostle gives guidance on Christ-like behaviors, not just Christian beliefs.

II. Connecting with One Another

Think of a time when someone went out of their way to serve you. When was it? What did they do? How did you feel as a result?

III. Study the Text

- a. On our Monday evening training session with Alex Absalom, we were reminded how effective evangelism allows others to *belong*, even before they *believe* or *behave*. This is what Jesus has done for us!

But Paul is writing to a church, a body of believers who have partnered with him in the gospel from early in his ministry (see **Philippians 1.3-6**). As such, their lives should look different from others.

Read just the first sentence of **Philippians 1.27**. How does your Bible translate this phrase? If you're meeting in a group, share the different ways the Greek is rendered.

- b. The first two words of verse 27 in the New International Version is "Whatever happens." It's an incredibly open-ended phrase.

Think of everything going on in our world. What else *could* happen before the end of the year? Make some notes here:

- c. Reread the rest of that first sentence in **verse 27**. Then think through the things you have written above that *could* happen. How could each of them make it difficult to "conduct yourself in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ"?

Why do you think Paul was so concerned with the Philippians' conduct?

Should pastors concern themselves with the conduct of church members?

Why or why not?



- d. Reread **verse 27**, then continue through the end of **verse 30**.

Why do you think Paul is so concerned about unity within the church? (Recall from the church's founding in **Acts 16.11-40** that the first three converts differed ethnically, economically, and spiritually.)

How do Good Shepherd's members differ? How do our differences challenge our "standing firm in one spirit"?

- e. In verses 28-29, Paul invites the Philippians to see their persecution as a gift.

Why does he frame it that way? How is persecution a "sign" to both believers and unbelievers at the same time?

- f. Read **Philippians 2.1-4**.

Chapter 2 begins with four 'ifs' and one 'then.'

What are the four 'ifs'? When have you experienced them?

- g. What do you think of Paul's 'then'?

How do the Philippians' lives "complete" Paul's joy?

What do you think it means to have the "same love"? Same love as who?

- h. **Verses 3-4** flow into the passage we will consider in greater detail next week. For now, though, why do you think humility is central to life in Christ?

How could you "look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others" in the church? In your family? In your neighborhood? In the voting booth?

How would this reveal to others your heavenly citizenship?

How could God use it to invite others into life in His family?

IV. Pray

- a. Ask God to reveal ways you could decrease conflict and increase unity within our church,
- b. Pray that God would prepare us to "conduct ourselves in a manner worthy" – whatever happens.
- c. Lift up those you know who have not yet accepted God's gift of salvation, that the words and actions of Christians would be used by the Holy Spirit to draw them in.

V. Digging Deeper

- a. See **Ephesians 4.1-16** for more on unity in the church.
- b. Engage what Scripture says about the four 'ifs': Encouragement – **John 17.21**, Love – **John 13.34-25**, Fellowship – **1st John 1.3, 6-7**, Compassion – **Romans 12.1, 2nd Corinthians 1.3, James 5.11**.

