

Unity and Courage

Philippians 1:25-28 HCSB Since I am persuaded of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your advancement and joy in the faith, (26) so that, because of me, your confidence may grow in Christ Jesus when I come to you again. (27) Just one thing: live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or am absent, I will hear about you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind, working side by side for the faith of the gospel, (28) not being frightened in any way by your opponents. This is evidence of their destruction, but of your deliverance--and this is from God.

Since I am persuaded of this. Paul felt that this was the will of the Lord on the matter. "Since" means that he was allowing that conviction to drive him to action. Allow me to demonstrate, "Since I know there is a lion in the next room, I will..." whatever. "Since I am persuaded that the economy will inevitably stall, I will pay my debts now and store food." Our true convictions always lead to action. If the vast majority of those who attend Culturally Christian churches are functionally indistinguishable from the world, they must not be truly convinced of Jesus' call upon their lives. Like Paul, we must seek the will of the Lord and then allow it to give our lives direction.

I know that I will remain and continue. He has reached the conclusion that his imprisonment will not result in execution but that he will somehow be acquitted and allowed to go free (see 1:26 "when I come to you again").

For your advancement. That is the purpose of his soon-to-be-acquired freedom. It is for the advancement of the kingdom and the continued discipling of the converts. Again, we must all keep in mind what our true purpose in life is. It is not to simply pay off a mortgage or to enjoy the benefits of living in one of the freest nations in the world. If we continue living, it is because we have a mission from our King that needs to be accomplished.

And joy in the faith. This is where real joy comes in. When we get our priorities right and realize that our lives have meaning in Christ, that we have hope for the future, that this world is largely meaningless outside of our mission to serve God and that nothing it can throw at us can ultimately hurt us, we find joy. Not happiness, which is inextricably tied to pleasant circumstances, but joy that rises ABOVE our circumstances. There is joy in faith that the atheist or the agnostic will never know.

Philippians 1:26 HCSB so that, because of me, your confidence may grow in Christ Jesus when I come to you again.

Because of me. "No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main..." (John Donne) If we sin, we do not sin alone. Someone else pays the price as well.

- **Numbers 14:18 HCSB** The LORD is slow to anger and rich in faithful love, forgiving wrongdoing and rebellion. But He will not leave *the guilty* unpunished, bringing the consequences of the fathers' wrongdoing on the children to the third and fourth generation. (see also Exodus 20:5; 34:7; Deuteronomy 5:9)

But when we do what is right and serve God properly, that too has an effect on others.

- **Matthew 5:16 HCSB** In the same way, let your light shine before men, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father in heaven.

We should each ask ourselves, "Because of me...what is happening in the lives of others?"

Your confidence may grow in Christ Jesus. In spite of Paul's willingness to remain alive and continue suffering for their sake, their confidence was not to grow in Paul, but in Jesus.

- **Jeremiah 17:7 HCSB** Blessed is the man who trusts in the LORD, whose confidence indeed is the LORD.

For we boast in Christ Jesus and do not put confidence in the flesh (Philippians 3:3).

When I come to you. Paul was in fact released from prison.

Philippians 1:27 HCSB Just one thing: live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or am absent, I will hear about you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind, working side by side for the faith of the gospel,

Just one thing. Paul is like God in that he keeps his requirements simple. God's demands were pretty simple in Gan Eden, the Garden in the land of Eden, i.e. "don't eat that fruit." His demands continued in their simple, straightforward nature.

- **Micah 6:8 HCSB** He has told you men what is good and what it is the LORD requires of you: Only to act justly, to love faithfulness, and to walk humbly with your God.

One thing is certain: if we fail it is certainly not because the Lord's demands are unreasonable. He spoke the truth when He said, "My yoke is light and my burden is easy." (Matthew 11:30)

I find it instructive that Paul's demand in exchange for remaining alive and suffering for their sake is remarkably similar to God's in Micah 6, even though this was in the "age of grace." Hashem says, "Act justly, love faithfulness, and walk humbly with your God." Paul says, "If I have to delay my home-going, make sure that your lives are worth that sacrifice - live in a manner that is worthy of the Gospel."

This is the same message that I continue bringing to you - my people, my flock, my congregation, my spiritual family. Live lives that reflect the joyful gratitude that should be the natural response of a saved people.

Worthy of the Gospel. Our lives generally reflect the influences we've felt in the past. We have our mother's mannerisms, our father's sense of humor, our friend's values, or our society's taboos. As talmidim, the influence of our Master should be strongly evident to all who observe our manner of living.

We are ambassadors for the Messiah.

- [2 Corinthians 5:20 HCSB](#) Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ; certain that God is appealing through us, we plead on Christ's behalf, "Be reconciled to God."
- [Ephesians 6:20 HCSB](#) For this I am an ambassador in chains. Pray that I might be bold enough in Him to speak as I should.

So, our lives should be worthy of the Kingdom, reflecting our new status as royal priests.

- [1 Peter 2:9 HCSB](#) But you are **a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for His possession, so that you may proclaim the praises** of the One who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.

Standing firm in one spirit. Our unity should be based on the Spirit we share.

- [Ephesians 4:1-3 HCSB](#) I, therefore, the prisoner in the Lord, urge you to walk worthy of the calling you have received, (2) with all humility and gentleness, with patience, accepting one another in love, (3) ***diligently keeping*** the unity of the Spirit with the peace that binds *us*.

The Spirit's forgiving, sealing, and empowering presence should help us to build unity through humble mutual acceptance, forgiveness, and restitution.

- [Colossians 3:12-14 HCSB](#) Therefore, God's chosen ones, holy and loved, put on heartfelt compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience,

(13) accepting one another and forgiving one another if anyone has a complaint against another. Just as the Lord has forgiven you, so also you must *forgive*. (14) Above all, put on love--the perfect bond of unity.

Our unity should be based on sound doctrine and submission to our spiritual elders.

- **Ephesians 4:4-6 HCSB** There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called to one hope at your calling; (5) one Lord, one faith, one baptism, (6) one God and Father of all, who is above all and through all and in all.
- **Ephesians 4:11-15 HCSB** And He personally gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, (12) for the training of the saints in the work of ministry, to build up the body of Christ, (13) until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of God's Son, *growing* into a mature man with a stature measured by Christ's fullness. (14) Then we will no longer be little children, tossed by the waves and blown around by every wind of teaching, by human cunning with cleverness in the techniques of deceit. (15) But speaking the truth in love, let us grow in every way into Him who is the head--Christ.

Philippians 1:28 HCSB not being frightened in any way by your opponents. This is evidence of their destruction, but of your deliverance--and this is from God.

Not being frightened. We are no longer children to be frightened by the boogie man of death.

- **Ephesians 4:14 HCSB** Then we will no longer be little children, tossed by the waves and blown around by every wind of teaching, by human cunning with cleverness in the techniques of deceit.

We are no longer tossed about by every whim of man.

- **James 1:6 HCSB** But let him ask in faith without doubting. For the doubter is like the surging sea, driven and tossed by the wind.

In fact, we demolish arguments,

- **2 Corinthians 10:5 HCSB** and every high-minded thing that is raised up against the knowledge of God, taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.
- **Joshua 10:22-25 HCSB** Then Joshua said, "Open the mouth of the cave, and bring those five kings to me out of there." (23) That is what they did. They brought the five kings of Jerusalem, Hebron, Jarmuth, Lachish, and Eglon to Joshua out of the cave. (24) When they had brought the kings

to him, Joshua summoned all the men of Israel and said to the military commanders who had accompanied him, "Come here and put your feet on the necks of these kings." So the commanders came forward and put their feet on their necks. (25) Joshua said to them, "Do not be afraid or discouraged. Be strong and courageous, for the LORD will do this to all the enemies you fight."

The first time God commanded the Israelites to cross the Jordan River and begin taking possession of Canaan, the people had balked. They considered the giants that were in the land, the huge fortified cities and the large professional armies and were too afraid to proceed. So, God made them wander in the desert for forty years until that entire generation died.

Then He tried again. The next generation was made of sterner stuff and went about the task enthusiastically if not always intelligently. But apparently, there was still a residual fear because Joshua himself had to be reminded several times to be courageous (Joshua 1:6-9).

Here, after a tremendous battle that involved taking on five armies at once, Joshua felt it was necessary to provide a visual lesson in courage. The five kings they had fought against had deserted their armies and were hiding in a cave. Joshua ordered the people to wall it up so they could finish dealing with the armies.

When the battle was over, they took the wall down and dragged the kings out. By making the captains place their feet on the necks of these proud kings, Joshua was hammering home the fact that these kings had no real power over God's people.

What a lesson! We may not be fighting human armies, but we struggle every day with sin and the evil influences that pervade this world.

- [Ephesians 6:12 HCSB](#) For our battle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the world powers of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavens.

Too many times, we run when we should be triumphantly placing our feet on their proud necks. We are opposed and persecuted and we run away caterwauling like little babies when we should be spiritual warriors!

God has already given us the victory – all we have to do is claim it! Surely there is a mountain you can claim? Is there not one giant that you could dispatch? Are you truly content to remain safe and sound in the wilderness, to simply survive and wait for death?

Be strong and courageous, for you are destined to gain victory over the world, the flesh, and the devil. Study the Bible continually. Meditate on it day and night so you may be sure to obey it well. Only then will you succeed. Do not be afraid or discouraged. For the Lord your God is with you wherever you go. Go place your feet on the neck of some proud king. See what God can do – through you.