CAPITOL® COMMISSION
Gospel Hope & Spiritual Strength for Government Leaders

Virtues for Today

February 6, 2024

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Weekly Bible Study Schedule
Tuesday, February 6, 7:00-7:45 AM
House Hearing Room 3
All Welcome!
Capitol Commission is NON-PARTISAN and NON-DENOMINATIONAL

Introduction
From Philippians chapter two flows the message of the gospel, modeled by Jesus, and proclaimed by the Apostle Paul.

The gospel is good news about Jesus who left heaven to come to earth in the form of a human; He lived 33-years to show the way of God's love, and to provide redemption by His sacrificial death on a cross. He rose from the dead and was exalted to heaven; and soon, He will return to earth to create a new heaven and earth.

Paul continues to admonish the Philippians from chapter one verses twenty-seven to thirty to be unified in mind. Whether defending the faith from the external pressure of the Roman opposition or the internal pressure from false teachers, they are to take up the same mindset as Christ. Stand together in one faith, in one spirit, and in one purpose.

The church is to contend together. The individual and community tethered by unity in spirit to accomplish God's plan for His Church.

Examples To Imitate or Not
The call to imitate is pronounced in chapter two. Paul offers four examples worth following: Jesus, Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus. Of course, Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus, followed the model example in Christ. The churches unity is maintained when unified in the attitude of Christ.

In a culture of celebrity, image, power, temptation lurks to mirror culture rather than imitate the example of Jesus. The platform persona draws many into a perspective of hubris; an overestimation of one's position; comparison of stature can each be difficult to resist.

How we measure our stature informs the attitude and thoughts by which we live. Do you live by the spirit of humility or hubris?

Roman-Greco Virtue

Roman-Greco society was a bastion of competitiveness. The idea of winning and outdoing your opponent was embedded in education. Athletics, Arts, and Communication skills were a means to elevate one's public status. The secular practiced selfishness, "me" first, pride, image protection, and power control.

James and John Effect
The expectation is not for Jesus to follow His disciples, rather for disciples to follower Him. In Mark 10 we read how the early disciples fell into the temptation of wanting to be first. Brothers, James and John, desired to sit at the right and left hands of Jesus (symbolic of "top" positions). A summation statement by Jesus was:

> *10:42-45 – So Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers in this world lord it over their people, and officials flaunt their authority over those under them. But among you it will be different. Whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must be the slave of everyone else. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many."*

Christian Virtue
Christian virtues are grounded in love. The Christian Ethic is more than ancient philosophies. Laid out in the four verses of our study are virtues like: encouragement, love, fellowship, compassion, unity, and humility.

In order to understand 2:1-4, one must revisit 1:30, where Paul affirmed their mutual struggle in suffering.

> *"We are in this struggle together. You have seen my struggle in the past, and you know that I am still in the midst of it."*

Paul's use of rhetoric plays out as affirmations rather unanswered questions are posed.

2:1 – Is there any encouragement from belonging to Christ? Any comfort from his love? Any fellowship together in the Spirit? Are your hearts tender and compassionate?

Since these virtues exist live them out in the midst of suffering, in the church, and in one's life. We are encouraged because we are God's sons and daughters. We belong to Christ and no one can take that from us. When a person we love passes from earth into eternity we hurt because we will miss them, and we are comforted knowing God loves us and is with us. The Holy Spirit is our comforter.

> *But the fact of the matter is that it is best for you that I go away, for if I don't, the Comforter won't come. If I do, he will—for I will send him to you.* John 16:7

The Spirit of God is with us so we can fellowship with Him. We get to participate with God in the fellowship of His sufferings, power of His resurrection, advancement of the gospel, and in each other's lives. We partner with the Spirit and with each other. Care what happens to one another. Compassion is action oriented. If you see a need ask how you can meet the need. What might it be like if we all became visible to each other? What if we saw each other as people made in the image of God with value?

2:2 – Then make me truly happy by agreeing wholeheartedly with each other, loving one another, and working together with one mind and purpose.

Participating in God's work in unity of mind and the spirit of love is what will make Paul's heart full of joy. His aggregate of phrases be like minded, love the same are heaped on the opportunity for spiritual growth.

The greatest virtue is love. It is the strongest bond. Love produces unity. We serve in order to love others more than ourselves. Paul lived devoted to Jesus believing that to remain on earth means to partner with the Holy Spirit and to partner with the Philippians. He embraced the example of Jesus to serve others.

Love in the spirit of Jesus. I'm asking the Spirit of God to help me love people more for who they are, not if only they agree with me. Perhaps you already have a list of people you don't want to love. Maybe you believe you can't love them. Let's be honest, some people are hard to love. But, what might happen if everyone in this building made a sincere overture to love at least one "difficult" person more than you do now under the dome, in the Supreme Court building, and in government facilities where you, reader, work?

I invite you to pray with me to love people better. Not to get anything from them, rather simply because Jesus does and He is our model for living the God life.

2:3 – Don't be selfish; don't try to impress others. Be humble, thinking of others as better than yourselves.

Evidently, the Philippian church had members who operated in selfish ambition, ego, and a cadre of arrows in their quiver. The solution to disunity, unforgiveness, bitterness, going to any length to get the upper hand on someone is humility. Rivalry and humility are not friends.

2:4 – Don't look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.
The Christian ethic of other-centeredness involves a rejection of self-centered motives. Humble leadership yields our preferences to accommodate the best interest of others.

humility?