

Gospel Doctrine Lesson 40: "I Can Do All Things through Christ"
(Philippians, Colossians, Philemon)

LESSON GOAL: To encourage class members to develop the characteristics of true followers of Jesus Christ.

Ted Gibbons: It seems to me to be impossible to read very much of Paul without a change of heart. This persecutor of the Christians, this participant in the martyrdom of Stephen, this most zealous of Pharisees found himself at the feet of the Savior, and **allowed his life to be transformed by the Love of the Christ.** From that moment to the end of his life, **Paul toiled and prayed and preached in a monumental effort to share the goodness of what he had found.** We who have been born of the Spirit and who have this same hope can do no less. **We must forgive all men, follow Christ and claim the redemption offered by the Lord Jesus Christ.** (Ted Gibbons tedgibbons@yahoo.com).

1. Paul encourages the Philippian Saints to follow Jesus Christ.

LISTEN TO THE LOVE IN PAUL'S VOICE IN PHILIPPIANS 1:

3 I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,

4 Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy,

5 For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now;

7 . . . I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace.

8 For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels [heart, compassion] of Jesus Christ.

9 And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment;

25 And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith;

26 That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again.

Elder Bruce R. McConkie: "Philippians is not a mighty dissertation, one to shake the earth or serve as a guidepost to Christendom, but it is a **sweet and refined statement** into which a number of gospel doctrines are woven. And our Bible is greatly enriched by its presence there." (DNTC, 2:525)

Ted Gibbons: "This letter to the Philippian saints has been called the "**happy letter** There are no great problems addressed in this letter, no stirring calls to repentance, no reproof nor rebuke, but rather a gentle admonition to the believers to "**be filled with the fruits of righteousness** which are by Jesus Christ unto the glory and praise of God." (1:11)

Those fruits can fill our lives as we follow Christ. Philippians suggests at least eight wonderful ways to do that.

A. Our lives should be an example of the goodness, glory, and grace of Christ.

We should ask, "What kind of Christ does my life preach?"

Philippians 1:18: ". . . notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice."

B. Our lives must be a blessing to others. Paul knew that his converts still needed his influence in the flesh.

Philippians 1:20-21, 24-25: ". . . in nothing I shall be ashamed, but *that* with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether *it be* by life, or by death. **For to me to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain.** . . Nevertheless to abide in the flesh *is* more needful for you. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith;"

C. Love one another and care for each other.

Philippians 2:2-3, 5-7: "Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind. Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. . . . Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:"

D. Be "blameless and harmless" regardless of your surroundings. Paul taught:

Philippians 2:14-16: "Do all things without murmurings and disputings: That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain."

E. **Christ must come first in our lives.** Nothing can take precedence over our love for and our relationship with him.

Philippians 3:8: "Yea doubtless, and I count all things *but* loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and **do count them *but* dung, that I may win Christ."**

F. **Forgiving ourselves and moving on.**

Philippians 3:13-14: ", , , this one thing I do, **forgetting those things which are behind**, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, **I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."**

President Hinckley counseled: "To any who may be grieving over serious mistakes in their lives, I hold out the assurance, given anciently and in modern revelation, that **where there is repentance there may be forgiveness**. Do not dwell upon the tragic mistakes of the past. Rather **"look to God and live"** ("If Thou Art Faithful," March 1992, Liahona).

G. **Not stressing out.**

Philippians 4:6-7: "Be careful for [our modern-day phrase would be *stressed about*] nothing; **but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God**. And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, **shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus."**

H. **Being content.**

Philippians 4:11-13: "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, **therewith to be content**. I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. **I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."**

Gordon B. Hinckley: "Let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ" (Philippians 1:27) That is a tremendously compelling injunction given to each of us. I recommend those words as a personal motto. May I suggest that you **type or write them and put them on the mirror** before you so that each day you might be reminded of them. **They could become a powerful motivator in restraining from anger, in thinking better thoughts, in speaking more elevating language.** ("If Thou Art Faithful," *Ensign*, Nov. 1984, 90)

Neal A. Maxwell: "Christ's advocacy is advocacy with perfect empathy and mercy. Being sinless Himself, the **wounds and scars He bears are actually ours**. After all, He was "wounded for our transgressions." He loved us so dearly that He voluntarily laid down His life for us. Furthermore, even though He gives us demanding commandments and stern tasks, **He has mercifully promised to prepare a way for us to keep and to fulfill all of them"** (*Even As I Am*, 33-34).

Neal A. Maxwell: "When we learn to **"shine as lights in the world"** (Philip. 2:15) **there is no need to seek to be in the spotlight**. Such lesser incandescence is of no interest" (*Men and Women of Christ*, 28).

President David O. McKay: "'Work out your own salvation' is an exhortation to demonstrate by activity, by thoughtful obedient effort **the reality of faith**. But this must be done with 'fear and trembling;' that is with a consciousness that **absolute dependence upon self may produce pride and weakness** that will bring failure. With 'fear and trembling' we should seek the strength and grace of God for inspiration to obtain the final victory.

"However, to work out one's salvation is not to sit idly by, dreaming and yearning for God miraculously to thrust bounteous blessings into our laps. **It is to perform daily, hourly, momentarily, if necessary, the immediate task or duty at hand, and to continue happily in such performance as the years come and go**, leaving the fruits of such labors either to self or to others to be bestowed as a just and beneficent Father may determine." (CR, April 1938)

Philippians 4:8-9: "Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are **true**, whatsoever things are **honest**, whatsoever things are **just**, whatsoever things are **pure**, whatsoever things are **lovely**, whatsoever things are **of good report**; if there be any **virtue**, and if there be any **praise**, **think on these things**. **Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you."**

"Think on these things" Many years ago James Allen wrote a little book, entitled, *As A Man Thinketh*. based on this scripture Consider a few of his thoughts:

- ❖ "Every act of a man springs from the hidden seeds of thought, and could not have appeared without them."
- ❖ "A man's mind may be likened to a garden, which may be intelligently cultivated or allowed to run wild; but whether cultivated or neglected, it must, and will, bring forth."
- ❖ "The soul attracts that which it secretly harbors; that which it loves, and also that which it fears, it reaches the height of its cherished aspirations; it falls to the level of its unchastened desires".
- ❖ "During the process of putting himself right, he will find that as he alters his thoughts toward things, and other people, things and other people will alter toward him."
- ❖ "A man can only rise, conquer, and achieve by lifting up his thoughts."
- ❖ "Dreams are the seedlings of realities."

Phil. 4: 13: "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

Lloyd D. Newell: "When we approach the 'rough' in life with a positive attitude and a humble dependence upon God, it is amazing how the rocky road we were once traveling can become so much more smooth. The nature of 'the road' really does not change, but our capacity to walk it increases when we turn to God for support. We, like Paul, will then say to ourselves: 'I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me'." (*The Divine Connection*, 96).

APPLICATION: How have you seen that you can "do all things through Christ"?

2. Paul reminds the Colossians that redemption comes only through Christ.

IN COLOSSIANS I, PAUL TAUGHT THESE TRUTHS ABOUT JESUS CHRIST:

- Christ is the **author of our salvation** (v13-14).
- He is in the **image of his father** (physically & spiritually). (v15)
- He is the **Firstborn** of the Father - the first of his spirit children. (v15)
- He is the **creator of all things**, both in heaven and in earth. (v16)
- He is the **head of the church**. (v18)
- He is the **"firstborn from the dead"**. (18)
- Even the **wicked are reconciled to God through Christ**. (v21)

Colossians 2:6-8: As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him: Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith, as ye have been taught, **abounding therein with thanksgiving**. Beware lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ.

APPLICATION: What can we do to strengthen our testimonies?

3. Paul teaches the Colossians what they should do as the elect of God.

Unlike Paul's message of love to the Philippians, Paul preached repentance and the power of Christ to the Colossians. He exhorted them with these words:

Col. 1:21-23, 28: "And you, that were sometime alienated and enemies in [your] mind by wicked works, yet now hath he reconciled in the body of his flesh through death, to present you holy and unblameable and unreprouvable in his sight: **If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled**, and [be] not moved away from the hope of the gospel, which ye have heard, [and] which was preached to every creature which is under heaven; whereof I Paul am made a minister . . . [and Christ] Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; **that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus.**"

Elaine L. Jack: Look closely at Paul's counsel: "Continue in faith," he said, be strong in your testimony. "Grounded and settled" suggests putting your roots down in good gospel ground, hold on, be secure and is the centerpiece of this challenge from Paul. "Be not moved away from the hope of the gospel," for it is the hope of the gospel that keeps circumstances, trials, disappointments in proper perspective. **The hope of the gospel includes the promise of peace and comfort from the Holy Ghost.** I know many people whom I would term grounded and settled. I know how they will respond in every situation whether meeting daily challenges or monumental difficulties. (*Ensign*, Mar. 1996, 19).

Neal A. Maxwell: "Events and circumstances in the last days make it imperative for us as members of the Church to become more grounded, rooted, established, and settled (Col. 1:23)... **Real disciples absorb the fiery darts of the adversary** by holding aloft the **quenching shield of faith** with one hand, while holding to the **iron rod** with the other. There should be no mistaking; it will take both hands!" ("Overcome," *Ensign*, May 1987, 70).

We are expected to be grounded. Paul suggests this understanding of that idea:

Eph. 3:17-19: "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, **being rooted and grounded in love**, may be able to comprehend with all saints what [is] the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; **And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God.**"

How do we accomplish this, we who are the elect of God, waiting and hoping for the redemption of Christ?

1. Seek heavenly pleasures, not earthly ones.

Colossians 3:1-2: "If ye then be risen with Christ, **seek those things which are above**, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. **Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.**"

2. Subdue the natural man.

Colossians 3:5: "Mortify therefore your members which are upon the earth; fornication, uncleanness, inordinate affection, evil concupiscence, and covetousness, which is idolatry."

3. "...Put on the new [man] . . . of CHARITY.

Colossians 3:12-15: "Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of **MERCIES, KINDNESS, HUMBLENESS** of mind, **MEEKNESS, LONGSUFFERING; FORBEARING** one another, and **FORGIVING** one another, if any man have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, so also do ye. And above all these things put on **CHARITY**, which is the bond of **PERFECTNESS**. And let the **PEACE** of God rule in your hearts."

4. Sing praises to the Lord

Colossians 3:16: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

5. Serve the Christ with boldness

Colossians 3:23-24: "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men; knowing that of the Lord ye shall receive the reward of the inheritance: for ye serve the Lord Christ."

6. Pray earnestly

Colossians 4:2-3: "Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving; Withal praying also for us, that God would open unto us a door of utterance, to speak the mystery of Christ, for which I am also in bonds:"

7. Speak with grace

Colossians 4:6: "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man."

Colossians 3:21: "Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged."

Layne E. and Jana Squires Flake: "We must constantly be aware that the one most influential factor in our children's behavior: us. We must guard against the tendency to provoke the very behaviors that disturb us. True discipline is not emotionally charged. Punishment, on the other hand, is frequently accompanied by a tide of uncontrolled emotion. There is no value in screaming at a child for his misbehavior. When parents engage in a shouting match with their children, the emotional temperature in the home rises and parents become guilty of the very thing the scriptures caution against: 'Fathers, provoke not your children to anger, lest they be discouraged.' (Col. 3:21) ("Punishment—or Discipline," *Ensign*, Oct. 1983, 40)

APPLICATION: How can we "knit together in love" our hearts in our own ward?

4. Paul encourages Philemon to be forgiving toward Onesimus.

Philemon lived in Colosse.

- He was, in the pattern of the day, a **slave owner**. In fact the Roman Empire included about 10,000,000 slaves.
- One of Philemon's slaves, **Onesimus**, had apparently **stolen** something from him and then had run away to Rome where **he met Paul and was converted**.
- Under Roman law, Onesimus's actions were punishable by death, but **Paul wrote to ask Philemon to forgive whatever debt Onesimus owed**, and to accept him as a brother in Christ.
- In fact, **Paul offered himself** as surety for the loss suffered by Philemon following his release from prison.

Philemon 1:15: "I know what he has done to you," he writes. "If the debt must be paid, send the bill to me. I'll take care of it. **But receive this man not as a thief, and not even as a neighbor, but as 'a brother beloved, specially to me, but how much more unto thee, both in the flesh and in the Lord.'**"

Philemon 1:18: "If he hath wronged thee, or oweth thee ought, **put that on mine account.**"

Someone once suggested that we read Philemon as though it were a letter from the Savior to us, asking us to forgive someone, all the while asking ourselves these questions: "Whom do I need to Forgive?" and "How can I let the Lord know that I have done so?"

Spencer W. Kimball: "I have always been uplifted by reading the short epistle of Paul to Philemon; it teaches us a principle and a spirit concerning gospel brotherhood. Philemon's servant, Onesimus, had run away from his master and joined Paul in Rome. Paul converted Onesimus to the gospel and in sending him, a changed man, back to Philemon. Paul wanted to teach Onesimus the necessity of **being obedient to law**, and he wanted to teach Philemon the **need for greater love**, a love sufficient to free his servant, even his equal.

"It is an inspiration and joy to see **this same spirit at work** throughout the Church, to see the Saints **embrace and help and pray** for those who daily enter the kingdom of our Lord. **Continue to reach out to each other—and the many more who will enter the Church.** Welcome them, love and fellowship them" (*Ensign*, Sept. 1975, 4).

APPLICATION: How does the gospel affect your relationships with the people around you?