

“I Can Do All Things Through Christ”

Philippians; Colossians; Philemon

Lesson
40
Summary

Scripture Summary:

Philip. 1: All that happened to Paul furthered the gospel cause—Our conduct should be as becometh the gospel. Philip. 2: Saints should be of one mind and one spirit—Every knee shall bow to Christ—Saints must work out their salvation—Paul faces martyrdom with joy. Philip. 3: Paul sacrifices all things for Christ—True ministers set examples of righteousness. Philip. 4: Stand fast in the Lord—We believe in being honest, true, and chaste. Col. 1: Redemption comes through Christ—He created all things, is in the image of God, and is the Firstborn of the Father. Col. 2: Fulsness of Godhead dwells in Christ—Beware of deceit by traditions of men—The handwriting against us was nailed to cross of Christ. Col. 3: Some lives are hid with God in Christ—Saints exhorted to be holy and to serve the Lord Jesus Christ. Col. 4: Saints exhorted to be wise in all things—Luke and others salute the Colossians. Philem. 1: The gospel changes a servant into a brother.

Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights:

Identity or Unity? In Israel, several cultures can be observed and their varying forms of unity (or disunity) can be identified.

The Bahai Religion: Its headquarters are in Haifa, Israel. They maintain the main religious concept of unity. They believe that all people are brothers and should even speak the same language. They suggest that all religions have truths that would unify mankind and that God will continue to reveal truths through prophets from time to time. Their own religious disciplines are similar wherever you go throughout the world. That discipline includes administrative structure, health rules, and charismatic procedures and exercises.

Islam, a Major Arab Religion: The Arabs, on the other hand, have a much less unified identity. Although their families are important and many memorize generations of their family genealogy, they have not been able to carry on any major unity as communities or countries. The Arab culture is largely influenced by Islam and one of its main principles is to “follow.” The word “Moslem” means “a follower.” The challenge is that Islam has many charismatic leaders, usually geographically separated, and so a unity of religious expression is almost impossible to achieve. The Englishman T. E. Lawrence (Lawrence of Arabia) vainly attempted to unify the various Arab tribes and geographic leaders into a common Arab nationality. His western concepts were too difficult to be adapted to the eastern way of thinking. “With the emergence of strong national identities in the Arab World, Arab countries have never been able to settle their own differences and unite.” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

Is “Jewish” Just a Religion? Looking at the Jews, there is a popular anecdote in Israel that seems to denote a characteristic among them. Jokingly, they say, “Two Jews in a conversation always come up with three opinions.” It is Jewish nature to discuss and even make up opposite points of view so that the contrasts or opposing ideas of view can become a learning experience. Yet, in the Jewish culture there is an underlying unity of “a people” or a “community of Israel.” “. . . (it) is the term used to describe the common responsibility, destiny, and kinship of all members of the Jewish people. The rabbis declared that ‘all Israel are responsible one for another’ and sinners must be rebuked because the entire community is ultimately responsible for the sinner’s wrongdoings. The unity of the Jewish nation was considered an historic and spiritual concept, in addition to being a social reality. All generations of Jews (including converts to Judaism) were viewed . . . sharing in the responsibilities of the covenant with God. Likewise, the righteous of all generations will be reunited at the time of the resurrection of the dead during the messianic period. This concept of community and shared fate is referred to often in the Talmud with the terms *kelal Yisrael* and *keneset Yisrael*.”

Family – Unifying Element of the Community of Israel: “Judaism considers the establishment of a family a holy task. Children are a gift from God and childlessness the greatest misfortune that could befall a marriage. The virtues of domestic bliss have been frequently extolled by the rabbis, and the close-knit Jewish family, where the home has been the center of religious practice and ceremony, has greatly helped the survival of Judaism and preserved the moral integrity of the Jews.” (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

Ancient Cooperative Efforts Repeated in “The Kibbutz:” “Kibbutzim with similar ways of thinking often group together in federations, which save their member-villages money by purchasing for them all in bulk, and arranging from one central office to sell all their crops. In addition, many kibbutzim cooperate with other kibbutzim in the same region, whether they share the same ideas or not, and together they are able to build central silos and arrange heavy transport.

Likewise, the kibbutz associations have their own adult education courses, choirs, amateur orchestras, art collections, bulletins, publishing houses, and even their own teachers' training college. Thousands of members of certain older kibbutzim, after completing their three-year army service, volunteer a year's labor --- unpaid, of course --- in newer kibbutzim, in order to help them stand on their own feet." (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.) A similar unity and community bond can be seen in the scriptures. "And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need . . ." (Acts 2:44-47) ". . . of one heart and of one . . . they had all things common." (Acts 4:32) ". . . and did minister one to another; and they had all things common among them, every man dealing justly, one with another." (3 Nephi 26:19)

Scriptural Unity Centered on the Lord: The valuable lesson that we can learn is that unity represented in the scriptures is always connected with a central belief and faith in the Lord. That focus assures a unity because His directive powers are the same for everyone. "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths." (Proverbs 3:6) ". . . our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way unto you." (1 Thessalonians 3:11) "Counsel with the Lord in all thy doings, and he will direct thee for good . . ." (Alma 37:37)

Jewish Unity in a "Prayer Circle" (Minyan): The request for forgiveness includes all. ". . . Almost all prayer . . . was written in the first person plural --- 'Forgive us,' 'Teach us,' 'Bring us to our Land.' Although private prayer was certainly permitted, the individual was urged to join a congregation (*minyan*) when he prays and to incorporate the needs of the *minyan* in his prayers." (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

Jewish Views Relating to an LDS Standard of Unity: The Latter-day Saint's concept of focusing on the Lord prompts a unified community life that can still be expressed individually. Jewish cultural statements from the Encyclopedia Judaica Jr. aligning with principles of the LDS thirteenth Article of Faith reflect a unified lifestyle reaching back to God's initial biblical instructions to all mankind. **Honest:** ". . . It is recognized that in a ruthless business world of mixed peoples, honest dealings are difficult, but the Jew should know and retain his ideals." **True:** ". . . Prayer is a way to master what is inferior in us . . . it helps us discover our true aspirations . . . through prayer we deepen our commitment to righteous living." **Chaste:** "Judaism encourages modesty as one of the means to chastity . . . a man is forbidden to be alone with a woman with whom he is not permitted to have sexual relations from considerations of both chastity and modesty." **Benevolent:** "In the Bible very often the acts of God are referred to figuratively using terms such as 'the hand of God' . . . the image of God's hands has been used to show benevolence and loving-kindness . . . (Psalms 145). **Virtuous:** "Righteous gentiles . . . rabbinic term for those non-Jews who, because of their moral character or virtuous acts, rank equally in merit and grace with Jews. According to the Talmud, the righteous gentile is as eligible as any Jew for a place in the world to come." **Doing good:** "Ethics are the principles by which man can live a good life in relation to his fellow man. The ethical life is basic to Jewish religious observance: "Love thy neighbor as thyself: I am the Lord" (Leviticus 19:18). Love of God is incomplete without love of man. This precept underlies the rules of conduct which the Torah prescribes . . ." "Hospitality is considered by Judaism to be one of the most important virtues that a person can develop. This has been true since the time of ancient Israel, when hospitality was not merely a question of good manners, but a moral institution which grew out of the harsh desert and nomadic existence of the people of Israel. The biblical customs of welcoming the weary traveler and receiving the stranger in one's midst developed into an important Jewish virtue. Isaiah states that one of the duties of the pious is to 'deal thy bread to the hungry' and to 'bring the poor that are cast out to thy house.'"

Holiness Is the Only Way to Combat Evil: "A.J. Heschel (1907-1972) based his views on a Midrash stating that holiness is the only way to combat evil and that learning and obeying the precepts of Torah is the only way to gain holiness. The simplest advice in combating evil: 'Turn from evil and do good' is from the Book of Psalms (34:15)." (Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.) Each part of the House of Israel has a common unified goal of turning from evil and in doing good. Focusing on the God of Israel makes all good things possible through Him.

Daniel Rona, born in Israel and living in Jerusalem has authored Old & New Testament and Book of Mormon Supplement Study Materials to be used in conjunction with the weekly LDS Gospel Doctrine Lesson study. NOTE: Three versions of the supplemental study materials are available **FREE** at www.HolyLandsRevealed.com. (Just click "LDS SUPPLEMENTS")

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