

**Contending as One:** Philippians 1.27-30  
[Going Deeper]

When Paul uses the word “*palitenomai*,” he writes it to a group of people who were actually, probably rather proud of their Roman citizenship in a prominent Roman city like Philippi. It seems that Paul is calling the Philippians to seem themselves as citizens of something even bigger than the Roman Empire—the Kingdom of God. How would you finish this sentence? Paul is calling us to see ourselves as citizens of something bigger than . . .

In other letters, Paul refers to us as “ambassadors of reconciliation.” How does this relate to the idea of “*politenomai*” in Philippians 1.27? If we take this one step further, as ambassadors, we could then describe the church as an “embassy” of the Kingdom of God. What would this look like?

**Read Genesis 1.26-30**

If Father, Son and Holy Spirit are three persons who give and receive from one another in an endless loop of self-giving love, then what does that mean for people who are made in the image of God? What affect does this have on the way we think of ourselves and each other?

How does individualism tend to undercut God’s design for creation?

Perhaps when we learn the story behind someone’s story it moves us from being accusers to advocates—how does this work?

How does individualism cause us to become consumers of each other? Have you ever felt used by someone else or used someone else? What do you do with something you have consumed? How do we do that with people?

**Read Hebrews 10.23-25**

Why do you think the writer ties holding onto hope with the idea of community?

What gets us into the habit of isolating ourselves from the community we are a part of?

What consequences have you experienced from isolating yourself?

So why do we do it?

**Read Philippians 1.27-30**

If suffering is a sign of salvation for the Christian, what in your life or the world might appear to be salvation, but is really destruction?

**Read Luke 16.13**

At the time of this letter, Emperor Nero was considered “the lord and savior from whom peace and the blessings of life flow.” What (not who) do you think the “neros” of today are?

Why are these things so obviously not the place from which the peace and blessings of life flow?

Think of some examples of people peacefully standing against systems of power—what is being pointed out when people do this?

When you think of the kind of person that God is transforming people into, through Jesus, what words come to mind? (patient, forgiving, generous, etc.) After you have made the list, write down what each word stands opposed to or in contrast with. (i.e. forgiveness stands in contrast to revenge, bitterness, resentment, etc.)

What message is your life communicating? Which words in your list above describe your message?