

Sydney Study Week 2006

Philippians



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ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE NOTES

AV	Authorised Version (King James)
Bull.	Bullinger's <i>Critical Lexicon & Concordance</i>
ch	Philippians chapter
Conc.	Concordant <i>Literal Translation</i>
Cp.	Compare
Diag.	Diaglott
Gk.	Greek
Heb.	Hebrew
LXX	Septuagint (Greek O.T.)
NASB	New American Standard Bible
N.T.	New Testament
mg.	Margin
occ.	Occurs
O.T.	Old Testament
Roth.	Rotherham's <i>Emphasized Bible</i>
RSV	Revised Standard Version
RV	Revised Version
Str.	Strong's <i>Analytical Concordance</i>
TCNT	Twentieth Century New Testament
Vine	Vine's <i>Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words</i>
Wey.	Weymouth's <i>New Testament in Modern Speech</i>
Yg. Lit.	Young's Literal Translation

These study notes are based on the notes originally prepared for the 1983 Australasian Christadelphian Youth Conference in South Australia. They are reprinted here with only a small number of very minor changes. The questions contained in the Background, General Overview and the Exercises within each study group are a collation of questions from the 1983 study notes and the workbook used at the 1994 Manitoulin Youth Conference in Canada. Throughout the notes, there are also a number of references to Brother T.J. Barling's book, '*Letter to the Philippians*'. Cover design by Bro. David Sawell.



STUDY TIPS

- Before commencing, make time for prayer to God, placing our efforts into His care.
- Have reverence and make TIME. The Bible is written for those willing to put time and effort into reading it - remember that this is our Heavenly Father speaking to us!
- Remove distractions. This can be one of the most difficult but most important things to do. Careful meditation is so important. We need to sit down and THINK!
- Speak to friends about the study as much as possible - we all need help, encouragement and motivation to continue (Malachi 3:16).
- We must learn to develop a need for our Heavenly Father's Words. If we really love our Father, we will want to listen to what He has to say. Approach the Bible like a humble child seeking to listen to his Father. Develop a love for God's Word
- One of the greatest motivations to do study is being able to help others. No matter what our abilities (or age) may be, all of us can have a positive influence (especially in our own homes!). Jesus gave his whole life to help others rather than serve himself.
- Aim to develop a greater personal relationship with God and the Lord Jesus Christ - this should be a major motivating factor in our study.
- Learn to be thankful for the opportunities we have. Many brethren and sisters in the dark ages were killed because they loved reading their Bibles.
- Read carefully - don't rush! - We cannot speed read the Bible (good Bible reading is good Bible study). Read and re-read the section of Scripture - become well acquainted with the record
- Use different Bible versions to help you understand what it is saying
- Look for repeating words or phrases & highlight them. Also highlight key verses that particularly stand out. Colouring pencils really add life to your Bible.
- Always ask questions and write them down for future reference. Ask others for answers (parents, friends, older brothers & sisters)
- Use study tools when your 'reading' is exhausted. Always use more than one study tool. Don't just copy out notes but think carefully about it! Put it into your own words.
- If using a Concordance, look at how the Scriptures use a certain word or phrase within the context rather than just looking up the meaning of it.
- Think about your study continually - whenever you have an opportunity! Keep asking yourself questions. Turn it over and over in your mind.
- Always summarise what we have learnt from a section of Scripture. Always ask "How does this practically apply to me?"
- On a practical note, make sure you keep all your notes on the one subject together in a clearly marked, easily accessible folder for future reference.
- Mark the cross references in your Bible as much as possible. Make summary notes next to other quotes, linking them to the section you are studying. Having notes in your Bible will be an important help in the future.
- Always pray to God thanking Him for the opportunities we have to read His Word - Be thankful and rejoice for what God has done for us!

NOTES

BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

THE MACEDONIAN ECCLESIAS

Of all the ecclesias Paul worked amongst, the Macedonian ecclesias, particularly the Philippians and Thessalonians, had a unique relationship with him. Paul described the Philippians as his “joy and coronal wreath” (ch 4:1), his “dearly beloved” (ch 4:1), and rejoiced to be the drink offering poured out upon the sacrifice of the Philippians (ch 2:16). This letter is full of Paul’s great love for his brethren. We understand that love when we look at the Philippians example of selfless labour and personal sacrifice (eg. 2:16; 4:15-17) which was even greater than that of the Thessalonians.

In no other letter does Paul open his heart and reveal his feelings to his brethren as he does in Philippians. This appears to be a result of the lack of major problems overshadowing the ecclesia. The doctrinal problems of the Roman and Galatian ecclesias were absent as were moral problems which existed in ecclesias like Corinth. Without such problems the ecclesia had devoted itself to the service of Christ and in that Paul rejoiced.

THE CITY OF PHILIPPI

Named after Philip of Macedon, father of Alexander the Great, the city was wrested from the Greeks by the Romans in 168 B.C. In 42 B.C Octavian, who later became Caesar Augustus, won several victories against the other assassins of Julius Caesar in Philippi, and when he became Caesar, he made Philippi a Roman colony. The Roman colonies became models of Rome itself and their inhabitants were conferred citizenship with the added privileges of ownership of land and slaves and exemption from tribute.

This comes out in the book of Acts when the masters of the demented girl charge Paul before the magistrates (Gk: ‘strategos’ – a Roman term), for teaching “customs which are not lawful for us to receive, neither to observe being Romans” (Acts 16:20-21). This pride in Roman citizenship is taken up by Paul when he contrasts that with the citizenship (Gk: ‘politeuma’) of heaven in ch 1:27 and 3:20.

DIVINE PROVIDENCE IN THE CALL OF THE PHILIPPIANS

Paul writes in Philippians 1:6 that “he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ”. The record of Acts 16 emphasizes that the formation of the Philippian ecclesia was God’s work. Paul and Silas started the second missionary journey with the intention of visiting the ecclesias of Syria and Galatia, but having added Timothy to their company in Lystra, God directed Paul and his brethren to Philippi. Consider the following events:

- they were forbidden of the Spirit to preach the Word in Asia (Acts 16:6)
- they then attempted to go into Bithynia: but the Spirit suffered them not (16:7)
- the man of Macedonia appeared in a vision (16:9)
- they took a ship immediately to Macedonia (16:10-11)
- their journey took only two days whereas the return journey took five days (20:6)
- they went straight to the first city (not the most important) in Macedonia (16:12)
- Lydia, not a native of Philippi, was there at the time they arrived
- the miraculous release of Paul and Silas from prison and the subsequent conversion of the jailor.

PAUL – CHRIST TO THE GENTILES

From Isa. 49 and Isa. 52-53 it is clear that Paul was Christ to the Gentiles. In Philippians 3, Paul stresses his desire to be conformed to the sufferings, death and resurrection of Christ (ch 3:10-11; see also 1:29-30; 2:5). Paul exhibited this principle during his time in Philippi. Consider the following:

- Though Paul obviously did a work of God (Acts 16:18); certain at Philippi did not believe but moved against him because of their own vested interests were threatened (cp. John 15:22)
- Paul's trial was a travesty of justice. They "hated him without a cause" (Acts 16:38; Psa. 35:19; John 15:25). They made a false accusation by saying that he was inciting rebellion against Rome (Acts 16:20-21; cp. John 19:12; Luke 23:2). With Silas, he was "taken from prison and from judgement" (cp. Isa. 53:7-8).
- They were beaten with "many stripes" (Acts 16:23; cp. John 19:1; Isa. 53:5).
- They were cast into prison – as good as dead, even as Christ was put to death and then placed in the tomb (Acts 16:24; cp. John 19:41)
- Divine pleasure was indicated by an earthquake which set them free (Acts 16:26; cp. Matt 27:51; 28:2).
- They were set free as if by resurrection from the bondage of mortality (Acts 16:26; cp. Matt. 28:7; Acts 2:24).
- They became the saviour of life to those with whom they spoke (cp. 2 Cor. 2:16; 4:9-12).

Indeed, before their eyes, Jesus Christ had been evidently set forth and crucified.

LUKE

As we read through Acts 16 and follow the use of the pronouns *we* (which includes Luke) and *they* (which excludes Luke), it appears that Luke joined Paul in Troas (Acts 16:10) and was left in Philippi for six years until the end of Paul's third journey (Acts 20:5-6). If so, Luke would have brought stability to the young developing ecclesia and grounded it upon sound principles before he left it.

TIME OF WRITING OF 'PHILIPPIANS'

There is no doubt that Paul wrote this letter from Rome during his first imprisonment. That he was a prisoner is obvious from ch 1:7, 13, 14, 16 and the mention of Caesar's household (4:22) and the Praetorian Guard (1:13) confirms that he was in Rome. He appears to be awaiting trial (1:19-25; 2:23) and the degree of confidence about his possible release can lead to only one conclusion, namely that it was his first imprisonment, Paul had appealed unto Caesar in order to legalise the truth as an acceptable religion in the Roman world. He says in ch 1:17 that he is "set for the defence of the gospel" not just himself. It appears that the apostle was successful in this aim.

PURPOSE OF BOOK

Philippians is a letter of overflowing appreciation for the Philippian ecclesia's support in both spiritual and physical things. But while Paul pours out his love for his brethren, he counsels them to build self-sacrificial love into their relationships and therefore remove disputes such as existed between Euodias and Syntyche. He therefore, directs their attention to Christ's example of humility and submission and the spirit of Christ as manifested in Timothy and Epaphroditus. While not tackling any particular doctrinal problems, Paul warns them against the Judaisers (ch 3:1-8), and shows the contrast in salvation by faith. In all, Paul's letter is one of his most personal expressions of brotherly love interwoven with powerful exhortations, not only for the Philippians but also ourselves.

PAUL'S CHARACTER IN PHILIPPIANS

The epistle to the Philippians is a letter of great personal intensity in which the apostle Paul pours out his heart to his beloved brethren and sisters. As the Spirit of God framed Paul's thoughts and left on record a wonderful legacy of Paul's mind, we can faintly understand the greatness of the apostle whom they all loved.

After reading the epistle carefully, we find that what mattered to Paul above everything else in his daily life was to follow the example of his Lord. He was Christ-centred, not to the detriment of the Father's glory, but rather to His honour (1:2; 1:11). "For to me to live is Christ" he wrote in ch 1:22, "that I may win Christ" (3:8). To Paul his Lord represented an ideal towards which he constantly pressed forwards (3:13-14). To be "in Christ" was everything to him, and this phrase occurs 17 times in the epistle, showing us the desire Paul had to develop a mind and attitude like that of the Son of God. There was with him a fervent desire to know Christ and the power of his resurrection (3:8-10) and to be made conformable to the principles of his death. Progress in this direction was so important to him that he often exhorted the Philippians to do the same (1:6, 9, 13; 2:2; 4:9).

We also clearly see in this epistle Paul's example of rejoicing under the most adverse of circumstances (1:18); in fact, the epistle is as much one of joy as it is of brotherly love. The joy of the disciple in Christ is meant to be an unquenchable strength which provides a striking contrast to the "happiness" of the world, so effervescent and dependent upon external stimuli. Paul and his hearers were in the happy circumstance of being a joy to each other. His prayers for them were always uttered with joy (1:4) because they were his crown and rejoicing in the truth (4:1). It was on this basis that he appealed to them to complete that bond of joy they experienced by repairing the breaches in their unity and become like-minded (2:2)

Like the Lord Jesus, Paul was a man of fervent prayer. He exhorted the Philippians not only to make known their requests to God, but to also appreciate the necessity of thankfulness. "But in everything", he said, "by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God." He told them, "I thank God in all my remembrance of you", and laid before his readers the substance of his prayers for them (1:4, 9-11)

If this epistle can be regarded as an expression of Paul's tender and affectionate feelings for his brethren in the faith, it must also be esteemed as one of the noblest testimonies to Paul's humility. It was from this virtue that many of his other characteristics sprang. He recognised Christ's absolute authority in all that happened to him. He accepted adversity without complaint and his ability to rejoice under suffering shows us his lowliness and steadfastness. He was free from the self-righteousness of the Pharisees and abased himself completely (4:12). He was but the servant of the Lord and like his master emptied himself of all self-importance.

While the eclipse of self, the esteeming of others better than himself, and the patient continuance in well doing were all hallmarks of Paul's greatness, we must not forget that Paul was caused to warn the ecclesia with firmness and severity of the enemies of the gospel. Justice with Paul was never a forgotten virtue.

The quality of Paul's excellence shines brightly from this epistle and the motivation for everything he did was plainly revealed in ch 4:13, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me". The example he left is high indeed and the principle he wrote of so many years ago are even more necessary to appreciate as we also attempt to "press towards the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus".

THEMES

There are many themes which Paul uses extensively in this epistle. Use this blank page to make a list of each of them, its occurrence and the reason for the theme. As a start, the theme of 'joy' and 'rejoicing' has been outlined. How many other themes are there?

1 REJOICE

The idea of joy and rejoicing occurs in 1:4, 18, 25, 26; 2:2, 16, 17, 18, 28, 29; 3:1; 4:1, 4, 10.

The reason for this theme is to demonstrate the close bond that existed between Paul and his brethren and sisters. If we can appreciate the way in which this feeling pervaded the whole epistle then we can enter into the atmosphere of the epistle with a complete awareness of the way Paul speaks to those whom he loves.

PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER ANALYSIS

Study 1: STRIVING TOGETHER FOR THE FAITH OF THE GOSPEL

- 1:1-2 Introductory Words
- 1:3-8 Paul's remembrance of the Philippians
- 1:9-11 Paul's prayer for their spiritual growth
- 1:12-17 The furtherance of the gospel in Rome
- 1:18-26 Hopes for release
- 1:27-30 Exhortation to steadfastness

Study 2: ESTEEM OTHERS BETTER THAN SELF

- 2:1-4 Appeal for unity
- 2:5-11 Christ's example of humility

Study 3: HOLDING FORTH THE WORD OF LIFE

- 2:12-18 Work out your own salvation
- 2:19-24 The Christ-mind in Timothy
- 2:25-30 The Christ-mind in Epaphroditus

Study 4: COUNT ALL THINGS LOSS FOR CHRIST

- 3:1-3 Rejoice in Christ and trust not in the flesh
- 3:4-9 Righteousness of the law verses the righteousness of God
- 3:10-16 Striving towards the mark of Christ

Study 5: STAND FAST IN THE LORD

- 3:17-21 Eternal life – Promise for followers of Christ
- 4:1-3 Be of the same mind in the Lord

Study 6: STRENGTHENED THROUGH CHRIST

- 4:4-9 The Peace of God – the fruit of Christ-mindedness
- 4:10-19 Paul's thanks for their gift
- 4:20 Ascription of praise
- 4:21-23 Final salutation

BACKGROUND QUESTIONS

PHILIPPI - THE CITY

The city of Philippi was a Roman colony and was a chief city of Macedonia strategically located along the Egnatian Way (the main road from Rome to Asia). Being a Roman colony, it was afforded special privileges and housed many Roman citizens. It was situated about nine miles from the Aegean Sea and the surrounding area was known for its gold mines and fertile soil (Ungers Bible Dictionary).

1. Philippi is mentioned only six times in the Scriptures (twice in subscriptions at the end of epistles). Look up each of the following passages and note what can be learned about the city:

Acts 16:12

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Acts 20:6

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1 Cor 16:24 (subscr)

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2 Cor 13:14 (subscr)

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Phil 1:1

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1 Thess 2:2

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PHILIPPI – THE ECCLESIA

Most of what can be learned of the Philippian ecclesia is recorded in Acts 16. Paul was guided by the spirit to go into Philippi to preach the gospel message. He was prevented from entering Asia and Bithynia and called to Macedonia, eventually coming to Philippi. The setting up of the ecclesia there is recorded in v12-40. He then departed to Thessalonica. Please read Acts 16 in its entirety.

1. During what missionary journey do the events of Acts 16 take place?

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2. (v6-10) Paul and Timothy had gone teaching throughout Phrygia and Galatia. Judging from a map (see the map on page 13), it appears that the next logical step would be to preach in either Bithynia or Asia. Why do you think they were forbidden to preach there and called to Macedonia?

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3. (v9) Paul saw a vision of a man calling him into Macedonia. Peter saw a vision in Acts 10. Both visions marked a beginning. What beginnings did each vision mark? Peter was called by Cornelius in prayer: whose prayer may have summoned Paul?

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4. (v12) What does Philippi mean? Is this significant?

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5. (v12) In what ways was Philippi the chief city of Macedonia?

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6. In Acts we are introduced to three likely members of the Philippian ecclesia: (a) Lydia, (b) a damsel with a spirit of divination and (c) the jailor. What characteristics did each of these people have? What strengths would they bring to an ecclesia? What weaknesses?

(a) Lydia (v14, 15, 40)

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(b) the damsel (v16-18)

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(c) the jailor (v23-34)

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7. (v 19-24) What was the general attitude of the city of Philippi towards the teaching of Paul? What implications would this have on the subsequent ecclesia which was set up?

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8. (v37-39) Why did the magistrate in Philippi have so much respect for Roman citizens?

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9. In Acts 16 between verses 7 and 10 the pronoun changes from "they" to "we", suggesting that Luke (the apparent author) joined Paul, Timothy and Silas at the city of Troas. In Acts 17:1 it is recorded that "they came to Thessalonica". What implication does this statement have? Note: In Acts 20:6 the pronoun "we" is picked up again as Paul leaves the city of Philippi during the third missionary journey. Is this a coincidence?

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PHILIPPIANS - THE EPISTLE

1. Where was Paul when he penned Philippians? Under what conditions? What was the date? (Try a Bible Dictionary or any book on Philippians). What verse in Acts describes this time period?

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2. Read the whole book of Philippians again picturing it as a personal letter written from a close friend who has brought you into the truth. View it from the standpoint of either Lydia or the Philippian jailor. Note passages that would especially apply to one of these two characters, also those that clarify the situation and setting in which Paul was. (Try a modern version so that it sounds more like a personal letter)

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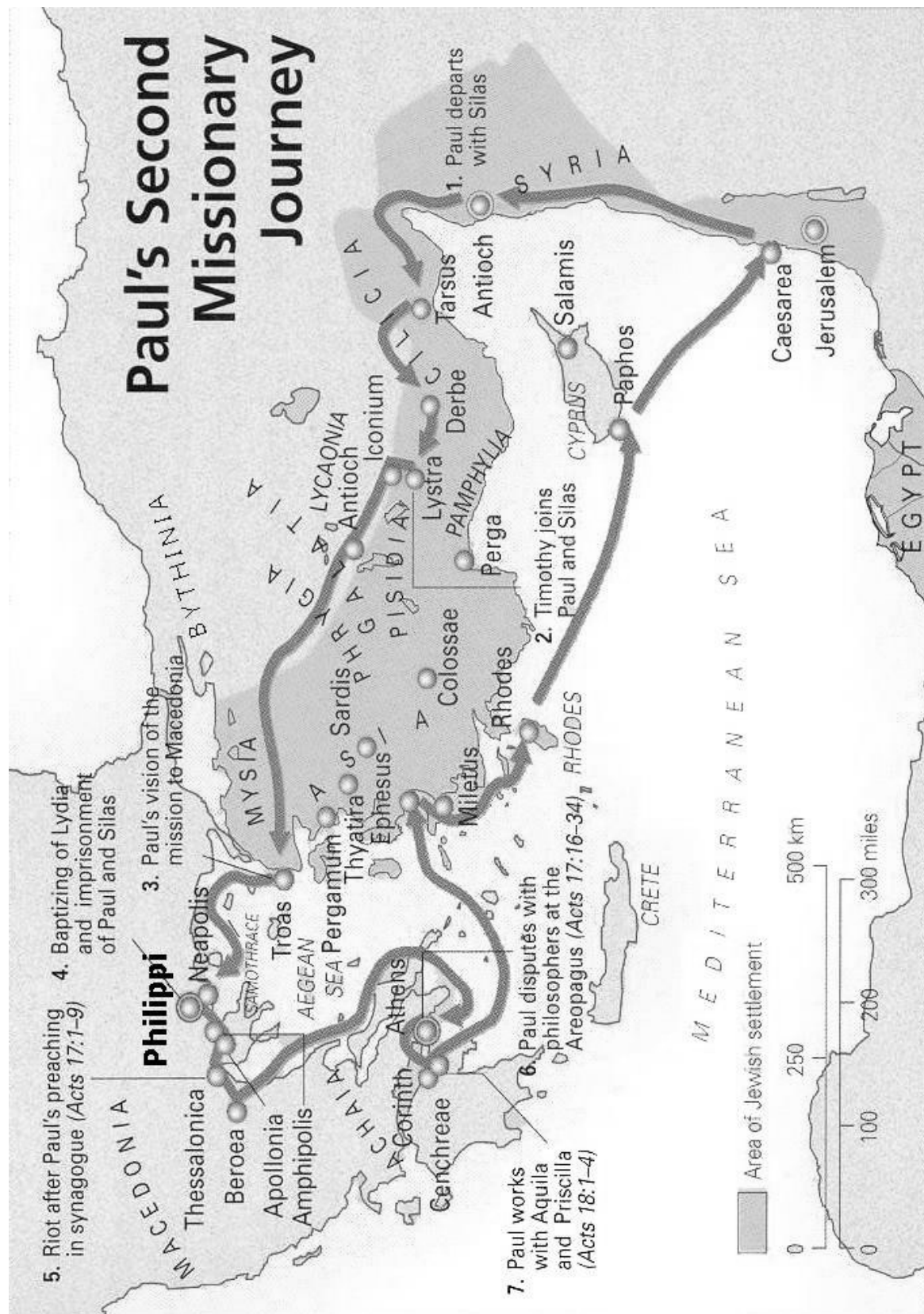
3. Did reading the letter make you feel happy or sad? Explain. What was the major impact of the letter?

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MAP OF PAUL'S SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY



GENERAL OVERVIEW QUESTIONS

CHAPTER 1: General Overview Questions

1. PAUL'S LOVE FOR THE PHILIPPIAN ECCLESIA

The ecclesia at Philippi was deeply loved by the apostle Paul, who founded it in Macedonia during his second missionary journey. The book of Philippians is full of verses that attest to Paul's love towards them and the reasons for it; thus the book is often referred to as the "epistle of brotherly love". The first 8 verses of Philippians chapter one are a beautiful example. Compare and contrast Paul's opening remarks in Philippians to the salutations in other epistles (especially Galatians). What other phrases throughout the book display Paul's love?

What characteristics of the ecclesia at Philippi warranted this affection?

How was Philippi different from other ecclesias (eg. Galatia)?

2. THE TRIAL OF BONDS

Paul deals extensively with his bonds or imprisonment in chapter one (v12-26). His mind is so centred on Christ that it appears that he was not depressed under these adverse circumstances. Instead, he looked for the benefits and positive results of his trials. One of the benefits of Paul's bonds was the furtherance of the gospel message (v12). We are told that others were strengthened to preach by Paul's example. In Mark 10:30, those that follow Christ are promised persecutions along with many blessings (also Phil. 1:29). Research the scriptural reasons for trials in order to understand why persecution, suffering and temptation are present in our lives. How did Paul's patient endurance benefit others?

3. THE THEME OF JOY

The gospel message is a joyful one and this message is a theme throughout Philippians. The word "joy", or forms thereof (e.g. "rejoice"), are found 17 times in this epistle. Using a concordance, note the passages where this word and its forms are found. What caused Paul to rejoice according to these passages? Give some examples of what causes Paul and other people to rejoice elsewhere in scripture.

4. PAUL'S DEPENDENCE ON PRAYER

The epistle of Philippians presents Paul as a man of prayer. He prays for the spiritual growth of the Philippians to a large extent in chapter one. In every prayer he would pray with joy, thanking God for the Philippians' partnership in the gospel (v4,5 NIV). Paul also trusted that the prayer of the Philippians on his behalf would lead to his deliverance (v19). With Paul's dependence on prayer in mind, read v9-11 and list at least five things for which Paul prayed. What do each of the requests have in common? In other epistles, what did Paul pray for? (Eph 1:15-19; 3:14-16; Col 1:3-4; 2 Th 1:3)?

CHAPTER 2: General Overview Questions

1. THE THEME OF UNITY (2:1-4)

Throughout his letter to the Philippians, Paul urges his readers to stand fast together in defence of their faith. We are all different, and the differences between us can cause friction. Often it requires real effort and a willingness to abandon what we want if we are to grow in a Christ-like relationship with others. It requires also a readiness to put God and His Word before our own opinions and ideas. Paul labours this theme of unity, or oneness, in chapter two. Here he notes a number of qualities which, when developed together, will establish the Christ-like mind that is essential for preserving unity.

What are these qualities for unity that Paul mentions?

What is the basic or foundational virtue that must develop in each of us in order to obtain unity (Hint: Phil . 2:8, 1 Pet. 5:5-6) ?

By what means do we achieve this virtue within ourselves (Hint: vs. 3-5)?

Locate other phrases, words or allusions to unity that Paul uses in Philippians.

Find instances in both the Old and New Testaments where the importance of 'unity' or 'oneness' among God's people is stressed.

To what extent do you think there were divisions within the Philippian ecclesia? Find proof for your answer within the epistle.

2. HUMILITY OF CHARACTER (2:5-11)

Having established the importance of humility as the basis of ecclesial unity, Paul focuses on the supreme example of Christ. Since Christ was willing to humble himself and become obedient to God's will, his Father was able to exalt him to a new and glorious life. Christ was raised from a suffering servant and made the King of all creation, unto which all men will eventually bow the knee.

According to the context (ch 1:27 2:11), what thoughts or characteristics make up this 'mind of Christ'?

Read verses 5 through 8 in an alternate, more accurate translation (R.S.V. or Diaglott) . Look up the word "form" from verses 6 and 7 in a concordance and explain, using scripture, how, the phrase: "form of God" and "form of a servant" relate to the Lord Jesus Christ.

What is humility, and how is it displayed by the believer?

Since Paul places great emphasis on the development of this quality within ourselves throughout Philippians, locate as many words, phrases, examples or allusions to it as you can find.

Locate and give verses for instances outside of Philippians where (a) we are instructed to be humble (b) the virtue of humility is commended (c) Christ humbled himself.

3. WORK OUT YOUR SALVATION (2:12-18)

With Christ's supreme example in mind, Paul now exhorts the Philippians to practise humility in their own ecclesia. Only through humility and obedience could God work with the Philippians. Arguments and half-hearted service would only distract from the effectiveness of their witness to the truth. While pondering the possibility of having to die for his faith in Rome, Paul once again refers to the desirable qualities of the suffering servant. Paul's instruction to "Work out (*implies to finish or accomplish in Strong's*) your own salvation", would appear to contradict with what follows: "For it is God that worketh in you" (v13). Explain what Paul means by these statements and the relationship that exists between them (Hints: Eph 2:10; Jn 5:30; Psa 127:1).

What is the relationship between faith and works (Hint: Jm.2:20-22)?

4. THE THEME OF SERVICE (2:19-30)

The theme of service continues into Paul's comments regarding Timothy and Epaphroditus. Both men were fine examples of selfless, humble, obedient servants working in God's vineyard. Although Paul has found their company and ministration in Rome uplifting, he wishes to send them to Philippi soon. Paul is constantly concerned with the well-being of his converts showing, even in his own life, the attributes of a servant.

With the aid of a Bible Dictionary, briefly review what we know about Timothy and Epaphroditus.

How do Timothy and Epaphroditus fit into Paul's epistle to the Philippians?

Find and record instances in this chapter where Paul relates the servant/labourer theme to Timothy and Epaphroditus.

Paul's development of the servant theme from Christ to Epaphroditus would appear to follow an important order within the chapter. Outline this order and explain its significance.

Find examples of terms of endearment Paul uses for the men.

Where in the epistle do we find Paul or the Philippian ecclesia expressing concern for one another?

Does Paul's closing statement in verse 30 imply a deficiency in the Philippian service (Compare also 4:10)? Back up your answer with verses or hints from the epistle.

What are some qualities that can be found in a servant that might be helpful in promoting unity?

CHAPTER 3: General Overview Questions

1. THE PROBLEM OF JUDAISM

Paul uses this letter to his brethren and sisters in Philippi to warn them about Judaisers. He points out in the phrase, "for you it is safe" (vs. 1), that this is a serious problem and that, although it hasn't affected them yet, they should be armed to protect themselves from the Judaisers. What is Judaism?

Compare how Paul deals with Judaism in Romans 4 and here in Philippians. What advice does he give to the brethren and sisters in Philippi?

What is the message for us in our ecclesias today?

2. THE ATTITUDE TOWARDS WORLDLY GAIN

The Scriptures deal in depth with wealth and the danger of relying on worldly possessions and treasures. Paul listed all that he had to his credit in vs. 5-6. However, vs. 7-8 show how worthless this was to him. Compare Paul's attitude to the things of this world with the ruler in Luke 18.

Abraham also left behind his life in Ur of the Chaldees to follow God. What can we learn from the example of these two men of faith? How can we leave what we think is gain and follow Christ?

3. THE ATHLETE IN SCRIPTURE

Paul uses the example of an athlete and compares that to the dedication we must have striving towards the Kingdom. Paul tells Timothy that "if a man also strive for masteries, yet is he not crowned, except he strive lawfully (legitimately)" 2 Tim. 2:5. Paul also uses the athlete in 1 Cor 9:24-25. Why is this comparison with the athlete such an effective one?

Paul gives details of how this athlete prepares himself (Phil. 3:13). How can we use this example to prepare ourselves and then to go out and to run the race?

4. OUR CITIZENSHIP IS IN HEAVEN

Paul discusses with the brethren and sisters at Philippi the matter of citizenship (conversation in vs. 20). In Col. 1:1-2, we are told to set our mind on the things above, suggesting that where our minds are, our citizenship is also. How can we use this verse to prove our stand regarding politics?

Although we live in relatively peaceful times, we should always be prepared for a draft (eg. Vietnam). With references as support, what is our argument regarding conscientious objection?

CHAPTER 4: General Overview Questions

1. THE LORD IS AT HAND

"The Lord is at hand" (vs.5). Paul in many of his letters mentions the fast approaching return of Christ. Look also at 1 Thess. and note how Paul reminds the Thessalonians of the return of Christ. Compare this to what he says about Christ's return in 2 Thess. 2. How could the return of Christ be soon to those living in the first century ecclesias?

How do the surrounding verses in Philippians 4 support Paul's claim and warning that Christ's coming is nigh?

How is this information even more vital to us on our walk to the kingdom, than to the brothers and sisters in the first century? (Refer to 2 Thessalonians 2).

2. THINK ON THESE THINGS

Verse eight is the nucleus of Paul's messages to the Philippians. Using the following verses of chapter four, list the attributes which are mentioned in verse eight. Explain how they are examples to us of how we should act in our daily lives as we walk towards the Kingdom of God. verses: 1-6, 10-13.

3. PAUL'S EXAMPLE

Ch 4:9 states "Those things which ye have both learned, and received, and heard and seen in me, do..." Examine chapter four and note all of the things which Paul does which are a Christ-like example to the ecclesia at Philippi and to us.

4. REJOICING IN THE TRUTH

Paul mentions in verse 18 the sacrifices which the ecclesia at Philippi gave, which were well pleasing. The Old Testament background is the sacrifice, not of atonement for sin, but of thanksgiving and praise. (see Lev 7:12-15; Rom 12:1; Eph 5:2 and Heb 13:15-16). What acceptable offerings can we give today? What are the characteristics of acceptable sacrifices?

NOTES

Study Group 1

“STRIVING TOGETHER FOR THE FAITH OF THE GOSPEL”

Philippians 1:1 – 1:30

VERSES 1-2: INTRODUCTORY WORDS

1:1 Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:

Paul addresses his brethren being certain to include them all.

“Paul and Timotheus”

Paul is the author of this letter but as Timothy was with him in Rome, he includes Timothy's name with his own, Timothy had worked with Paul in the founding of the ecclesia (Acts 16:3), and so there was a special bond between Timothy and the Philippians. Paul and Timothy's feelings towards the Philippians were identical (ch 2:29) so Paul includes Timothy's name with his.

“the servants of Jesus Christ”

- servants (1401) Gk: 'doulos' = “bond slave”

There is no need for Paul to establish his apostleship with the Philippians as he did with the other ecclesia's (e.g. Rom. 1:1; 1 Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:1). They recognised Paul's authority and so he presents himself and Timothy as bond slaves of Christ – the one who took upon himself “the form of a servant” (ch 2:7). It would also have taken them back to the time of the formation of the ecclesia when the demented girl had recognised Paul and Silas as ‘servants of the Most High God’ (Acts 16:17)

“to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi”

- saints (40)
- “In Christ Jesus” occurs 17 times in this epistle

Although Paul calls himself a bond slave, he addresses them who have the exalted position of sanctified or holy ones. He is careful to include them ALL, even those who were not in total harmony with the rest of the ecclesia.

“with bishops and deacons”

- bishop (1985) “to watch over, take care of” (Bull)
- deacons (1249) Gk: 'diakonos' = “a servant” (Bull)

These two groups are singled out for special mention because they had a particularly important task in the development of Christ-mindedness in the ecclesia. The bishops had a similar task to our Arranging Brethren, to watch over the spiritual welfare of the ecclesia (Heb. 13:17) and to feed the flock of God (Acts 20:28). As a consequence they tended to be the more mature brethren and therefore became called “the elders” (Acts 14:23. Tit. 1:5, 7). The deacons handled the practical side of ecclesial service, and ministered to the spiritual and physical needs of the ecclesia.

1:2 Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace and Peace were the two blessings that Paul prayed might be given to every member of the ecclesia.

“Grace be unto you and peace”

- grace (5485) unmerited Divine favour
- peace (1515) unity with God and each other

This is a familiar greeting in Paul's epistles, but its full meaning should never be lost. The first need in all our lives is to appreciate the grace of God (a basic quality of His character, Ex. 34:6-8). This is especially seen in the sacrifice of His son (Rom. 3:24, 25). Then having been "justified by faith, we have peace with God" (Rom. 5:1). This peace is not a freedom from trouble (John 16:33), but the result of a mind at one with the Father. Peace is a principle fruit of the spirit (Gal. 5:22), and the failure of the Philippians to have peace amongst themselves, showed that they had not yet reached full maturity in Christ. Paul concludes the letter by referring again to the grace and peace of God (4:7, 23). As the epistle proceeds, notice the special emphasis on peace.

"from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ"

It is essential to remind ourselves that both these blessings come only from God. They can never come from human endeavour. As our lives tend to self-centredness rather than God-centredness, these blessings will disappear.



Exercise 1

1. Timothy was present with Paul on his first visit to Philippi (Acts 16:1-3, 12) and apparently when this epistle was written. What part do you think Timothy had in writing this epistle? Explain.

2. To what three groups was Paul writing? Use a concordance to find other passages where these groups are mentioned. Define the role each group had in the ecclesia, and suggest a modern day equivalent.

3. This exact greeting is found in Rom 1:7 and again in 2 Cor 1:2. What is the significance of this greeting? Why would it be Paul's standard salutation?

VERSES 3-8: PAUL'S REMEMBRANCE OF THE PHILIPPIANS

1:3 I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,

- "I thank my God in all remembrance of you" (RSV). He is not saying that he thanks God every time he remembers them but rather that all his memories of them cause him to give thanks to God.
- Commences four other epistles this way (Rom. 1:8, 1 Cor. 1:4, Eph. 1:15-16, Col 1:9)
- thank (2168)
- remembrance (3417)

The apostles very first thought was to tell brethren and sisters how much joy they gave him. How often have you turned to God and thanked him for the help and example of your brethren and sisters?

1:4 Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy.

In his remembrance of them Paul was moved to pray for God's strength to help them.

"Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request"

- always (3842)
- prayer (1162)
- making (4160)
- request (1162)

Paul prayed "always" as his Lord had exhorted him to do (Luke 18:1-8), but so intense was his love for them, that every prayer that he offered had a request for their spiritual benefit. The apostle must have possessed a strong faith in the power of prayer and a keen awareness that his prayers could help them (cp. similar principle in Eph. 6:18). Again there is an emphasis on them "all". Even the "problem brethren" were not left out of his thoughts – they needed God's strength the most. Here is a powerful reminder to us to remember our brethren and sisters in our prayers, not only those in our own ecclesia but the brotherhood worldwide. Our failure to do so is an evidence of our self interest rather than looking on the things of others (2:4).

"with joy"

- joy (5479)

Prayer was not burdensome or wearisome to Paul. He prayed with a great deal of thanksgiving and happiness which could never be dulled by his frequent petitions. The exercise of worship and communion with the Father was a delight (cp. Psa. 37:4, Mal. 1:13).

1:5 For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now;

Now Paul explains why he remembers them with such joy.

"For your fellowship in the gospel"

- fellowship (2842) Gk: 'koinonia' (see notes on "communicate" 4:14)
- RV gives the sense "for your fellowship in the furtherance of the gospel"

The Philippians had worked energetically with Paul in the work of Christ. Now they were prohibited by distance to help in his work, but they were still sharing with him in material things by sending the gift (ch 4:14-16).

"from the first day until now"

From the time that Lydia had responded to the gospel and opened her doors to the apostle, the Philippians had been consistent in their support of Paul. This was quite different from the changeable attitudes to Paul that existed in some ecclesias like Corinth and Galatia.

1:6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ:

Because of their consistent faith, Paul had good reason to be confident that God would continue to work with them.

"Being confident of this very thing"

- confident (3982)

His confidence was not based on personal fleshly opinion; but on the clear evidence of the providential work of God in their midst in the past, and their faithful consistency to that work in the present.

“that he which hath begun a good work in you”

- begun (1728)
- good (18)
- work (2041)

The work of the Divine hand in the establishment of the ecclesia could not be denied, it was God who called them and opened their hearts (eg Lydia, Acts 16:14). Without the blessing of God, the labours of Paul and the Philippians would have been in vain (Psa.127:1). It is vital for us to remember that it is God's work, not our own, in which we are engaged and therefore glory to God and not the praise of men should be the result.

“will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ”

- perform (2005) “perfect” (Roth)
- the day of Jesus Christ is the day of his second coming. This phrase occurs twice elsewhere in Philippians (1:10, 2:16).

The Father had commenced the work in Philippi for a purpose – that He might have fruit in the day of His Son's return. On the Philippians' part, it was essential that they push onwards towards the kingdom, progressing towards perfection. The idea of progress and striving becomes an important theme in this letter. Compare the following:

- 1:9 “your love may abound yet more and more:”
- 1:25 “furtherance (progress, RSV) and joy of faith”
- 2:2 “fulfil (complete) ye my joy”
- 3:14 “press towards the mark”

There is no room for standing still; with the Lord's coming at hand, we must prepare ourselves if we are to be acceptable in his sight (Rom. 2:16; 1 Cor. 1:8).

1:7 Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because 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.

Their faithfulness was evident in their support of Paul even if it meant sharing God's grace in the midst of trial.

“Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all”

- meet (1342)
- “it is right for me to feel this about you all” (RSV)
- “I am justified in having this confidence about you all” (Roth)

The apostle now points out the grounds on which he retains his confidence of verse 6.

“because I have you in my heart”

- Note AV margin, Diag. and Roth. – all suggest “you have me in your heart”

The Philippians' love of Paul would cause them to continue their fellowship with him in the spreading of the gospel.

“inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace.”

- defence (627) see v.17
- confirmation (951) only other occurrence is Heb 6:16, “an oath for *confirmation* is to them an end of all strife”
- partakers (4791) from Gk: ‘koinonia’ = “fellowship” (v5)
- AV margin, RV & RSV change sense to “partakers with me of grace”
- Grace here is the privilege to suffer for the truth cp. v29 “unto you it is given...”

There was a common sympathy between Paul and the Philippians in his affliction which he received for the gospel's sake. Paul knew that in his bonds and in his work of having the truth ‘confirmed’ as a recognised Roman religion, the Philippians were right behind him.

In a city whose people were such staunch supporters of Rome, it is not unlikely that the Philippians received some affliction as a result of their support for the prisoner in Rome (cp. v.28-30). They were to fellowship Paul's sufferings just as he shared Christ's (cp. 3:10). There was a common sharing of the tribulations and the joys of the truth and the apostle was pleased with that.

1:8 For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.

As a mark of his sincerity Paul calls upon God to witness the depth of his love towards them.

"For God is my record"

- record (3144) "witness"

Even though our yea should be yea, Paul wanted to convince the Philippians of his love for them, and so he calls upon God to be his witness. He does this on many other occasions (e.g. Rom. 1:9, 9:1; 2 Cor, 1:23; Gal.1:20; 1 Thess. 2:5).

"how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ"

- greatly long after (1971)
- bowels (4698) "intestines" (Vine). Follow through Paul's usage of this word in his epistles as it symbolises Paul's innermost feelings

The depth of love Paul felt for the Philippians was not based on human emotion, but a response to the love of Christ. As the apostle John wrote in his first letter (ch 4) loving God and our brethren is an indication that we are the sons of God. "If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another" (1 John 4:11)



Exercise 2

1. The Greek word for "remembrance" (3417) (in v3) is used six other times in scripture. Look up these passages and determine in what sense this word consistently used:

Rom 1:9

.....

Eph 1:16

.....

1 Thess 1:2

.....

1 Thess 3:6

.....

2 Tim 1:3

.....

Phm 1:4

.....

2. (a) In verse 3, Paul is thankful when he remembers the Philippians. List some of the things which you are thankful for

.....

.....

.....

(b) Look up the following verses and write down beside them why Paul is thankful:

Acts 28:15

Rom 1:8-9

Rom 6:17

Rom 16:3-4

Eph 1:15-16

1 Thess 1:2-3

1Thess 2:13

2Thess 2:13

(c) What is the common thread in each example? What insight does this give us into the character of the apostle Paul?

3. What do your brethren and sisters and young people contribute to your walk in Christ which causes you to thank God for them?

4. What requests can we make for our brothers and sisters in our prayers? Is praying for others effective? (Jam 5:13-18; Acts 12:5-11) What must accompany prayer for it to be answered? (Mat 21:22; Mark 11:24; 1 John 3:22; Jer 29:12-13)

5. Note the emphasis on the words "every" "always" and "all" in these verses (see also v7-8). Do these words indicate unity among the Philippians? If not, what do they indicate?

6. What does fellowship (2842) involve? (2:1; 3:10; 1 Cor 1:9-10; 1 John 1:3-7)

7. How does God work with us to begin and perform the good work?

8. What does it mean to be a partaker of grace?

9. Paul had the Philippians in his heart. Which do you think comes first: fellowship or love?

10. Look at the meaning for the Greek word "bowels" (4698) in v8. What does it mean to long after someone "in the bowels of Jesus Christ"?

11. (a) In connection with verse 6, explain how God works in his saints. List a few important examples.

- (b) How do we recognise God at work in our lives?

VERSES 9-11: PAUL'S PRAYER FOR THEIR SPIRITUAL GROWTH

1:9 And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgement.

Having previously told them that he prays for them (v.4) Paul now reveals the contents of his prayers – that they might grow in knowledge and discernment.

“And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more”

- pray (4336)
- love (26) Gk: ‘agape’
- abound (4052)

Again the need for growth and development in the truth is emphasised. We cannot remain static: we either make progress or regress. We must always be anxious to improve. The complacent will never improve for they have lost sight of the perfection of Christ.

Paul's particular concern here is that they may continue to work on the development of self sacrificing love. To love God is the first commandment and from that comes the second, loving our brethren and neighbours as ourselves. Paul is encouraging the second. These words take on an added meaning when we remember there was a cause of lack of love in the ecclesia – the contention between Euodias and Syntyche – which is not mentioned until ch 4:2.

“in knowledge and in all judgement”

- knowledge (1922) Gk: ‘epignosis’
- judgement (144) “discernment” (RV, RSV)

The development of love must be tempered by two qualities – knowledge and judgement. Exact knowledge (‘epignosis’) and discernment are essential qualities to the development of godly love. Without them love can degenerate into mere sentimentality. A love coupled with knowledge and judgement may need to reprove and correct those straying from the truth. True love therefore means seeking the best for our brethren in the way in which the Father loves His children (Heb. 12:6-8).

1:10 That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;

The development of sacrificial love balanced with the knowledge and discernment should cause those in Christ to remove from their lives the things that are of no consequence.

“That ye may approve things that are excellent”

- approve (1381) “to prove, discern, examine, primarily of metals” (Vine)
- excellent (1308) “differ” (AV margin)
- “may be putting to the test the things that differ” (Roth.) We may ask “differ” from what? – from the attitudes and practices of the age. Hence the idea is as in Conc. “for you to be testing what things are of consequence”
- same phrase in Rom. 2:18, “approve the things that are more excellent”

As the refiner proves his metal in the fire, so we are called upon to use the truth to test and approve the things that are really worthwhile in life. This proving process must occur in relation to both doctrine and practice in an ecclesial world where freedom in both thought and action is tolerated in the name of the love of Christ. In Rom. 2:18, Paul told the Romans that they thought they had tested the things of consequence but in reality they continued to trust in the flesh and not in God. In contrast the saint must live in conformity with what the truth tells him about himself and the world.

“that ye may be sincere and without offence”

- sincere (1506) “judged of in the sunlight and so found genuine” (Bull.). Only other occurrence is 2 Peter 3:1.
- without offence (677) from a Greek word meaning “to strike”
- “that we may be men of transparent character and blameless” (Wey.)

If we are prepared to really test our characters by the light of the Word, then we will not only stand approved by Christ in that day, but we will also not be guilty of offending our brethren (or people in general), now. We must ensure that our “development” in the things of God is not detrimental to the spiritual growth of others. Love, balanced by knowledge and discernment, will cause us to refrain from what we may consider to be a harmless action when we know it could cause someone else to stumble and sin.

“till the day of Christ”

The urgency for us to be prepared for Christ’s coming is even greater than for the Philippians. Christ’s coming to them could be as far off as the day of their death, but for us it could literally be tomorrow. Have you a transparent character for the Sun of righteousness to examine?

1:11 being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

Sincerity or genuineness is not enough. Paul now prayed that the believers might also be filled with the characteristics of the Father which would bring praise to Him.

“Being filled with the fruits of righteousness”

- filled (4137)
- fruits (2590) occurs also 1:22, 4:17

We are familiar with the “fruit of the spirit” as described by Paul to the Galatians (Gal. 5:22-25). The development of this fruit is a result of the principle of the truth affecting our thinking and hence producing God-like qualities in us. Here the emphasis is on being filled with the fruit. Having tested our characters there is no room for impurities and our whole lives must be filled with fruit. We each possess varying abilities but whatever our capacity is must be filled with fruit.

“by Jesus Christ”

Again we are reminded that it is not of our own strength that we can develop fruit. Unless the branches abide in the Vine they don’t receive the essential sap to bring forth fruit; “the branch cannot bear fruit of itself” (John 15:1-8).

“unto the glory and praise of God.”

- glory (1391)
- praise (1868)

Jesus said that if men could see our good works they would glorify the Father (Matt. 5:16). God is honoured when we adopt His standards and attempt to develop His characteristics in our lives (see John 15:8). Paul told the Corinthians to “do all to the glory of God” (1 Cor. 10:31). Here the glorious principles of God manifested are spelt out in practical terms. God manifestation is the key to our life in the truth; it is the whole of God’s purpose with us that we should become like Him.



Exercise 3

1. (a) Define and analyse the Greek words for:

“love” (26)

.....

“abound” (4052)

.....

Paul saw that the Philippians had “agape” love and wanted it to abound. Read 1 Cor 13:4-13 and 1 Jn 4:7-21 to learn more about “agape” love (‘agape’ or ‘agapao’ is used over 25 times in this passage).

(b) “Love should abound more and more” in our relationships with each other. What will develop this love? How will it be seen in our lives? How will full knowledge and judgement balance our love?

.....

.....

.....

2. The word “approve” (1381) in the Greek carries with it the idea of testing, examining or scrutinising to determine whether a thing is genuine (Theyers Greek-English Lexicon). How does this examination help us to remain sincere and without offence until the day of Christ? (Hint: look at how 1381 is used in scripture eg Rom 12:2; 1 Cor 11:28; 2 Cor 13:5; 1 Jn 4:1).
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-
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3. How do we cause our brethren to stumble (be offended)? What is the solution?
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-
-

4. What are the fruits of righteousness and how do we fill ourselves with them? In what sense are they by Jesus Christ? (Try Rom 3:22-26; 5:18-21; 1 Pet 1:21-25.)
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5. Have you ever been imprisoned (eg. living in isolation, confinement or hospitalization?) What did you think about? Compare or contrast this to Paul’s thoughts in this section. (verse 7 tells us he was in bonds.)
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-
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VERSES 12-17: THE FURTHERANCE OF THE GOSPEL IN ROME

1:12 But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel.

Paul wants them to know that he is not concerned about being bound; he has turned his position into an opportunity for preaching the truth.

- understand (1097)
- furtherance (4297) Derived from a root which has the idea of driving forward, and was used to describe the way in which pioneers cut a way through the land in front of the army, thus furthering the advance of the soldiers. Compare Paul opening people's minds to the truth.

The Philippians were so worried about how Paul was faring in Rome, that they sent Epaphroditus to care for him (2:25-30). In Paul's reply we have seen that his first thoughts were for them. However, knowing that they were concerned about him, he tells them about his circumstances, but not in a way that would bring him pity. Rather than emphasise his difficulties (as we would do) he minimises his problems and tells them of the fantastic opportunities he now has for the work of the truth. He was certainly a living example of his instructions to Timothy "preach the word, be instant in season out of season" (2 Tim. 4:2). Every circumstance could be used to give glory to God.

1:13 So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace and in all other places.

The Apostle's preaching became known to the Praetorian guard and large numbers of people in Rome.

"So that my bonds in Christ"

- bonds (1199)

As he sat in Rome in chains, he was sharing the sufferings of Christ (Col.1:24). Paul was not ashamed of the gospel for which sake he was imprisoned, but rather used his chains as a means of witness, "For the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain" (Acts 28:20)

"are manifest in all the palace and in all other places."

- manifest (5318)
- palace (4232) Gk: 'praetoric' refers to the Praetorian guard whose duty was to guard Caesar's palace
- all other places – "unto all the rest" (Roth. RSV) that is, to all other people (cp Acts 28:30-31).

The soldiers guarding Paul (Acts 28:16) must have been amazed at the outstanding qualities of their prisoner. From the reference to Caesar's household in ch 4:22 it appears that there was a ready response to the word of truth. The gospel of salvation spread in the most unlikely circumstance. We can never be sure what type of soil people are, and should therefore never hold back from preaching to any.

1:14 And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

The brethren in Rome were motivated by Paul's boldness in preaching to go forth and preach the gospel also.

- many – "most" (RV)
- waxing confident (3982)
- word (3056)
- fear (870 but see 5401)

Most of the brethren were inspired to greater efforts by Paul's fearless witness for the truth. Paul had not succumbed to self-pity and the frustration of prison life, but was telling all of the glorious hope he held. The lesson is clear – enthusiasm is contagious. The brethren had been a little

emboldened by his example to witness just as we are stirred up by the confident enthusiastic witness of other brethren.

There should be no reason for us to be afraid when we preach. We hold the truth and we should never feel ashamed of that precious hope committed to our trust (2 Tim. 1:7-9, 12).

1:15 Some preach indeed Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will;

Although the brethren had been preaching more boldly, there had been mixed motivation.

“Some indeed preach Christ of envy and strife”

- preach (2784)
- envy (5355)
- strife (2054) “debate”, “contention”

The personal antagonism between Paul and some of the Roman brethren was probably due to two causes:

1. The entry of such a powerful spiritually-minded character as the apostle would have brought resentment from some who loved to have the pre-eminence.
2. When Paul first arrived in Rome and called the Jews together (Acts 28:19-29), a clear division arose as many were upset by Paul's forthright denunciation of them in the terms of Isaiah 6:9-10. This could have had repercussions in the ecclesia. It appears that some brethren disassociated themselves from Paul. These brethren who were antagonistic to Paul still preached Christ, but motivated by a competitive spirit and a desire to increase the pressure on Paul (see next verse)

“and some also of good will”

- good will (2107)

Many brethren were inspired by Paul, and realising his great position as a light to the Gentiles (Acts 13:47), were more than willing to work with Paul in the spreading of the gospel.

1:16 The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds:

Some brethren were stirred up to increase their efforts to preach Christ out of envy of Paul, hoping to increase the pressure on him.

“The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely”

- contention (2052)
- sincerely (55) only occ. “with pure motives” (Vine), “purely” (Roth)

These brethren preached the gospel with impure motives – for Paul's detriment and for personal gratification. Paul had just exhorted the Philippians on the need for sincerity (v.10), and in ch 2:3 he reminds them of their need to put away strife and envy. Such exhortations were to be heeded at Rome as well. All this added further afflictions to his imprisonment, because tragically, contention had broken out simply as a result of his example of doing good. It was a subtle reminder to the Philippians that the contention which was likewise occurring amongst them was likewise adding further affliction to his circumstances.

“supposing to add affliction to my bonds.”

- add (2018) “super add” (Diag)
- affliction (2347) Gk: ‘thlipsis’ = “pressure”. They were adding friction or pressure to the suffering and hardship already imposed by his imprisonment.

These brethren's actions in some way caused Paul to have increased affliction from the authorities. There is no doubt also that their actions would have increased Paul's anxiety as the care of all the ecclesias came upon him daily (cp. 2 Cor. 11:28)

1:17 But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel.

Other brethren perceived the Divine purpose in Paul's imprisonment, namely to gain recognition for the truth in the Roman world, and preached the gospel to support his cause.

- love (26) Gk: 'agape'
- set (2749) "to lay". Bro. Barling comments: "posted by God rather like a soldier on guard duty"
- defence (627) Gk: 'apologia' cp. 2 Tim. 4:16.

Because these brethren understood what God was achieving through Paul's imprisonment, they were willing to do their part in making the gospel known in Rome. Paul is setting himself as a soldier to guard the truth from the enemy. When he eventually stood to answer for the truth (2 Tim, 4:16), no one stood with him. What an example to us; we should be always ready to give an answer ('apologia') for the hope within us (cp 1 Pet. 3:15)

**Exercise 4**

1. What are "the things which happened unto me" to which Paul refers?

2. Paul indicates that persecution can lead to the furtherance of the gospel. In Acts 8:1-4, we are told that the persecution of the ecclesia by Paul led to the scattering of the saints. Each member went forth from Jerusalem preaching and the gospel message was spread throughout Judea and Samaria. This was a sure proof to Paul that his trials could help spread the message. Find other scriptural examples where trials or persecution led to the spreading of the gospel. Do you know of any personal examples?

3. Verse 13 in the NIV translation says, "As a result, it has become clear... that I am in chains for Christ". What characteristics or actions of Paul do you think made this clear? In your personal circumstances at school or work, how can you show that Christ is the motivation behind your character and actions?

4. What does v14 indicate had formerly been the attitude of some brethren toward preaching? Why do some people lack confidence to speak of God's Word to others?

5. Preaching the gospel out of envy and strife is an example of doing the right thing for the wrong reason. List some examples of how we may fall into the same trap. Is God pleased more by good deeds or good motives? Support your answer with scriptural references. [Note: RSV and NIV reverse verses 16 and 17]

6. List practical suggestions in which we can preach the Word at work or at school. What Bible subjects do people respond to most readily?

7. How can we develop an awareness of turning every circumstance for the preaching of the truth? List some situations in which you have missed opportunities and examine some methods to overcome this problem.

8. Define and analyse the Greek word for:

"contention" (2052)

How would preaching Christ out of contention add affliction to Paul's bonds?

9. Love should be the factor behind all of our actions. Consider how preaching is an indication of the Philippians love for:

- (a) God
- (b) Paul
- (c) The ecclesia
- (d) The listener

VERSES 18-26: HOPES FOR RELEASE

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

Whatever the motivations of the preachers, Paul rejoiced in that the gospel was being spread.

- Way (5158)
- pretence (4392)
- truth (225)
- preached (2605)
- rejoice (5463)

Through many means the gospel was going forth and the attention of many people was being drawn to “the crucified Christ” who was demonstrated before them in the life of Paul. Paul was told by Christ on the road to Damascus that he would bear Christ’s name before kings and in so doing suffer for his name’s sake. (Acts 9:15-16). Suffering and the bearing of Christ’s name were therefore inseparable, and Paul rejoiced in his afflictions knowing that God’s purpose was being fulfilled. He was therefore not angry towards the brethren who preached Christ in the pretence because their actions were extending the gospel message to others.

1:19 For this I know that this shall turn my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.

The example of their preaching coupled with the strength Paul received from the example of Christ would cause him to endure the trial before the emperor and secure his release.

“For I know that this shall turn to my salvation”

- this, that is, their preaching v.18
- turn (576)
- salvation (4991)
- turn to my salvation “result in my deliverance” (Diag.) A citation from Job 13:16 (LXX) – compare the context and position of these two prisoners of Yahweh

Their preaching and spreading of the gospel would give Paul greater grounds to stand before the Emperor and appear for the truth to be approved as a state religion. He would also be encouraged by their example and be more confident before the authorities, so improving the likelihood of his release.

“through your prayer”

- prayer (1162)

Epaphroditus could have told Paul about their frequent prayers for him, and Paul would have taken courage from that. He had on other occasions asked brethren to pray for him (1 Thess. 5:25; Heb. 13:18), knowing, that if it was God’s will, the Father would respond. Again we should ask ourselves how often we pray for others. The frequency with which we offer such prayers is one gauge of our spiritual maturity.

“and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ”

- supply (2024)
- spirit (4151) cp. Rom.8:9 “disposition” Bro Barling writes, “it serves to summarise in one word the essential outlook and character of... the Lord Jesus ... The manifestation of the same spirit by the Apostle would constitute his vindication” (p.128, ‘Letter to the Philippians’)

As he thought about Christ’s example he was strengthened in his mind to share Christ’s suffering.

1:20 According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that 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.

Magnifying Christ's name was of supreme importance in Paul's mind and therefore he wanted strength so that he would stand up to pressure, in full confidence of the truth he believed, witnessing even unto death.

“According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed,”

- earnest expectation (603) “watching with outstretched head; signifies strained expectancy, eager longing” (Vine). Only other occurrence Rom. 8:19
- ashamed (153) cp. “whosoever believeth on him shall not be ashamed” (Isa 28:16 LXX; Rom 9:33; 10:11). This verse was possibly in the back of Paul's mind.

His hope is that Christ would be magnified through him; that is, that he might demonstrate the character of Christ whether he was to live or die. To him, to waver in trial would cause discredit to the name of Christ. We can therefore understand his keen desire not to let down the truth and his beloved Lord whom he served. Whenever we fail to live up to the truth we profess, people around us are quick to see the inconsistencies, and the name of Christ is put to shame.

“but that with all boldness as always”

- boldness (3954) Acts 28 records that at this time while he dwelt in his own hired house, he spoke with all confidence (boldness) no man forbidding him (v.31). He could therefore rightly say that he always spoke with boldness

In Ephesians, Paul asks those brethren to pray for him that he might be able to open his mouth boldly, speaking boldly as he ought to speak (Eph. 6:19-20)

Such boldness is not the product of fleshly self confidence but rather the outcome of knowing that he possessed the truth and that God was with him. Our approach to other people should be in humility, but also with boldness, for God has not given us the spirit of fear (2 Tim. 1:6-8)

“so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death”

- magnified (3170) lit. “make great”

What an amazing man Paul was! His purpose was to spread the glorious name of his Lord – and if his death would magnify his Lord he was prepared to endure that.

1:21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

In life Paul would demonstrate the character of Christ and in death he would immediately gain the inheritance he longed for.

“For to me to live is Christ”

- live (2198)

Paul was a manifestation of Christ. Even though his early life was lived in such opposition to Christ he could later say “Christ liveth in me” (Gal. 2:20) and “be ye followers of me even as I also am of Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1) and again, “the life also of Jesus might be made manifest in our body” (2 Cor. 4:10). He was a witness of Christ both in death and resurrection. To the Galatians he could write that they had seen Christ crucified in him (Gal. 3:1; cp. also ch 3:10-11).

“and to die is gain”

- die (599)
- gain (2771)

Paul's death would mean gain for the gospel inasmuch as his death would strengthen the resolve of the brethren and convert more to the truth. To Paul it would mean immediate gain as his next conscious moment would be the resurrection day when he would be united with his Lord. As Jesus said, “whosoever shall lose his life... shall save it” (Mk. 8:35).

1:22 But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not.

Paul is thinking that if he secures his release and lives on he can further pursue the example of Christ; it will be an opportunity for further fruitful activity. Yet he is not certain that that is what he really wants for himself.

“But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour”

- fruit (2590)
- labour (2041)
- Note: The Greek structure is broken, and not smooth flowing, suggesting that he is reasoning the whole situation out aloud
- “If it is to be life in the flesh that means fruitful labour for me” (RSV)
- Paul says “in the flesh” not as in contrast to life “in the soul” or as Weymouth translates it “stay on earth”, but rather he contrasts life in the fleshy body to life in the spiritual body.

Although Paul's thoughts are disjointed, the RSV provides the sense; a longer life would give him greater opportunities for service to bring forth fruit unto Christ. This explains his previous statement that “for me to live is Christ”.

“yet what I shall choose I wot not,”

- “I cannot tell” (RSV)

He is undecided as the next verse goes on to show.

1:23 For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:

The apostle is still wrestling in his own mind as to which would be the best, and he reaches his decision in verse 24.

“For I am in a strait betwixt two”

- strait (4912)
- “I am being pressed between two” (Bull)

As with all problems in the truth, the merits of each action must be weighed up against what would be best for the cause of God, not the individual.

“having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ”

- desire (1939)
- depart (360) “to break up in parts” other occurrences – Lk.12:36 “when he will *return* from the wedding” (Roth. “once he may *break up* out of the marriage feast”). The noun occurs in 2 Tim. 4:6, “the time of my departure is at hand”. See also Bro. Barling, pp.58-60. ‘*Letter to the Philippians*’

Our death will only mean to us that we will be instantaneously at the resurrection morn, there to meet our Lord and in his grace receive eternal life. Paul therefore longed to break up his life in this nature and almost instantly receive immortality. These words are similar to those in 2 Corinthians where he writes of putting off this tabernacle that he might be clothed upon with immortality (2 Cor. 5:1-4); of being absent from the body and present with the Lord (2 Cor.5:8). In neither reference is he thinking of heaven going, but he sees no gap between his death and resurrection.

“which is far better”

We can only be impressed by Paul's serene state of mind when facing death. His present life meant so little and the life to come so much that he had no fears about dying. It is worthwhile to think of the attitude of other brethren and sisters facing death as portrayed in scripture. Are we crucifying the flesh so much that death is preferable to life?

1:24 Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.

Although Paul would rather have died, for their sake he would rather remain alive.

- abide (1961)
- needful (316) “of, with or by force” (Bull.)

Paul wanted to die, but selflessly he realised that it was necessary for him to remain alive. There is no sense of egotism in Paul's words, just a deep sense of concern and great love for his beloved family in the Lord (cp. 2 Cor.11:28).

1:25 And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith:

Having confidence that what he believes is according to God's will, he is confident that the Father will bless his desire.

“And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all”

- confidence (3982)
- abide (3306)
- continue (4839) only occ. A strengthened form of *abide*. Note therefore the emphasis.
- “convinced of this” (RSV)

Convinced of the necessity for him to abide with them, according to God's will, he is also confident that God will release him.

“for your furtherance and joy of faith”

- furtherance (4297) occurs only in v.12, 1 Tim. 4:15 “profiting”
- of faith – most translations say “in the faith”

Again here is an emphasis on their need for progress. Paul wanted to do his part to push forward the development of the Philippian ecclesia towards the goal of Christ (3:12-14). The Philippians would receive joy in their fellowship with Paul, a joy based not on human friendship but the common joy in the faith.

1:26 That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again.

Their joy of faith would be caused by Paul coming into their midst.

- rejoicing (2745) “glorying, boasting”
- abundant (4052)
- coming (3952) Gk. ‘parousia’ = “literal presence”
- “that your glorifying may be superabounding in Christ Jesus in me through my presence with you again” (Conc)

They would be very glad to see Paul after such a long period of separation, and especially after all the trials and persecutions he had been through. But Paul ensures that they will not lose sight of the fact that the real ground of rejoicing is in Christ Jesus. His release and coming to them again must be interpreted as an act of Divine grace, and to the Father and Son must praise and rejoicing be directed. “He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord” (1 Cor.1:31).



Exercise 5

1. What was Paul confident would help him to obtain salvation? Explain the role of each factor. In what circumstances will God answer our prayers for others?

2. Note how Paul again places the emphasis on prayer. Review your notes on v4. In v4, Paul assures the Philippians that he prayed for them in every prayer, and now he is appealing for them to pray for him. He makes this same appeal at least seven other times in scripture (Rom 15:30-32; Eph 6:18-19; Col 4:3; 1 Th 5:25; 2 Th 3:1; Phm 1:22; Heb 13:18), emphasizing the importance of prayer. Make a list of the needs of others so that you can include your brethren and sisters in your prayers. (If you need some help to find things to pray for, look up the above verses for ideas.)

3. Paul declares that it was his earnest expectation and hope that he would not be ashamed. From this verse and the others listed, how can we avoid being ashamed at the day of Christ?

Phil 1:20

Psa 119:80

Isa 50:7

Rom 9:33

1 John 2:28

4. How can we magnify Christ in our life and in our death? How did Christ magnify God in his life and in his death?

5. Do you genuinely desire to be with Christ above all else? How can we develop a “love for his appearing”?

6. (a) Paul recognized the need to encourage others by his presence (See also Rom 1:11-12). Sometimes we excuse ourselves from attending Bible Class or CYC because we have other things we “must” do. In what ways can we provide benefit for ourselves and others by being present at all ecclesial functions?

- (b) Can we ever be of benefit by our absence?

7. Define and analyse the Greek word for:

“furtherance” (4297)

8. Paul's joy is apparent from these verses, also v18. Remembering that Paul was imprisoned, discuss ways in which tribulation and sorrow can enhance our capacity for joy. Look for examples where suffering led to great joy. (e.g. Acts 5:41). Explain.

9. Paul was convinced that he should remain alive for the good of the Philippians even though this was against his own personal wishes. Think of examples of how we can implement that attitude in making decisions in both our personal and ecclesial environment.

VERSES 27-30: EXHORTATION TO STEADFASTNESS

1:27 Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ; that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;

Whether Paul was released and came to them or not, they should still strive to develop a united attitude in the truth.

“Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ”

- conversation (4176) Gk. ‘politeuomai’ = “to behave as a citizen” and is a verb of “conversation” in ch 3:20

Being a Roman colony, the people of Philippi had a great pride in their Roman citizenship. Paul tells the Philippians to have a similar attitude to their citizenship of the heavenly kingdom. Just as the people of Philippi modelled their city on Rome, so must the saints model their lives on the city whose builder and maker is God. The expression “gospel of Christ” is appropriate here rather than “gospel of God” because Paul is encouraging them to develop the disposition of Christ, an idea developed in ch 2.

“that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs”

- absent (548)
- affairs (4012)

Just as the presence or absence of Christ should make no difference to our conduct, so the Philippians should not need to change their behaviour when Paul came. In fact, even if he didn't come, he longed to hear good reports of their progress in the truth.

“that ye stand fast in one spirit”

- stand fast (4739) not to be confused with Gk. ‘stoicheo’ which means to stand in an unbroken line (like soldiers in a battle)
- spirit (4151) Gk. ‘pneuma’ here used in the sense of the mind

Here is Paul's first strong appeal for unity – that the divisions in the Roman ecclesia might not be seen in the Philippian ecclesia. Unity is essential because if we are going to stand firm against the pressures of the world then we must be united as brethren, with one mind. That mind is not our own, but that of Christ, as Paul shows in ch 2.

“with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel”

- mind (5590) Gk. ‘psuche’ = “body”
- striving together (4866) other occurrence Phil 4:3 “*laboured* with me”, “vigorously co-operating” (Diag.)

There is no room for division if we are labouring together as one body trying to achieve one objective. If we put the faith of the gospel first in our ecclesia there will be no room for contention about personalities, and harmful gossip. Those who bite and devour end up being consumed one of another (Gal. 5:15).

1:28 And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.

If they wavered in the face of trial they would cause a slur on the truth.

“And in nothing terrified by your adversaries”

- terrified (4426) “startled” (Conc), “to scare as a horse when something blocks its path” (Bull.)
- adversaries (480)

The concern of the apostle is that in the face of sudden trial they might buckle under pressure. It was important for them and for us to ensure that our faith is built up to withstand trial.

“which is to them an evident token of perdition”

- evident token (1732) “declaration”
- perdition (684) “destruction, ruin” (Bull.)

By persecuting the ecclesia, their adversaries would receive eternal destruction themselves but give the Philippians salvation. As their adversaries looked on the Philippians’ faithful example, they would feel judged by the righteousness of the brethren and would fear judgement to come (compare Jesus before Pilate, John 19:8, and Paul before Felix, Acts 24:24).

“but to you of salvation, and that of God”

The result of their faithfulness would be their eternal salvation, according to the grace of God. Salvation through trial is a continued theme of the scripture (e.g. 1 Pet. 1:7). Follow this theme through scripture.

1:29 For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;

The Philippians were blessed with the privilege of being able to suffer for Christ.

- given (5483) “it has been given as a favour” (Roth). “For to you it is graciously granted, for Christ’s sake not only to be believing on him, but to be suffering for his sake also” (Conc)
- suffer (3958)
- sake (1722)

Far from suffering for Christ’s sake being a source of complaint and sorrow, they are told that they are in fact a gift! To suffer is a privilege even greater than belief. Jesus had told his disciples to rejoice and shout for joy when persecuted for great would be their reward (Matt. 5:12). The faithful in the “white-hot” days of the truth rejoiced in suffering. They considered it a divine gift or privilege (Acts 5:41). Peter exhorts brethren to rejoice in sufferings, in sharing Christ’s sufferings, for in the day of glory they shall rejoice exceedingly (1 Pet.4:13-14; Heb. 12:6). Paul had set an excellent example in their midst singing praise to God in the prison of Philippi having endured stripes (Acts 16:23-26). The benefits of suffering patiently are outlined in James 1:3-4; Heb.12:6, 11. As Christ learned by the things which he suffered (Heb. 5:8), so his followers likewise must have their lives tempered by sufferings providentially brought upon them.

1:30 Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me.

They had seen Paul enduring trial joyfully in Philippi and now were hearing of his faithful example in Rome.

- conflict (73) Gk. ‘agon’, cp English word “agony”

In a very real way Paul had at Philippi conformed to the pattern of Christ’s sufferings. Consider the following:

Acts 16:20	He was falsely accused (cp. Matt. 26:59)
Acts 16:23	He was beaten with many stripes (cp. Isa 53:5)
Acts 16:24	He was thrust into prison (cp. Christ in the grave Acts 2:24)
Acts 16:26	An earthquake signified God’s disapproval (cp. Matt. 28:2)
Acts 16:38-39	God released him and vindicated him (cp. Acts 2:24)

He is asking them to follow his example, and the faithful example of Christ. Christ asked the Smyrneans to be “faithful unto death” (Rev. 2:10). How are we faring in these far off days in enduring the small trials that come our way?



Exercise 6

1. Define and analyse the Greek word for:

“conversation” (4176)

.....

.....

“striving together” (4866)

.....

.....

2. Verse 27 introduces the idea of unity within an ecclesia, a strong theme within the book of Philippians (2:23; 3:16, 17, 4:2), by emphasising self-examination (v10). If each member of a group has their conversation (or behaviour) based on the gospel, unity can be achieved. List aspects of your behaviour which “becometh the gospel of Christ”.

.....

.....

.....

3. The Philippians were advised to “strive together”. Usually strife within an ecclesia is condemned (Phil. 1:15; 2:3; Rom 13:13). What was different about this strife?

.....

.....

.....

4. How can we develop “one spirit” and “one mind” in our ecclesial environment? Think of examples in your own ecclesia where you feel there has been a striving for a common goal. When this spirit is not present what can be done to change it?

.....

.....

.....

5. One of the real problems we all have in standing up for the truth is fear of the enemy (v.28). Who were the Philippians’ adversaries (Acts 16:19-24)? Generally, followers of Christ are law-abiding citizens. Why then do they have enemies? What causes this fear and how can it be overcome? Why would a lack of fear on the part of Christ’s followers teach the adversaries that destruction for them was near?

.....

.....

.....

6. (a) in v29 Paul states that the truth demands suffering as well as faith. In what ways are we called upon to suffer for Christ today?

- (b) The apostles saw suffering as a privilege. How could they do this?

7. In what sense do we do things on behalf of Christ? Is this similar to how Jesus came in his Father's name (John 5:43; 10:25; 17:4)?

8. List ways in which your conflicts or trials parallel those which you have seen and heard in Paul. How are you encouraged by knowing that others have endured the same trials?

NOTES

Study Group 2

“ESTEEM OTHERS BETTER THAN YOURSELF”

Philippians 2:1 – 2:11

VERSES 1-4: APPEAL FOR UNITY

2:1 If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies,

Here are four beautiful qualities of the truth which they were in danger of losing if they didn't preserve unity.

“If there be therefore any consolation in Christ”

- consolation (3874) Gk “paraklesis” = “to call to one's side for consolation or exhortation”

Our God is the God of all comfort (‘paraklesis’) who will comfort (‘parakoleao’) us in all our tribulations (2 Cor 1:3-6) and eventually give us everlasting consolation (2 Thess 2:16). Who would want to lose this comfort by spending their time in disputes which would destroy the spirit of the truth?

“if any comfort of love”

- comfort – only occ. “to speak kindly or soothingly” (Bull.)

The love of Christ soothes and encourages those who are heavy laden. That same comfort is readily welcome from our fellow pilgrims on the way to the kingdom.

“if any fellowship of the Spirit”

- fellowship (2842)
- ‘common sharing of the spirit’ (Wey)
- Note: no definite article – “fellowship of spirit”

The Philippians shared one spirit (ch 1:27) – a spirit of the love of God and of each other, a spirit of zeal for the work of God. They needed to stand fast in that spirit or they would lose it.

“if any bowels and mercies”

- bowels (4698) ‘metaphorical, like our understanding of the heart, the seat of the innermost feelings’ (Bull.)
- mercies (3628) ‘pity’ (Conc.)
- There had been a strong love and pity within the ecclesia. Would this be destroyed by disunity?

2:2 Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.

Paul's joy in the truth would be full if they could develop like-mindedness and so preserve the qualities of verse 1.

“Fulfil ye my joy”

- Fulfil (4137)
- joy (5479)

The apostle later in the epistle (ch 4:1) call the Philippians his “joy and crown”, but that joy would be complete only if they developed and maintained unity. Paul obviously has the dispute between Euodias and Syntyche in mind although he doesn't mention that particularly until ch 4:2.

“that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.”

- likeminded (5426) Lit. “think the same thing”
- love (26) Gk: “agape”
- being of one accord (4861) Gk: ‘sampsuchos’ = “one in soul” only occ.
- one mind (1520, 5426)

The stress on unity can't be missed. Paul wanted them to think the same thing, and have the same love, being and mind; that is to act as if they were one person. A challenge to us to completely forget about asserting ourselves and strive for the unity of our ecclesia and ecclesias in general. As the one body of Christ (Eph. 5:30. 1 Cor. 12:27), we ought to co-operate harmoniously in the work of the truth (1 Cor. 12:12-23), growing together in our concerns (1 Cor. 12:24-26, Eph. 4:15-16, Col. 2:19)

2:3 Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

The spirit of self-assertiveness is always destructive of unity; but the spirit of self-abasement and appreciation of others is the key to maintaining oneness in Christ.

“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory”

- strife (2052) ‘faction’ (Conc.); From Greek “to labour for wages”, hence “canvassing, intriguing, generally party spirit, faction” (Bullinger) Translated “contention” ch 1:6;
- vainglory (2754) only occ.

Solomon wrote that “only by pride cometh contention but with the well advised is wisdom” (Prov. 13:10). The wise seek for unity, but the proud seek for personal glory however empty (vain) it may be eternally. They are not afraid to cause dispute or factions if they gain admiration or attention because of it.

All glorying is vain unless it be in the cross for Christ (Gal. 6:14) and the knowledge of God (Jer. 9:23-24). If any man thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself (Gal. 6:3). Paul therefore exhorts every man not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think (Rom. 12:3) Humility is the only path for present unity and eternal glory (1 Peter 5:3-6).

“but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves”

- lowliness of mind (5012) Used only 6 times in the N.T., 5 times by Paul. He showed the Ephesian elders his own example of “humility of mind” in their midst (Acts 20:19), and in his letter to the Ephesians (ch 4:1-3) reminds them that “lowliness” is essential if the ecclesia is to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace
- esteem (2233)
- better (5242)

In contrast to the spirit of faction and glorying in the flesh, self-abasement is the key to unity. The saint must not impress himself with his own virtues and his brother's faults, but rather look at his brother to see the example of Christ exhibited in his life. It is positively beneficial, both for ourselves and the unity of the ecclesia, for us to dwell in the strengths of our brethren rather than their weaknesses. See also Romans 12:10.

2:4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

Unity is created by forgetting ourselves while taking note of the interests and well being of others.

- look (4648)

The first characteristic Paul warned Timothy against in 2 Tim 3:2 was the men being “lovers of their own selves”. This quality of selfishness predominates in the world and has therefore naturally affected the ecclesia. Paul, in this chapter, shows us the totally selfless life of Christ who concerned himself only with others needs. Further he adds the example of Timothy, who would “naturally care for your state”; and of Epaphroditus, who was prepared to sacrifice himself to care for others. In Rom. 15:2-3, he told the Romans not to please themselves but to care for their fellow brethren, just as Christ showed. It is a natural characteristic of youth to be selfish. There is

therefore a great need for us, as young people, to look beyond our own needs and wants and serve our brethren. This is the only way unity will be achieved and maintained.



Exercise 1

1. (a) Define and analyse the Greek words for:

“consolation” (3874)

.....

“comfort” (3890)

.....

“love” (26)

.....

“fellowship” (2842)

.....

“bowels” (4698)

.....

“mercies” (3628)

.....

- (b) What are the “consolations”, “comforts”, “fellowship” and “mercies” of the truth in our days?

.....

2. Rewrite verse one as you now understand it to read:

.....

3. What is meant by the expression “fellowship of the Spirit”? Can a Christadelphian today experience this? Explain.

.....

4. (a) Paul's joy was dependent upon harmony and unity of purpose among the Philippians. What words does Paul use in this verse to stress his point on unity?

.....

(b) How closely does your ecclesia or young people's group match these attributes? What things have contributed to the unity in your ecclesia? What things have detracted from that unity (Hint: v3) and how can you help overcome them rather than add to the problems?

(c) What are some underlying reasons for strife, vainglory and other forms of disunity?

5. (a) List other instances in Paul's epistles (including Philippians) where he instructs us about 'our minds' (eg. Rom 12:16; 2 Cor 13:11)

(b) Whose mind is to be in all of us (v5)? What indications are there in the epistle that not all of the Philippians were of one mind?

6. The RSV translates "lowliness of mind" as 'humility'. The word occurs six other times in the N.T. Using Englishman's or a computerised concordance, find and read these passages. Make a list of other items that you can find in these verses that help to build unity.

7. Consider the parable put forth by Jesus in Luke 14:7-11. How do we esteem others better than ourselves?

8. Christ was the supreme example of what verse 4 talks about (Rom 15:2-3). Can you think of others who were good examples of this?

9. Consider the unity that existed between David and Jonathan (1 Sam 18:1; 20:41-42). We may not be as close to everyone in our ecclesia as David was to Jonathan, but we must make a diligent effort to try and get along. Who do you find it difficult to get along with? Try to make a list of the things that cause the problem. Are there things you can do to help?

10. Why should we be interested in the welfare of others? What are some practical ways in which we can show our concern?

VERSES 5-11: CHRIST'S EXAMPLE OF HUMILITY

2:5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

As the supreme example of the principle of self-abasement, Paul looks at the life of Christ.

Although Christ was greater than all men, he showed the greatest example of self-abasement. The Christ-mind is revealed in John 13 where "Jesus knowing that the Father had given all things into his hands, and that he was come from God, and went to God ... he ... began to wash the disciples feet." Despite his greatness he was prepared to totally humble himself and think solely about the needs of those he came to save.

2:6 Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

Here is Jesus' great example of humility. He had divine status (form of God) yet he did not seek the privileges that equality could give him, but submitted to the will of the Father.

"Who being"

- Gk: 'harparkon' = "to be" or "to exist". Used of Abraham when he was 100 years old (Rom.4:19, was), and therefore cannot mean "to be originally" as Trinitarians claim
- See Bro. T. J. Barling 'Letter to the Philippians', pp.72-73

"in the form of God"

- Form (3444) Gk: 'morphe'. Sometimes used of shape but cognate words are also used of: "a form of godliness" – 2 Tim. 3:5
"till Christ be formed in you" – Gal. 4:19

And the verb is used in Rom.12:2, "transformed" and 2 Cor. 3:18 "changed" in the sense of a moral transformation.

In v.7 the word "form" is used of "the form of a servant", which shows that the meaning is not of form in a physical sense but rather refers to Jesus' character and status as God's son. Jesus had this divine status because God was his Father. He was given a great capacity, the Spirit being poured on him without measure (John 3:34). However, when he was tempted to misuse his Divine ability (turning stones to bread, Matt.4:3-4) to demand Divine protection (throwing himself off the pinnacle of the Temple, Matt. 4:5-7) and to seek his promised throne immediately (Matt. 4:8-10), he refused in all cases. Jesus realised that the cross must come before the crown, and so he humbled himself, choosing voluntarily to take the position of a slave.

“thought it not robbery to be equal with God”

- “did not meditate a usurpation to be like God” (Diag.)
- robbery (725) It is useful to follow this word through the N.T. Means “to snatch or grasp something external to oneself”
- equal (2470)

For Jesus to have demanded the rights of Sonship in his mortality would have been to take something that didn't belong to him – “robbery” in every sense of the word. Therefore he chose a path of lowly suffering with the promise of eternal riches, rather than snatching immediate riches, honour and equality with God. He could rise to a higher status, not by imitating Eve's self-willed endeavour to be like the elohim (Gen. 3:5), but by becoming the loving submissive instrument of his Father's will (Matt. 26:39).

REFUTING THE PRE-EXISTENCE

These beautiful verses are twisted by the churches to teach the pre-existence of Christ. Consider the following:

1. “who being” from previous page.
2. form cannot mean shape as all men are in God's shape (James 3:9, Gen. 1:28) and substance as he was mortal, lower than the angels.
3. Lightfoot and Philips translate the phrase “thought it not robbery” as “did not cling to equality with God” as if Christ as the third part of the trinity was by nature equal with God. Note the explanation in the text.
4. No records exist of Jesus making “himself of no reputation” by making a decision in heaven to divest himself of his authority and come down in human frame.
5. The word “made” in the phrase “made in the likeness of men” (v.7) does not have to mean “born” as it is used in the next verse when Jesus “became” obedient unto death.

Further information is available in “Letter to the Philippians” by Bro. T.J. Barling pp.61-79

2:7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men

Rather than try to seize equality with God, Jesus abases himself taking the status of a servant and became as any other man.

“made himself of no reputation”

- One Gk. Word (2758) = “to empty” (Bull.)
- “he emptied himself” (RV, RSV)

This idea is similar to Jesus' own teaching, when he directed his first Beatitude to the “poor in spirit”. Those who are prepared to empty themselves of themselves and fill their lives with God (cp. Isa. 66:1-2), are those whose lives God will be pleased to perpetuate into eternity.

“form of a servant”

- form (3444)
- servant (1401) Gk: ‘doulos’ = “slave”

Paul's thoughts have turned to the servant prophecies of Isaiah where the prophet speaks of the submission of the Son to the will of the Father as slave to his master (e.g. Isa. 50:5-6). This culminated in suffering to justify many (Isa. 53:11), an idea which leads into the next verse. The slave had to give his life in total service to his master. He was owned by his master. He had no rights of his own. And as we look at Jesus' life we see an example of a man whose whole life was consumed by his Father's business. This involved not only serving his Father, but also those who he came to save. Jesus' counsel is clear; “whoever among you would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of Man

came not to be served but to serve" (Mk. 10:43-45 RSV; see also Mk. 22:27, Matt. 20:26-28). Nowhere is this more powerfully illustrated than in John 13 in the washing of the disciples feet. John 13:13 is one of the few passages where it is recorded that Jesus laid claim to his divine status; yet it is in the context of Jesus being servant of all!

THE CHERUBIM IN PHILIPPIANS 2

In depicting the mind of Christ it is not surprising that Paul mentions the four aspects of Christ's character (depicted in the four gospels) which align with the four faces of the cherubim:

- Eagle** – "being in the form of God" (v.6) – son of God
- Ox** – "took upon him the form of a servant" (v.7) – servant
- Man** – "fashion as a man" (v.8) – son of man
- Lion** – "every knee should bow" (v.10) – Christ the King

"likeness of men"

- likeness (3667)

The Jews' view of Messiah was that of a mighty hero, but Jesus was the opposite. His appearance and demeanour was meek and unassuming. He appeared as any other man.

2:8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Jesus came and lived a more humble way of life than any man, yet he never fulfilled the sinful lusts within and, against all his natural instincts, suffered death, the most humiliating death – on the cross.

"in fashion as a man, he humbled himself"

- fashion (4976) "manner of life" (Vine) – only other occurrence 1 Cor. 7:31 "fashion of this world"
- found (2147)
- humbled (5013)

Jesus in his manner of life was more humble than any of the men around him. There was no pretension in the way he lived that would give any hint that he was the future king of the world. With all other men their humanity has led to sin. Not so Jesus, for he "was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb.4:15). He lived as a man but overcame human nature throughout his life, and finally fought against all his natural instincts to die a humiliating death on the cross.

"and became obedient unto death"

- obedient (5255)
- unto (3360) "until"

Jesus was keenly aware of his responsibility. On his shoulders he bore the sins of the world from Adam to their own day. To sin even once would have destroyed the entire plan of salvation. "For even Christ pleased not himself, but as it is written, the reproaches of them that reproached thee fell on me" (Rom. 15:3).

"even the death of the cross"

- death (2288)
- cross (4716)

Christ's submission to his Father's will, even death by crucifixion, entailed more than just an agonising and cruel death. He was caused to hang naked before a jeering multitude. Such a death must have been totally abhorrent to the sensitive nature of our Lord, but it was necessary that the weakness of flesh be placarded for all the world to see. He saw past the "many sons" he would bring to glory and so "when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judgeth righteously" (1 Peter 2:23).

2:9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:

On the basis of his total submission to his Father's will, Jesus was exalted to the greatest position any man could attain.

“Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him”

- highly exalted (5251) cited from Isa. 52:12, “Behold my servant ... he shall be exalted and extolled and be very high”

Obedience was the cause of his exaltation. Because he lived a sinless life, it was not possible that he should remain in the grave (Acts 2:24), and so the Father exalted him to glory.

“a name which is above every name”

- name (3986) “that name” (Roth.)

Paul wrote to the Ephesians that God hath set Christ “far above ... every name that is named” (Eph. 1:21). Paul is also exhorting the Philippians that if they were prepared to humble themselves before each other, God would exalt them in due time.

2:10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;

Because Jesus had become the Saviour then all will bow in reverence to him for what he has achieved.

“that at the name of Jesus”

- name (3686)
- quoting from Isa. 45:23-24

In Isaiah the name to which every knee bows is the name of Yahweh. Jesus Christ is the extension of Yahweh Himself in the work of salvation (cp. John 14:9, Heb. 1:1). Isa. 45:41 speaks of Yahweh as a just power and a saviour and Paul draws out this idea by using the term Jesus which means “Yah shall save”. Jesus was the means of Yahweh’s salvation. Yahweh is ultimately our Saviour, yet Jesus Christ as the extension of that salvation is often called “our Saviour” in the New Testament (e.g. 2 Peter 1:1, 11).

There is a second reason why Paul calls him Jesus. Jesus is the name used only of our Lord in his mortality. Following his resurrection, he was made “both Lord and Christ” (see notes v. 11), and is now addressed as Jesus Christ, Lord Jesus Christ, or Lord Jesus. Paul uses the name Jesus because he has been drawing our minds back to the time when Jesus was mortal and when he co-operated with the Father, submitting to the death of the cross. Because he endured the cross, the whole earth will give honour to him.

“every knee should bow”

- knee (1119)
- bow (2578)

Christ will have dominion over “all things”. (Psa. 8:6, Heb. 2:6-10), and all will reverence him, both in heaven, in earth and under the earth. These are unique terms and are not to be confused with the phrases in Eph. 1:10 and Rev. 5:3, 13.

“of things in heaven”

- heaven (2023) occurs 20 times in N. T. and means “the heavenlies”

Paul does not use the noun “heaven” but the adjective “heavenly”. This is not a reference to the literal heavens (and the subjection of the Angels) but rather to the saints who will honour Christ for the salvation he has brought. “Worthy is the lamb that was slain” (Rev. 5:9, 12). In Eph. 1:21-23, Paul shows that the ecclesia has been made subject to Christ.

“and things in the earth”

- in the earth (1919) “earthy” cp. ch3:19 “earthly things”

The mortals will also honour the Son. Even former rulers of the earth will do homage before Yahweh’s Son (Psa. 72:10-11)

“under the earth”

- under the earth (2709) one Gk. word; literally “underground” (only occ.)

Those consigned to eternal death will give glory to Christ and vindicate the righteousness of God.

2:11 And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the Glory of God the Father.

Praise to the exalted Christ will be to the ultimate glory of the Father who accomplished salvation for all through him.

“And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord”

- tongue (1100)
- confess (1843)

This is the full title of Christ. He was called Jesus at birth, it being a prophecy that he should “save his people from their sins” (Matt. 1:21). But upon his resurrection and change to immortality, he became the Christ, “the anointed one” (Heb.1:9), and Lord over all (Rom. 14:9). “Lord” could again refer to Isa. 49:23-24, that is Christ is Yahweh – the fulfilment of the Yahweh name.

“to the glory of God the Father”

- glory (1391)

To glorify the Son is to glorify the Father who brought salvation. (Isa. 59:16). “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself”. (2 Cor. 5:19). Jesus obtained the victory over flesh, but the source of his strength was the Father. Hence Christ’s accomplishment and exaltation reflects glory to the Father.

**Exercise 2**

1. Paul now directs our attention towards the supreme example of the Lord Jesus Christ. Using Scriptural references outside Philippians, how would you explain this “mind of Christ” (Hints: 1 Cor 2:14-16; 2:13)? How can we develop this “mind”?

2. Why does Paul introduce a consideration of the “mind of Christ” at this stage in the chapter? Does it fit a structure in the chapter or epistle that you can discern?

3. The Greek word for “robbery” used in this verse is ‘harpagamos’ (725). It comes from the word ‘harpazo’ (726) which *means “to seize, to catch up or away, pluck, pull, take by force and grasp”*. Find instances in Christ’s life where he gives glory and honour to God rather than accepting it for himself.

4. If Christ did not grasp at immediate riches, honour and equality with God, at what did he grasp? Use Scriptural proof for your answer.

5. Paul makes many allusions to the Old Testament throughout this chapter and the rest of his epistles. List the parallels (Hint: Gen 3:1-7).

6. Define and analyse the Greek word for:

“reputation” (2758)

7. (a) What does it mean to ‘empty’ oneself?

(b) How did Christ empty himself, minister to others, humble himself?

(c) Why is this process of emptying oneself so important? How can we follow this same pattern of mind and action?

8. Define and analyse the Greek words for:

“likeness” (3667)

“fashion” (4976)

9. Held within Paul’s discussion of the example of Christ are a number of allusions which he makes to the Suffering Servant Prophecy of Isaiah. Can you find verses within chapters 45 to 53 of the Servant Prophecy that speak of Christ as a servant? Find verses from the Suffering Servant Prophecy which connect (not necessarily the exact wording) with the following allusions made by Paul in verses 8-10:

<i>Allusions from Philippians</i>	<i>Isaiah passage</i>
2:8 – “humbled”	
2:8 – “obedient unto death”	
2:9 – “highly exalted”	
2:10 – “every knee should bow”	

10. Consider Luke’s account of Christ’s last hours which he spent in the Garden of Gethsemane, Luke 22: 39-46. Note especially the attitude which he displays in his prayer in v.42. Why was Jesus required to die (ie. to “be obedient unto death”)?

11. The death of the cross was a humiliating experience for Jesus. In what ways is being “crucified with Christ” humbling for us? Why is humility of mind regarded by the Apostle as a virtue of supreme importance?

12. (a) Define and analyse the Greek words for:

“highly exalted” (5251)

“above” (5228)

- (b) How and why did God highly exalt His Son? Consider in connection Matt 5:3, 1 Pet. 5:5-6, Prov 15:33, Acts 2:24.

13. Define and analyse the Greek word for:

"confess" (1843)

.....

(b) How can, could, or do we confess and acknowledge the Lord Jesus Christ?

.....

.....

(c) How will a confession by all people in the future, that Jesus Christ is Lord, give glory to God?

.....

.....

NOTES

Study Group 3

“HOLDING FORTH THE WORD OF LIFE”

Philippians 2:12 – 2:30

VERSES 12-18: WORK OUT YOUR OWN SALVATION

2:12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

“Wherefore”

- Therefore (RSV)

Having set before them the mind and spirit of Christ, Paul urges them to implement this in their lives, thereby to grow.

“my beloved”

- beloved (27)

Paul addresses them tenderly, being very anxious for them to receive his words. He is very careful to ensure full effect of his words, knowing that their salvation depends on it. He is not indulging in diplomacy, but rather expressing genuine love.

“as ye have always obeyed”

- always (3842)
- obeyed (5219)

Christ's obedience to the Father (v8) was an example to the Philippians to follow the words of the apostle, who spoke under inspiration, the Word of God.

“not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence”

- presence (3952)
- absence (666)

See notes 1v27. There was even more necessity when he wasn't with them that they continue to make an effort to live the Christ-life.

“work out your own salvation”

- work (2716)
- salvation (4991)

Paul does not mean that salvation is attained, because he continues “for it is God which worketh in you” (ch 2:13). Works are an essential part of the Christ-life because faith is seen in works, and works are the fulfilment of faith (James 2:20-23). It will be on the basis of how our love for the truth has been demonstrated in works, that we will be judged (2 Cor 5:10; Matt 16:27; Rev 22:12). The emphasis on the word “own” meant that the individual brethren and sisters could not rely on being a member of a healthy ecclesia.

“with fear and trembling”

- fear (5401)
- trembling (5156)

The Philippians could not afford to be complacent. In ch 3:3, Paul tells them not to put “confidence in the flesh”. It is essential that we remember that our God is a consuming fire to those that do not work out their own salvation.

2:13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do his good pleasure.

Working out our own salvation will not be done in the strength of flesh, for it is God which gives us the desire and the energy to serve him.

“For it is God which worketh in you”

- “For it is God who energiseth within you” (Roth)

The Judaiser thought that he could save himself by his own works. Paul says it is God that works through us. Similarly, he writes to the Corinthians to tell them that we are co-labourers with God (1 Cor 3:9). The works of God are not the achievement of human will-power. “Except Yahweh build the house, they labour in vain that build it” (Psa 127:1).

“to will and to do of his good pleasure”

- will (2309)
- do (1754)
- good pleasure (2107)
- of – “for his good pleasure” (RSV)

God gives us the will because it is an appreciation of His love for us that motivates our service (Rom 2:4; Gal 2:20-21; Gal 5:6). Our response is seen in activity that transcends what fleshly motives could ever achieve (Phil 4:13), and gives pleasure to God in the greatest sense. Desire to serve the Father does not come of the flesh but of the spirit. The absorbing of God’s Word is essential to direct us in the Father’s will as well as provoking in us, that desire to serve Him.

2:14 Do all things without murmurings and disputings:

If the ecclesia is single minded in its service to the Father there will be no complaining or arguing prevalent.

“Do all things without murmurings”

- murmurings (1112) “to utter in a low voice privately” (Bull.)
- Alluding to Israel in the wilderness. Murmuring was their first and last sin (Ex 15:24; Num 17:10).

There are two sorts of private complaining which damage the fulfilling of God’s good pleasure. The first is criticism of our brethren which destroys love and the unity of the ecclesia in the progress of the truth. The second is criticism of the work of the ecclesia, which indicates that we are not motivated by the will of God. Concerning Israel, Psa 106:25 says that they “murmured in their tents and hearkened not unto the voice of Yahweh”. Murmuring was the result of not listening to God and fulfilling His will. As young people we often criticise and do nothing in a positive spirit to build up our ecclesia or young people’s group.

“and disputings”

- Disputings (1261) Gk: ‘dialogismos’ (not ‘Suzetesis’ as in Bullinger)
- “inward reasoning, an opinion” (Vine); “questioning” (RSV)

When brethren and sisters start publicly questioning the doctrines of truth, or the way the ecclesia is run (ecclesial standards for example), the unity of the ecclesia can be destroyed by constant debate. This is the opposite that the spirit of Paul urges upon them in ch 2:2.

2:15 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.

If the ecclesia can together produce the unity of the Christ-mind it will be an effective witness in the world.

“That ye may be blameless and harmless”

- blameless (273) “that nothing can be said against because of incompleteness in character” (Bull.)

- harmless (185) “unmixed”. “The Greeks used it of wine unmixed with water, of unalloyed metal” (Vine). It is a similar idea to “sincere” (ch 1:10), and is translated as “sincere” in the margin.

The world must not be able to see any inconsistencies in our walk. Can our school friends or work companions look on us and see the characteristics of Christ or do they see a life which is very mixed, with part of this world’s desires and part filled with God?

“the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation”

- Paul quotes Deut 32:5 where, in the song of Moses, Yahweh says that Israel are no longer His sons because they have corrupted themselves (not showing forth the character of the Father). They are described as a “perverse and crooked generation” – an expression Paul applies to the environment of Macedonia in the first century.
- Rebuke (298) Gk: ‘amometos’ = “without spot” (as contrasted to Deut 32:5).

Paul has exhorted them to develop the Christ-mind and the qualities of son-ship which Christ revealed. Moses prophesied that Israel would be cast aside as God’s sons because they had become corrupted and were found “with spot”. Paul now exhorts spiritual Israel to show the characteristics which reveal that they are truly God’s sons.

“among whom ye shine as lights in the world”

- Paul in ch 2:15-16 is drawing his ideas from Isa 49, particularly in this verse from Isa 49:6 of Christ (in Paul) as “the light to the Gentiles”
- Symbol used of the lampstand in the tabernacle with the oil of the Word shining in the midst of darkness
- shine (5316)
- lights (5458)
- world (2889) Gk: ‘kosmos’

‘God is light’, says John (1 John 1:5) and his true sons must shine forth the light of the Word in word and action (cp Matt 5:16 “good works”). As Jesus said, it is impossible to believe the truth and not manifest it (Matt 5:14-15). Paul exhorts that in conformity with a life lived to the glory of God (harmless and blameless) they should hold forth the Word in the midst of an evil generation. The theme of shining in a dark world is one you should follow through scripture for yourself.

2:16 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.

Paul sees an effective proclamation of the truth in an evil society as a great cause of rejoicing at Christ’s return.

“Holding forth the word of life”

- Hold forth (1907) “to hold out towards” (Bull.)
- Figure of the lampstand – holding out arms

The example we show to those in the world is a witness to the hope we hold, but it cannot benefit them unless we tell them of that hope. If a vigorous ecclesia like Philippi needed a reminder of their responsibilities to preach the Word, so do we. It is the responsibility of every brother and sister to be ready to give an answer of the hope within them (cp 1 Pet 3:15).

“that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.”

- Paul quotes Isa 49:4 which he also quotes in Gal 2:2 concerning his own work. This is another allusion to the Suffering Servant prophecy from Isaiah.
- rejoice (2745)
- day (2250)
- run (5143)
- vain (2756)
- laboured (2872)

Paul wanted to be sure that at the judgement seat the Philippians would have fruit of God, that there might be a result from all his labour. He wrote to the Corinthians to tell them that even if their

preaching had no permanent result, the holding forth of the Word would bring blessings for them (1 Cor 3:11-15). Even if the activity of our ecclesia fails to change the world, our efforts in the strength of God, will bring us a reward.

2:17 Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.

The apostle pictures himself at the judgement seat and sees his own sacrifice as a drink offering (a secondary part to the sacrifice of the faithful work of the Philippians), and rejoices in the co-operation they have shown with him.

“Yea, and if I be offered”

- offered (4689) Gk: ‘spendo’ = “to pour out, make a libation”; “poured out as a drink offering” (Roth). The drink offering symbolised the joyful offering of a man’s labours unto Yahweh.

It has been suggested that Paul is speaking of his death as a drink offering in giving his total existence. But in linking this verse with the previous one, the figure appears to be Paul at the judgement seat presenting the sacrifice of the Philippians; and pouring forth his own work as a drink offering accompanying their offering.

“upon the sacrifice and service of our faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.”

- sacrifice (2378)
- service (3009)
- joy (5463)
- rejoice (4796)

Paul would rejoice in the day of Christ if they kept up that sacrifice as a burnt offering – giving heart, soul and mind to Yahweh their God in total dedication (Mk 12:33).

2:18 For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me.

Not only would Paul rejoice but they would share that joy eternally.

- Cause (846)



Exercise 1

1. (a) Define and analyse the Greek word for:

“beloved” (27)

.....

- (b) To what other Greek word is the word “beloved” very closely connected?

.....

.....

- (c) Paul uses this term of endearment for people in all of his letters but two. Can you find them?

.....

.....

2. Consider Prov. 10:16, John 6:27-29, Heb 4:11. What does working out our own salvation involve? List some practical ways in which we can work out our salvation.

3. (a) What does it mean to serve the Lord with “fear and trembling”? What does it involve?

(b) Are we instructed elsewhere to serve the Lord with fear?

4. The word “worketh” in the Greek, is ‘energeo’, meaning to energise. In what way does God energise or work within us? How do we enable God to energise or work within our lives? What is the “will” and “good pleasure” that God wants to work into us?

5. (a) In these verses, Paul would appear to be making reference to the account of faithless Israel in the wilderness (consider Paul’s direct reference to the Israelites in 1 Cor 10:10, also Psa 106:25). Explain how the following ideas apply to the Israelites and give a Scriptural reference for your answers:

“murmurings”

“disputings”

“a crooked and
perverse generation”

“lights in the world”

- (b) What are the dangers of working in the truth with murmurings and disputings? What does God say about murmuring and disputing elsewhere in scripture?

6. What is this “Word of life”? What measures of separation must we take to be unaffected by the world and yet hold forth the Word of life to them? How can we hold forth the Word of life in our lives?

7. (a) Define and analyse the Greek words for:

“shine” (5316)

“lights” (5458)

(b) Because Israel possessed divine laws and the Word of God, they should have been recognized to be a “wise and understanding people” (Deut 4:6). We, like the Israelites, possess God’s Word, and thus should shine forth our lights to others in this dark world. How can we shine as lights to the surrounding world (Consider: Matt 5:14-16)?

8. (a) Many times Paul pictures our journey to the kingdom in terms of a race (1 Cor 9:24-26; Gal. 2:2; Heb. 12:1). Why would Paul choose to describe it this way?

(b) With whom is it that we are not to run (1 Pet. 4:4)?

9. Read verse 17 from the RSV or Rotherham’s. Show how Paul is employing terminology from the Mosaic Law. What is the point of his allusion? To what type of Old Testament sacrifice was Paul referring?

10. Why would Paul joy and rejoice if he was sentenced to death by the Romans? Consider 2 Cor 4:17; 2 Tim 3:12; Acts 5:41; Matt 5:8; Rev 14:13. Would you be willing to die for your faith? Would you rejoice upon receiving a death sentence, as Paul says he would have?
-
-
-

VERSES 19-24: THE CHRIST-MIND IN TIMOTHY

2:19 But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know of your state.

Paul was equally concerned about the Philippians' well being as they were about his, and so he determined to send Timothy that he might report on their progress and faith.

"I trust in the Lord Jesus"

- trust (1679) Gk 'elpizo' = "hope"

Paul recognised that his plans depended upon the will of God and His Son, unlike those described in James 4:13-15.

"to send Timotheus shortly unto you"

- Timotheus means "valued of God". Formal form of the name Timothy.
- send (3992)
- shortly (5030)

This was a great sacrifice for Paul, because Timothy was such a valued companion and comfort to the Apostle.

"that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state"

- "that I may be of a cheerful soul" (Roth)
- good (2174)
- comfort (2174)
- state (4012)

Paul's genuine concern for the Philippians was such that he would rejoice when he heard of their progress in the truth.

2:20 For I have no man likeminded who will naturally care for your state.

Timothy was chosen by Paul because of his oneness of mind with the Apostle and also because of his genuine concern for the wellbeing of the Philippians.

"For I have no man likeminded"

- likeminded (2473) lit. "one-souled"

Paul and Timothy thought so much alike that it was as if they were one person. As a result, Paul could have supreme confidence that Timothy would react in the same way as he would himself. Here was an example of the spirit of unity and teamwork that Paul had exhorted the ecclesia to adopt.

“who will naturally care for your state”

- naturally (1104) “genuinely” (Bull.)
- “will be genuinely anxious for your welfare” (RSV)
- care (3309)
- state (4012)

Timothy showed a unique characteristic which is certainly not natural to the flesh. He had a genuine concern for the interests and needs of others. Paul had explained the Christ-mind in ch 2:5-8, but in Timothy they could see a living demonstration of that mind.

2:21 For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's

- seek (2212)
- “all look after their own interests” (RSV)

In the context of the previous verse, it seems that there were few available for the long round trip to Philippi. Moreover, of them all, only Timothy had the devotion to Christ to willingly sacrifice himself to reach the Philippians and then, when he had reached them, to genuinely care for them. Generally men are selfish; even in the truth, few of us reach the stage of forgetting ourselves and putting the cause of Christ first (see Rom 15:1-4).

2:22 But ye know the proof of him that as a son with the father he hath served with me in the gospel

Timothy had slaved with Paul in extending the gospel as a son follows the example of his father.

“But ye know the proof of him”

- “but you know Timothy's approved worth” (Wey); “But you know what Timothy has proved himself to be “ (TCNT)

They know Timothy well because of his role in establishing the ecclesia.

“that as a son with the father”

- in 1 Cor 4:7 Paul calls Timothy “his beloved son” and holds this out as an example to his other “beloved sons” (v14) in Corinth
- Paul calls Timothy “my own son in the faith” (1 Tim 1:2), and “dearly beloved son” (2 Tim 1:2). This latter term is only used elsewhere of Christ's relationship to the Father.

In v5-11, they have been exhorted by Christ's ready obedience to his Father, and in v15, drawn back to Israel's failure to be God's true sons. The way Timothy followed Paul's example showed the way they should follow the will of their Heavenly Father.

“he hath served with me in the gospel”

- served (1398) Gk: ‘edoulusen’ = “slaved with me”

Although Timothy was like a son to Paul, both were slaves of Jesus Christ following Christ's example in v7. The Philippians could not look on the example of Christ as being too high for them to reach, because Paul and Timothy had taken upon them “the form of slaves”.

2:23 Him therefore I hope to send presently as soon as I shall see how it will go with me.

Paul wanted Timothy to stay until the outcome of his case had been determined, even though he was confident of release, because he knew that the Philippians would be anxious to hear the result.

2:24 But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly

Despite the fact that Timothy would be sent, Paul was confident that he would be able to see the Philippians shortly.

- trust (3982) “to be persuaded” (Bull.); “I am assured” (Roth.)

Paul was confident of release (ch 1:25) and was sure that he would be in their midst again. There seems to be a note of joyful expectancy in Paul’s words here.

**Exercise 2**

1. (a) Find a passage that shows us that we are to rely upon God’s will (Hint: try James).

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- (b) Can you think of examples in scripture, where men or women did not consult God first? What happened to them or their plans?

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- (c) Paul’s plan depended upon the will of God. Make a list of times when you remember planning events in your life with the will of God in the forefront of your mind. Is there anything in our life that should be done without consulting or thinking of God first?

-
-
-
2. Timothy was apparently in Rome with Paul. No doubt he was a source of great strength and encouragement while Paul was awaiting his trial. Why then would Paul be prepared to part with his closest companion at this point in time? Why did Paul desire to send Timothy?

3. The bond between Paul and Timothy was very strong. Timothy was concerned about the same things as Paul. This was especially true of the ecclesia at Philippi. What past connection did Timothy have with this ecclesia?

4. (a) Define and analyse the Greek words for:

“likeminded” (2473) – (cp v2)

“naturally” (1104)

“care” (3309)

- (b) Would you say that Paul and Timothy had the mind of Christ? Give proof for your answer.

- (c) Timothy genuinely cared for others – how is this characteristic developed?

- (d) Are there examples in the Word, of Timothy being genuinely anxious for the welfare of others and his service in the Gospel? Note that the theme of ‘service’ is still present in the chapter.

5. Ch 2:21 is a sad comment on the state of mankind in general, but it is true even today. What verse in this chapter instructs us to do otherwise? Would this be the mindset of a willing servant?

6. (a) What are the things of Jesus Christ?

(b) Seeking the things of Jesus Christ involves, in part, serving our ecclesias. Make a list of ways in which you have served your ecclesia or its members over the past month. How could you improve? When you did serve, was it with joy, or was it with murmuring, dispute and half-heartedness as the children of Israel?

7. (a) What characteristics made up Paul's father-son relationship with Timothy in the truth?

(b) How did such a close father to son relationship develop? How can we follow such an example with our spiritual fathers and mothers?

8. How would a father be different from an instructor (1 Cor. 4:15).

9. (a) Define and analyse the Greek word for:

"presently" (1824)

(b) If Paul wished to wait till he knew what the outcome of his trial would be before sending Timothy, what does this tell us about his trial?

(c) Does Paul give any indications elsewhere in the epistle as to what he feels the outcome of his trial will be?



VERSES 25-30: THE CHRIST-MIND IN EPAPHRODITUS

2:25 Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother, and companion in labour and fellow soldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants.

Epaphroditus was the representative of the ecclesia sent to minister to the Apostle. Paul now sends him back with great commendation for his selfless devotion.

“Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you”

- Present tense, indicating that he has not yet been sent
- “Yet I deem it important to send Epaphroditus to you now” (Wey.)

From v26, it appears that Epaphroditus longed to see them again, and so Paul decides to send him back to them. Bro. Barling suggests that he may have felt homesick in Rome and wanted to get back to Philippi.

“Epaphroditus”

A name derived from the goddess of love Aphrodite, suggesting that he was a Gentile convert.

“my brother and companion in labour and fellow soldier”

- companion in labour – expression used of many in Philippi, in ch 4:3 “fellow labourers”
- fellow soldier – Paul in prison is exhorted by the soldiers around him; he and Epaphroditus were fighting a different warfare Eph 6:11-18.

These are terms of respect for a dear brother and friend.

“but your messenger and he that ministered to my wants”

- messenger – lit. “apostle”
- ministered – Gk. ‘leitourgos’, cp. Notes on “service” in v17

Epaphroditus was sent by the Philippians to enquire of the apostle’s well being and take a gift to sustain him (ch 4:18). He had stayed with Paul and ministered as a public servant thus representing the care of the Philippians for Paul.

2:26 For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye heard that he had been sick

Epaphroditus was longing to see his brethren, especially since they had heard of his sickness, because he didn’t want to be a continuing cause of concern.

“For he longed after you all”

- “for he has been longing for you all” (RSV)
- longed (1971) occ. v8 “to desire earnestly” (Bull.)

Note the genuine and earnest desire that Epaphroditus had for his brethren at Philippi. It is obvious that he was constantly thinking of them and their well being, and had even been prepared to give his life to supply their service to the Apostle. Here, truly, is an example who fits the description of v3-5, and is worthy of emulation.

“and was full of heaviness because ye heard that he had been sick”

- heaviness (85) “to be troubled or in anguish” (Bull.). Only used elsewhere of Jesus being in anguish in the garden of Gethsemane (Matt 26:37; Mark 14:33).

Epaphroditus was distressed to know that the Philippians had heard of his severe ill-health. He was concerned lest they worry unduly about him and thus detract from Paul and the work in hand. Epaphroditus did not want their pity – his work was one of sacrifice.

2:27 For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy upon him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.

Paul saw that God's mercy was shown not only to Epaphroditus in the restoration of his health, but also to himself in that he was spared the agony of losing a loved companion.

Epaphroditus had evidently suffered a major illness which had almost taken his life. In healing him, God had also shown mercy to Paul. Not only would Paul have been saddened at the loss of a faithful brother, but his sorrow would have been heightened in realising that the illness suffered was probably the result of his trip to Rome in order that he might minister to the Apostle.

2:28 I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful.

Paul was keen to send Epaphroditus back to the Philippian ecclesia again, where he would be welcomed joyously. Though he would miss Epaphroditus himself, seeing the Philippians' joy would temper his own sorrow.

"I sent him therefore the more carefully"

- carefully (4708)
- "I am therefore all the more eager to send him" (Wey).

Though Paul regarded Epaphroditus as a valuable minister to his needs (v25), he here demonstrates the selfless attitude which he has spoken of earlier (v3-5). His only concern was for Epaphroditus and the Philippians.

"that I may be the less sorrowful"

- less sorrowful (253) "more free from sorrow" (Bull.), "the less anxious" (RSV)

Paul's sorrow in the loss of a faithful companion would be lessened by the Philippians' joy in receiving him again. It is difficult for us to see that sometimes our loss or deprivations may be for the benefit of others – and in that we can rejoice. Here Paul is a true example of one exercising the sympathy that should exist within the body of Christ (cp 1 Cor 12:12, 18-26).

2:29 Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation.

Paul asks the Philippians to welcome Epaphroditus into their midst again and esteem him highly for his work in the name of Christ.

- Receive (4327) "be giving him welcome" (Roth)
- gladness (5479)
- reputation (1784) "honour" (Roth, RSV)

Paul wanted the Philippian brethren to genuinely welcome Epaphroditus back. Some may have viewed him as a deserter who had not fulfilled his commission of ministering to Paul on their behalf. However, Paul was concerned that he be honoured by all for his service to Christ.

2:30 Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.

The reason Paul now gives for highly honouring Epaphroditus is that he was prepared to lose his life in the service of the truth.

"Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life"

- not regarding (3851) "to expose one's self to danger, to hazard" (Bull.)

Epaphroditus was an example of the mind of Christ in that he neglected his own interests ("own things" v3) and was totally concerned about Paul. His sacrifice was so great that he did not regard his own life as more important than the opportunity to serve his master. Jesus said, "whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever will lose his life for my sake, the same shall find it" (Luke 9:24). Where is this sort of commitment to Christ and our brethren today?

“to supply your lack of service toward me”

- “to complete your lack of service to me” (RSV)
- cp 4:10 “lack of opportunity”. Paul was not complaining or rebuking them.

Paul wanted the Philippians to realise that it was in the course of fulfilling their service to him that Epaphroditus had nearly lost his life. Epaphroditus therefore deserved their commendation, not their rebuke.

**Exercise 3**

1. (a) Why is Epaphroditus in Rome? Where did he come from? What does Paul intend to do with him?

-
- (b) How can we serve brethren and sisters in other lands?

2. Find five words that Paul applies to the man Epaphroditus. What do these characteristics tell us about the man? What kind of a servant was he?

3. (a) Define and analyse the Greek words for:

“longed” (1971)

“heaviness” (85)

-
-
- (b) Why did Epaphroditus long after the Philippians? Why was he full of heaviness?

4. Paul interpreted the recovery of Epaphroditus from ill health as an act of God's mercy, because he was keenly aware of God's providence. Make a list of events in your life which you consider to have been an act of God's mercy (cp principle of Psa 145 1-7 where we are exhorted to speak of God's mercy).

5. Find examples within scripture of others who rejoiced as the result of someone else's joy.

6. (a) Do you think that some of the Philippians may have had criticism for Epaphroditus upon his return home? (Receive him as a brother. 2:29)

(b) Why did Paul ask the Philippians to view Epaphroditus with reputation (honour)? Consider 1 Tim 5:17

(c) How could the Philippians look after Epaphroditus on his return? How should we look after those in need?

7. (a) Notice how the theme of service continues. It is Paul's antidote to vainglory and disunity (v4). What four examples of service has Paul placed before the Philippians in this chapter?

(b) What does Christ say regarding our lives and service to him (Hint: Matt 16)?

8. Epaphroditus was not even willing to compromise the work of Christ for his own life. Do we ever make compromises when choosing between work for God or serving ourselves?

9. What should our attitude be to those brethren and sisters who sacrifice for the truth and how can we help them further the work?

NOTES

Study Group 4

“COUNT ALL THINGS LOSS FOR CHRIST”

Philippians 3:1 – 3:16

VERSES 1-3: REJOICE IN CHRIST AND TRUST NOT IN THE FLESH

3:1 Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you, to me is not grievous, but for you it is safe.

Paul now turns his attention from the positive exhortation of the mind of Christ to a danger that the Philippians must face – Judaism. He feels a responsibility to remind them to secure their spiritual safety.

“Finally, my brethren”

- Finally (3063) – Lit. “for the rest”. Translated in 1 Thess 4v1 “furthermore”. Frequently used in the concluding portion of Paul’s epistles, introducing practical exhortations; not necessarily implying that the letter is drawing to a close, but marking a transition in the subject matter as in Phil 3:1, where the actual conclusion is for the time postponed and the farewell injunctions resumed in 4:8’ (Vine).

Paul uses the endearment “my brethren” as he now directs their attention to the problem of Judaism.

“rejoice in the Lord”

- Theme previously introduced ch 1:18, 26; 2:26, 17, 18, 28
- Note particularly ch 1:18

Here is the answer to the problem of Judaism. If we appreciate the joyous position we have as those redeemed by the blood of Christ there will be no room for boasting in our own works. We must rejoice in the Lord and not in the flesh – an idea carried into chapter 4 (see v4, 10).

“to write the same things to you, to me is not grievous, but for you it is safe”

- grievous (3636) – “tedious” (vine), “tiresome” (Young’s Lit.).
- safe (804)

Paul is so concerned with their well-being, as any true friend ought to be, that he takes the opportunity to reinforce warnings which he had previously made to the Philippians and especially other ecclesias, including Rome. The catastrophic consequences of not getting the message across made this a warning that should always be repeated and so it wasn’t tedious to Paul to give it. Modern day counterparts are warnings of growing materialism and of Christ’s coming – warnings which we should never grow tired of either giving or hearing.

Paul’s phrase “but for you it is safe” suggests that no problem of Judaism existed at the time but the potential was always there. Judaism was not just a problem of the first century. The constant danger exists for us to think that we can do something to earn salvation, and seek the present praise of men for our “good works”. Paul’s words in this chapter should set our thinking right.

3:2 Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.

To be forewarned is to be forearmed. Therefore Paul ensures that he selects three graphic phrases to arrest their attention and show the true character of the Judaisers.

“Beware”

- Beware (991) literally “to see”. Sometimes translated “to behold” or “take heed”.

The Philippians had to see the Judaisers for what they really were – dogs, evil workers and the concision – and take steps not to be deceived by them.

“of dogs”

- dogs (2965) – used of Gentiles because of abhorrence to Jews (see Matt 7:6; 15:26; Mk 7:27)
- Term used in Psa 22:16, 20; of both Jews and Gentiles involved in the death of Christ
- A figure used by Paul in Gal 5:15 of the Judaisers
- A definite article “of *the* dogs” implies a particular group

The apostle Paul uses a term which would have filled the Philippians with absolute abhorrence. Dogs of those days were not domestic pets but vicious filthy scavengers that would even eat their own vomit (2 Pet 2:22). This was a term justly applied to the Judaisers who, acting like wild beasts, turned the truth of God into a lie.

“of evil workers”

- evil (2556)
- workers (2040)

Works done to glorify flesh are evil works however good they may appear in the eyes of others.

“of the concision”

- concision (2699) – “the mutilation” (Roth.)

This is a contemptuous reference to the circumcision of flesh insisted on by the Judaisers for salvation but which profits nothing (Gal 5:1-4; 6:15). The principle of circumcision as necessary for salvation was clearly repudiated at the Jerusalem conference (Acts 15).

3:3 For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

True circumcision is not circumcision of the body, as the “evil workers” tried to insist, but of the heart. Rather than being a cause of boasting, circumcision should have been a symbol of not having confidence in the flesh.

“For we are the circumcision”

Paul in Romans 2:26 says that the uncircumcised Gentile walking in the truth was truly circumcised and the Jew boasting in the works of the Law was not.

The contrast between true worship and Judaism is obvious:

Spiritual Israel	Judaiser
• Worship God in spirit	• Worship in the letter of the law
• Glory (rejoice) in Christ Jesus	• Glory in the flesh, eg circumcision
• No confidence in the flesh (rely on God's grace)	• Confidence in the flesh (rely on human works and accomplishments)

“which worship God in the spirit”

- worship (3000)

Jesus had told the woman at the well of Samaria that Gentiles could worship God on the condition that it was “in spirit and truth” (John 4:24). Jesus was quoting from Joshua 24:14 where Joshua used the words “sincerity and truth”. Paul's idea is that we should worship God with our whole being, not the hypocrisy and half-heartedness of the Judaiser.

“rejoice in Christ Jesus”

- rejoice (2744) means “to boast” or “glory” not rejoice

The Judaisers boasted that their own works would earn them salvation, yet it was clear that by “works of law no flesh shall be justified” (Gal 2:16), and that the Law had never promised life (Gal 3:21) even if anybody had been able to keep it. But what the Law could not do, God did, by bringing salvation through Christ Jesus (Rom 8:3). The Law had been taken away because it had

cursed a righteous man (Gal 3:13; Col 2:14-16), and now the only source of boasting could be in the salvation that God had brought. Jeremiah in referring to human boasting in general, had said, "Let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am Yahweh" (Jer 9:23-24, also 1 Cor 1:29-31).

"and have no confidence in the flesh"

- confidence (3982)

When circumcision was given in Genesis 17 it was to teach Abraham that he should not trust in the flesh, particularly in relation to the bringing forth of Isaac. "And he gave him the covenant of circumcision and so he begat Isaac" (Acts 7:8), and so Isaac was born after "the spirit" not "the flesh" (Gal 4:27-29). We also should put our total reliance for the fulfilment of the promises on God and never put our trust in the flesh.



Exercise 1

1. What is Paul actually saying when he says, "to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe"? (*it may help to look up another translation*)

2. (a) Define and analyse the Greek words for:

"beware" (991)

"dogs" (2965)

"concision" (2699)

- (b) What word is repeated in verse 2 and what is the significance of this?

(c) At this time dogs were not domestic pets, but actually filthy scavengers which "turn to their own vomit again" 2 Pet. 2:22. "Dogs" were also used by the Jews as a derogatory term for the Gentiles. Find a New Testament reference for this.

2. (a) What is Judaism?

(b) “Evil workers” – Judaisers placed emphasis on works of the flesh as if by their works they had God in their debt. Explain what was wrong with this perspective (start with Rom 3:27-28; 4:2-4).

(c) Since many of Paul's epistles which tackle this problem have been preserved for us, Judaism is obviously a twentieth century problem also. Give some examples from personal and ecclesial life.

3. Paul contrasts true circumcision to the “concision” of v2. Explain what true circumcision is and provide references for support.

4. (a) “Worship God in spirit” – to what kind of worship does “in spirit” refer? (see John 4:23-24).

(b) Contrast the worship of God in the spirit and the worship of God after the letter of the law (v3).

5. What does it mean to have confidence in the flesh as opposed to having confidence in God (v3)?

6. (a) Define and analyse the Greek word for:

“rejoice” (2744)

(contrast with rejoice of v1)

- (b) In this section rejoicing in the truth is the answer to the problem of Judaism. How do we develop a joy in the truth?

VERSES 4-9: RIGHTEOUSNESS OF THE LAW VS THE RIGHTEOUSNESS OF GOD

3:4 Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more:

If any man wanted to put confidence in the flesh and not heed Paul's exhortation of verse 3, then Paul could easily do better.

If Paul was prepared to count all the things of the flesh as vile refuse, v8, then there must be a reason for it. Just to impress them with what he is not putting trust in, Paul lists seven credentials which could have made him the perfect Judaiser.

3:5 Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee;

Paul lists five things from his background which made him a “good” Jew in the eyes of others, and which the Judaisers regarded as of great importance.

“Circumcised the eighth day”

Paul had been born a Jew not a proselyte and therefore had been circumcised under the strict requirements of the covenant with Abraham (Gen 17:9-13) and the Law (Lev 12:3).

“of the stock of Israel”

- stock (1085) – “race” (Roth)

Paul was a pure-bred Jew, and no doubt, like many Jews, had the genealogy to prove it.

“of the tribe of Benjamin”

The tribe of Benjamin was of importance from its inception, Benjamin being the second son of Jacob's beloved wife Rachel. Benjamin's territory in the land took in Jerusalem (Josh 18:16) and Benjamin became associated with the other more faithful tribe Judah from whom “Jews” had derived their name. From Benjamin came Israel's first king (mentioned by Paul in Acts 13:21). Although King Saul, the Benjamite, chased David the anointed king from Judah with blind fury, Benjamin stood firm with Judah at the time of Jeroboam's rebellion. Paul (Saul) had also breathed out threatenings and slaughter against Christ's followers, yet in the end he followed the path of Christ, the seed that sprang out of Judah.

Paul had good reason to be proud of his tribe, which he had also mentioned when writing to the Romans (Rom 11:1).

“an Hebrew of the Hebrews”

- of – Gk. ‘ek’ = “from”, “out of”
- “a Hebrew born of Hebrews” (RSV)

Paul continues to show his purity as a “thoroughbred” Hebrew, in the line of the first Hebrew, Abraham. The use of the term emphasizes his moral purity as a “crosser-over” separated from Gentile corruption.

“as touching the law, a Pharisee”

- touching (2596)

Paul told Agrippa that he lived “after the most straitest (strictest) sect of our religion ... a Pharisee” (Acts 26:5). He was educated by Gamaliel, one of the most prominent Pharisees (Acts 22:3), and had followed their strict interpretations of the Law. By their concern for interpretation and reinterpretation, the Pharisees had completely destroyed the original intention of the Law (Matt 23:23). Paul had been taught their ways and could have been the best Judaiser of all time.

3:6 Concerning zeal, persecuting the ecclesia; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless.

Although many Jews could have laid claim to the qualities of verse 5, nobody could match Paul in the two characteristics of verse 6. In these attributes he stood head and shoulders above everyone else.

“Concerning zeal, persecuting the ecclesia;”

- zeal (2205)
- persecuting (1377) – Gk. ‘dioko’ same word in v12 “follow after”

Nothing in Paul’s life was done half-heartedly. Paul became the greatest persecutor of our brethren and sisters of his day. He was the foremost in the slaying of Stephen (Acts 22:20); he was one who through the fierceness of his persecutions scattered the brethren and sisters from Jerusalem (Acts 8:1-4); he was the man who had received authority from the High Priest and defied the heat of the midday sun to travel to Damascus in haste to seize the believers (Acts 9:1-3). Who could say that he had shown greater zeal for Judaism than Paul?

“touching the righteousness which is in the Law, blameless”

- touching (2596)
- righteousness (1343)
- blameless (273) – Gk. ‘amemptos’ see notes 2:15

The apostle was one of those who strove to attain the righteousness (or self-righteousness) which is by the Law (Rom 9:31). In that regard he was beyond criticism, and like all Jews would have been confident of his own righteousness and therefore his personal salvation. How dumbfounded he must have been on the road to Damascus to find that what he had put his absolute trust in was a complete sham. Now Paul sees himself, not as righteous by works of law, but, by nature a wretched sinner (Rom 7:18-25).

3:7 But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.

This impressive list of qualifications of a “perfect” Judaiser was more than useless to Paul the follower of Christ.

“but what things were gain to me”

- gain (2771) actually plural – “gains” as contrasted to “loss” singular

The particular gains Paul is speaking of here are the gains which guarantee us salvation that we may think we have made by working in God’s service.

“those I counted loss for Christ”

- counted (2233)
- loss (2209)
- for Christ – “because of Christ” (Young’s Lit.)

We have two choices – salvation by the works of flesh or salvation in Christ. Paul was prepared to esteem all his works of flesh as worthless, and humble himself to receive salvation in Christ. There can be no room for boasting in the flesh or confidence in our own ability, for our salvation depends on our humility and faith in the son of God (Rom 3:20-28; Eph 2:8-10).

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.

Paul emphasises that not only are the credentials of the Judaiser worthless but all things in this life are vile refuse compared to the excellency of the knowledge of Christ.

“Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss”

- “more than that, I count everything as loss” (TCNT)
- doubtless (3304)
- count (2233)
- loss (2209)

Not only was Paul prepared to leave the benefits of Judaism behind him, but to count all things which personally benefited him in life as loss that he might win Christ. Christ had told his disciples that “whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul” (Matt 16:25-26). Christ alone can give life and if we desire to save our life we must be prepared to lose all things in this life. It is impossible to serve God and Mammon (Matt 6:24). The choice is left to us as to which road we will take. Paul exhorts us to “lay aside every weight” (Heb 12:1), “to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts” (Gal 5:24), and to follow Moses’ example (Heb 11:25-26), but his greatest exhortation is in his own example. Few of us have given up anything like what Paul gave up for Christ.

“for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord:”

- “the surpassing worth of knowing Christ” (RSV)
- excellency (5242) – Gk. ‘hupereko’ – “to be superior or excel” (Bull.). In 4:7 rendered “passeth all understanding”
- knowledge (1108)

Knowing Christ involves both the intellectual understanding and knowledge gained by experience in life, a knowledge which surpasses anything in this life. Paul experienced the same opposition as Christ, fellowshiping his Lord’s sufferings, and so came to know the one he served. Notice that Paul calls Christ his Lord. Christ, not the flesh, ruled Paul’s life.

“for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung”

- dung (4657) – “vile refuse” (Diag.); “that which is cast to the dogs” (Bull.). Note link with v2.
- suffered (2210)
- count (2233)

Here is further emphasis by Paul that all things in life are more than useless. If the “dogs” (the Judaisers) want these things they can have them. The Judaisers fed on those things that Paul had thrown away.

“that I may win Christ”

- win (2770) – verb form of “gain”, v7

The wise will see the salvation through Christ cannot be compared to anything in this life. The fact that we cling to the pleasures and “benefits” of this life is clear evidence that we have failed to “see him who is invisible”.

3:9 And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith:

Having won Christ, Paul realised he must remain "in him", being covered by the righteousness of God through faith in Christ. Self-righteousness through one's own achievements can never save.

"And be found in him"

- found (2147)

Paul often uses the expression "in Christ" to explain the state of those who have been constituted saints, covered by the sacrifice of Christ. See Elpis Israel p131-133. Having "won" Christ the apostle desires to remain "in him".

"not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law"

Paul's past life as a Pharisee had consisted of a constant effort to prove how good he was. The life of the saint involves a recognition that "all have sinned and come short of the glory of God" (Rom 3:23), and, in humility, an acceptance of God's grace in providing the sacrifice of Christ. The Judaiser had forgotten the reality of his own flesh and blood nature and his real need to be covered by God's righteousness. In Romans, Paul summarises the problem of Israel in trying to establish their own righteousness when he says "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth" (Rom 10:3-4). There is a need for us to meditate on our weakness, to place dependence on Yahweh's salvation and not to seek to justify ourselves.

"that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith"

- which is of God – Gk. 'ek' = "out of" ie from God

The principle of justification (being made righteous) by faith is explained in Romans 4. Abraham was a sinner, yet because he was prepared to believe in the impossible, that he would have a seed, Yahweh was prepared to say that he saw him as righteous (Rom 4:1-5, 19-22). Paul tells us in Rom 4:24 that we will be imputed (counted or seen as) righteous if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead. It is not our righteousness but God's righteousness that covers us.

This principle does not mean that we will be saved by just sitting back and believing. Abraham's faith was confirmed by actions which sprang from his faith (James 2:21-22). Abraham as a sinner was justified by faith, but as a saint by the works of faith (see Elpis Israel p260-261). Brother Thomas writes "If a saint has no righteousness of his own, Jesus Christ will refuse to be righteousness for him at the judgement" (Anastasis p27, Menorah Edn.). Clearly our righteousness imputed to us required effort on our part, not in the strength of flesh but in the strength of God.

Note the differences between man's and God's righteousness:

Man's righteousness	God's righteousness
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Law • Works (Gal 2v16; 3v10-11) • Boasting (Rom 3v27) • Man-centred • Merit • Debt (Rom 4v4) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grace • Faith (Phil 3v9) • Humility (Phil 2v8) • God-centred • Glory to God (Phil 2v11) • Free gift, promise (Rom 6v23; Gal 3v8)



Exercise 2

1. (a) Boasting in our own righteousness before others is fairly natural. How do we overcome it?

(b) What should be our only source of rejoicing or boasting? Look up 1 Cor 1:29-31; Eph 2:8-10.

2. Where should we place our confidence, if not in the flesh? See Josh 5 where, by circumcising the men, Joshua left the Israelites vulnerable before their enemies.

3. (a) *Paul lists his “fleshly” credentials, all of which he could well have boasted. His background was very well known, virtually impeccable and would have been impressive to any Judaiser!*

“of the tribe of Benjamin” – What was so special about that particular tribe that would make a Jew proud to say he was a Benjamite?

(b) *“An Hebrew of the Hebrews” – a pure-bred, a “Hebrew born of Hebrews” RSV.*

What was the significance of being a Hebrew?

4. (a) Briefly describe the main characteristics of a Pharisee.

(b) Who educated the apostle Paul? (See Acts 22:3)

5. (a) Define and analyse the Greek word for:

“zeal” (2205)

(see Gal. 1:13-14)

“persecuting” (1377)

“blameless” (273)

(b) Briefly review what we know of Paul as a “persecutor” of the ecclesia. Discuss the kind of character and temperament he must have had. How would that quality be useful in his work in the truth? (see Acts 8:1; 9:1).

6. (a) As a Pharisee, Paul strove to attain righteousness which was by Law and considered himself blameless in that regard. Contrast this attitude with the attitude he reveals in Rom. 7:18-25.

(b) What is the difference between the righteousness of the law and the righteousness of faith?

7. (a) Define and analyse the Greek word for:

“gain” (2771)

(b) “gain” (ie. assets) is plural whereas “loss” (2209) is singular. Look at Matt 13:45-46 and Matt 16:26 and explain what you think Paul is saying here.

(c) Paul counted all things but loss for Christ. What are some of the things in your life that need to be given up for Christ?

8. Paul's transition is complete – from serving flesh to serving Christ (see Rom 6:17-18). What exhortation is there for us from Paul's example?

VERSES 10-16: STRIVING TOWARD THE MARK OF CHRIST

3:10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death:

Having been covered by the righteousness of the Father, Paul saw the need to identify himself completely with Christ. Our calling is the same.

“That I may know him”

- know (1097) – Gk. ‘ginosko’

Knowing Christ is the only way to eternal life (John 17:3). This “knowing” is not just an intellectual comprehension of the atonement but a knowledge of Christ's character and the motivating principles of his life. This knowledge is such that it will be openly manifested in action (1 John 2:3-5; Eph 4:21-24).

“and the power of his resurrection”

- power (1411) – Gk. ‘dunamis’
- resurrection (386) – Gk. ‘anastasis’

Why should Paul mention the resurrection first? Suffering, death then resurrection would seem a more logical order. Christ was raised because as a sinless person it was not possible that the grave should hold him (Acts 2:24). In Romans 1:4, Paul says he was raised because of his spirit of holiness or holy way of life. We need to die with Christ and rise to newness of life (Rom 6:1-6; Col 3:1-4; Eph 2:5-6). Jesus lived all his life as a resurrected man, dead to sin and alive unto God. It was this principle that was the power of Paul's life – he was crucified with Christ yet Christ was alive within him (Gal 2:20-21).

“and the fellowship of his sufferings”

- fellowship (2842) – Gk. ‘koinonia’ – “sharers”, “partakers”
- sufferings (3804)

The desire of Paul was to be as exact a replica of Christ as possible. He wanted to share the agony of the Lord every day of his life. All sufferings for Christ's sake were in effect a continuation of his sufferings since the believers were one body with their Lord. So Paul spoke of his sufferings as filling up “that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh” (Col 1:24). Peter's thought is identical, “Rejoice in as much as ye are partakers (from Gk ‘koinonia’) of Christ's sufferings” (1 Pet 4:13).

The Philippians had seen Paul sharing Christ's sufferings in Philippi; he was beaten and thrown into prison. But with Paul's stripes the jailor had been healed. Paul was indeed Christ crucified among them (cp Gal 3:1-2).

“being made conformable unto his death”

- conformable (4832) same word as “fashioned like” v21, “conformed to the image of His son” (Rom 8:29).

Our sharing of Christ’s sufferings will be seen in the ultimate by us sharing his death, not literally but by being “conformed to” or “fashioned like” his death in becoming dead to sins (Rom 6:11; 1 Pet 2:24). In Rom 12:2, Paul warns us not to be “conformed” to this world but “transformed by the renewing of your mind”. Paul was a living example of this principle. He told the Corinthians that he died daily (1 Cor 15:31); to the Galatians he wrote that he was crucified with Christ (Gal 2:20), crucified unto the world and the world crucified unto him (Gal 6:14, see also Gal 5:24 for the same principle).

This is a very real challenge for everyone, but particularly so for young people in today’s evil world where “peer pressure” is so great. We must be fashioned or conformed into the image of Christ (Rom. 8:29) if we desire a place in the Kingdom rather than to the things of this life.

3:11 If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.

Here was the goal before Paul. If his old man was crucified and he was resurrected with Christ in mind, he knew he would share his resurrection in body.

- resurrection (1815) – Gk. ‘exanastasis’. The only occurrence.
- resurrection of the dead – “resurrection from the dead” (RV, RSV); “out of dead ones” (Diag.)
- any means (4458)
- attain to (2658) – “to arrive” (Bull.)

There is no doubt that Paul will be resurrected. The resurrection he wanted to attain to is “out of the dead ones”, that is, a resurrection to eternal life not to the second death (Dan 12:2; John 4:29; Rev 2:11; 20:6). For that cause Paul was prepared to give everything.

Paul does not presume that he will attain to eternal life and therefore he says “if by any means”. This thought is carried into verse 12.

3:12 Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect; but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which I also am apprehended of Christ Jesus.

Paul realised that there was no room for complacency. Salvation was something yet to be obtained and required constant striving.

“Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect”

- attained (2983) – “obtained” (RV, Conc. Lit, RSV). Different word to v11.
- perfect (5048) – “finished”, “completed”

Paul had not yet obtained a place in the kingdom neither was his character perfected. In contrast the Judaisers believed that they had achieved both. There can be no room for complacency in the truth. We cannot expect to coast into the kingdom. Life is a constant struggle against sin, a struggle that can only be stopped by the coming of Christ or by death – “he that endureth to the end shall be saved” (Matt 10:22). Paul uses the same word “perfect” in Hebrews of the son of God who was perfected through suffering (Heb 2:10). God’s son had to also win the battle against sin, and he could not give up that battle until he could victoriously say, “It is finished” (John 19:30).

“but I follow after”

- follow after (1377) – “pursue” (Conc.), “press on” (RSV), same as “press” v14, “persecuting” v6

He pressed on towards his goal with a determination based on his love of God.

“if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ”

- apprehend (2638) – “to lay hold of” (Vine)

Christ had laid hold of Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:3-5, 15-16). A life totally devoted to destroying the cause of Christ was now turned to a complete life devoted to the work of his Lord. Paul had been called for a purpose and he would never forget that purpose (eg Acts 26:16-18) or the grace of God poured out upon him (1 Tim 1v12-16). His cause in life was to give glory to the Father and to seek for the glory of the future age. God similarly has called us for a purpose and only our faithlessness can frustrate it (1 Thess 5:9; Rom 8:30).

3:13 Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended; but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,

Realising that his race for life was not finished, Paul saw the need for positive action in striving to attain the kingdom, and the danger of living in the past.

“I count not myself to have apprehended”

- “not as though I had already attained” – cp notes v12
- count (3049)
- apprehended (2638)

We must continually look into the mirror of the Word to see our failure to glorify the Father (James 1:21-25), rather than be like the Laodiceans who did not know their failures (Rev 3:17).

“but this one thing I do”

- Young’s Literal connects this with the mark in v14, “Brethren, I do not reckon myself to have laid hold; and one thing – the things behind indeed forgetting, and to the things before stretching forth – to the mark I pursue ...” (v13-14)

There is a single mindedness in Paul’s thinking. How many times have you said “I’ve got so many things to do”. We should have only one goal, one thing to do in life. All the activities we engage in should be directed to this cause.

“forgetting those things which are behind”

- forgetting (1950) “forgetting, indeed, those things which are behind yet stretching out to those in front” (Conc.)

A runner must never be distracted by those behind him and how well he is going compared to others. If he thinks he is doing well and reduces his effort he will lose the race. Thinking about the past is dangerous – we can either become over-confident because of past successes or be discouraged by past failures. Another application can be made of Paul’s words, that we should forget the past life we used to live in the flesh and press onwards (cp Lk 9:62).

“and reaching forth unto those things which are before”

- “straining forward to that which lies ahead” (RSV); “eagerly reaching out ...” (Roth.)

The picture is of the runner, using all the strength of his being to reach the finishing line. We will only reach the kingdom by positive action and determined effort.

3:14 I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus

Paul’s greatest desire in life was to reach that mark.

“I press toward the mark”

- press (1377) - note use in v6 & 14. The word indicates activity motivated by strong desire.
- mark (4649) - only occurrence; “an object set up in the distance at which one looks and aims; hence a mark or goal” (Bull.)

We should give a lot of thought to this word “press”. How often we just wander along in life – we get up, drift off to work/school, go home to do the readings or indulge in idle chatter and then go to bed. What a great contrast to the determination of Paul (and Christ his example) who spent every minute of his life to the glory of God! If we are motivated we will have the self-discipline to set

ourselves short term goals and work towards them, with the eventual hope of reaching the kingdom of Christ.

The eventual mark or goal before us is the example of Christ, to which Paul has previously directed our attention; “Let this mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus” (2:5). Throughout v8-13 Paul has spoken of the surpassing worth of “knowing Christ”, “winning Christ”, and his desire to “know him”. Using the same figure of the athlete in Hebrews 12, Paul writes, “Let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus...”.

Christ is the example because he is the only one to have finished the race. We know we cannot reach perfection but we are called upon to strive to know Christ and follow his example.

“for the prize of the high calling of God”

- prize (1017) – Gk. ‘braebeion’ = “a prize bestowed on the victors in the public games of the Greeks” (Bull.). The prize the victor received was the coronal wreath (Gk. ‘stephanos’)
- high calling (507, 2821)

In 1 Cor 9:23-25, Paul uses the figure of the race to highlight the following points:

1. v24, many run in the race – only one receives the prize – “many are called but few are chosen”. If we want to win we can’t be half-hearted.
2. v25, the athlete must be “temperate” or show self-constraint. The athlete’s training was extremely rigorous and involved great self-denial. The same point is raised in Heb 12:1 when Paul instructs us “to lay aside every weight” – being prepared to give up the pleasures of this life and receive shame, not praise, in this day.
3. v25, the athletes devoted their lives to attain such a puny reward as a crown of leaves – we are promised a crown of eternal life. As we look around our generation we see people enduring great self-discipline to become great sportsmen, musicians, businessmen, etc, for temporary glory – but we have the hope of immortality – for which we often give far less diligence (cp Lk 16:8). This is the point Paul makes in the phrase “high calling”. The object of our endeavours is far far greater than the trivial objectives of the people around us. Look at the typical aspirations of this age:
 - to be rich
 - to be famous
 - to have fun (as long as you don’t hurt anyone)
 - to see the world, etc, etc

What a *high* calling we have!

“in Christ Jesus”

Christ has provided the means of receiving eternal life to which we have been called. Eternal life will only be “in” him because we all will fall short – we rely on God’s grace to cover our shortcomings. Paul’s words in Heb 12:15 give the picture of Christ running back towards us with the finishing line so that we don’t “fall short of the grace of God”.

3:15 Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.

The proof of spiritual maturity is the acceptance of the attitudes Paul describes in v14. These attitudes are clearly revealed in the Word of God.

“Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded:”

- perfect (5046) – “mature” (RSV, Conc.)
- “As many therefore as are full-grown, let this be our resolve” (Roth.)

“Perfection” is not possible as Paul has already said in v12. Paul’s words are addressed to those who are mature, that they might share the same resolve as he did. Have we heard his exhortation?

“and if in anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.”

- reveal (601)

There were some among them (perhaps with leanings to Judaism) who didn't share these attitudes of mind. The only solution to their problem was to study the Word, for in so doing God would reveal the right motivations to them.

3:16 Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us mind the same thing.

Even if some don't understand Paul's zeal for progress, there must be no falling back nor relaxation of hard-won standards.

“Nevertheless, whereto we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule”

- attained (5348)
- walk (4748) – Gk. ‘stoikeo’ = “to walk in line”. This word is used of the Roman soldiers marching in an unbroken line which was difficult for the enemy to break
- rule (2583) – “reed” or “measure”
- “but whatever be the point that we have already reached let us persevere in the same course” (Wey.)

There could be no letting up of the present standard even if some were not encouraged to strive for a higher standard of ecclesial spirituality. Paul again stresses the need for unity. He wants them to walk in an unbroken line according to the same standard or measure. It is important in ecclesial life to set a good standard of spiritual thought and behaviour for all the ecclesia to practise. It is also important that that standard be not too high for some to give up or too low to give glory to the Father. How could this standard be seen in the ecclesia?

- Regular study of the Word by all the ecclesia
- An active witness to the public
- An expectation of hospitality to each other
- Thought for others in the way we dress
- Abstinence from worldly practices which could be a stumbling block to some

“let us mind the same thing”

- “by the same rule walk, the same thing think” (Young's Lit.)

Paul returns to his appeal to unity – unity of mind will be seen in unity of action.



Exercise 3

1. (a) Define and analyse the Greek word for:

“know” (1097)

(see John 17:3)

- (b) How do we come to “know Christ”?

(c) What are some practical examples in the life of a follower of Christ that demonstrate that we “know” him and desire to manifest his actions in our life?

2. (a) Define and analyse the Greek words for:

“fellowship” (2842)

.....

“conformable” (4832)

.....

“sufferings” (3804)

.....

(see 1 Pet 2:21; 1 Pet 4:13; 2 Cor 2:5,7)

.....

(b) How did Paul fellowship or share in the sufferings of Christ? (see 2 Cor 1:3-11; Col 1:24-25).

(c) In what ways do we share Christ’s sufferings and become conformable to his death?

3. (a) What can we learn from the example of the athlete that Paul is alluding to here, “reaching” or “straining forward” to his goal?

(b) Discuss the analogy of the athlete in respect to the Lord Jesus Christ (see Heb 12:1-2).

(c) An athlete cannot be distracted by anything, but must keep his attention firmly fixed on this goal. Similarly, Paul says that we must not be distracted by anything that has gone on in the past, but look only to the future and to the goal for which we are striving. Why is it not beneficial or constructive for us to dwell on the past, whether it is our own or someone else’s?

4. How strongly motivated or driven are you in “pressing” toward the mark?

5. (a) What is the prize of the high calling of God? Why do we want the prize? Is it for selfish motives?

- (b) The race we are engaged in is a communal race where many runners can obtain the prize – what can we do to help each other to run with greater vigour and eagerness?

NOTES

NOTES

Study Group 5

“STANDBAST IN THE LORD”

Philippians 3:17– 4:3

VERSES 17-21: ETERNAL LIFE – PROMISE FOR FOLLOWERS OF CHRIST

3:17 Brethren, be followers together of me, and mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample.

Having set out his example of determination to reach his goal, Paul now asks the Philippians to follow his example in every way.

“Brethren, be followers together of me”

- followers together (4831) Diag. “joint imitators”. Paul was a follower or joint imitator of Christ and was asking the Philippians to be followers together with him.

We might think that Paul is being egotistical, but the Philippians knew Paul’s strong conviction and his great commitment to the truth. The example he was setting before them was really Christ’s, not his own. “Be ye followers together of me even as I also am of Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1). He asks them to be united (followers *together*) on the basis of his example. On several other occasions Paul asks brethren to follow his example (e.g. 4:9).

“mark them which walk so as ye have us for an ensample”

- “and observe those thus walking, according as ye have us – a pattern” (Young’s Lit.)
- mark (4648) – verb of noun “mark” in v14; “look to” (Bull.) “watch” (Diag), “keep an eye on them” (Roth)
- walk (4043)
- ensample (5179) – “pattern, type model”

Not only did the apostle hold out his own example for them to follow but also that of brethren like Timothy and Epaphroditus (ch 2). He asks them to look at and follow these brethren for they with Paul are a pattern to all believers.

3:18 For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ:

The reason why Paul wants them to pursue his example is that many are walking as enemies of Christ.

“For many walk of whom I have told you often”

- walk (4043)
- told (3004)

He had never shirked his duty to warn them of those showing a bad example (cp. v1, also Acts 20:23: Paul warned the Ephesians for three years). The exact nature of their walk is described in v19.

“even weeping”

The apostle was deeply grieved by the walk of some whom he knew would receive their just punishment. It is an ecclesial tragedy when those who have walked the same road to the kingdom are ensnared by the pleasures of this age. But Paul also wept for the future of the ecclesia if the Philippians followed their bad example.

“that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ”

- enemies (2190)
- cross (4716)

Rather than seeking the righteousness of God by faith they made themselves enemies of the way of salvation He had provided. They did not crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts (Gal. 5:24), and in so doing they spurned the crucifixion of Christ.

3:19 Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.

They that sow to the flesh shall reap corruption. These men who were earthly in their thinking will return eternally to the earth.

“whose end is destruction”

- end (5056)
- destruction (684)

Paul emphasises the wickedness of their ways by showing how Yahweh views it. He sees it as worthy of destruction. It is worth us contemplating, for our God is a consuming fire (Heb. 12:29). If our life is lived to the enjoyment of flesh then we will reap destruction (Gal. 6:8). Paul had thought about the “terror of the Lord” (2 Cor. 5:11), and lived his life accordingly – to the glory of God. It is easy to consciously put this thought from our minds.

“whose God is their belly”

- belly (2836)

Used of the womb and the belly – symbol of all the lusts of the flesh. Used of Judaisers in Rom. 16:18, who serve their own belly.

As mentioned under ‘enemies of the cross’ (v18), these brethren and sisters refused to take up their cross and follow Christ. Instead of grasping the practical issues of the atonement, they advocated liberty and worshipped the flesh. Our service to Christ must involve sacrifice, a principle opposite to the ideas of our age.

“whose glory is in their shame”

- glory (1391)
- shame (152)

Those whose consciences are dull to the Word of God through sin end up glorifying in shameful things.

“who mind earthly things”

- mind (5426)
- earthly (1919)
- “who are engrossed with earthly things” (Diag.).

One either lives for the present or the future. To indulge in this world’s pleasure and exclude service to Christ is to forfeit life. It is impossible to do both (Matt. 6:24). The true servant lives for Christ’s return and his kingdom, and strives to bring every impulse into obedience to the will of God. To mind earthly things is to be distracted from this. He must therefore mortify those members which are on earth (Col. 3:1-5), and have his attention upon heavenly things (v20).

3:20 For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ:

Earthly things should be forgotten as our citizenship is of heaven, from where we await the coming of Christ.

“for our conversation is in heaven”

- conversation (4175) Gk: ‘politeuma’ = citizenship (Roth).

Philippi, as a colony of Rome, was bound to follow the laws and customs of Rome. We also are bound to follow the laws of Heaven to which we are related as citizens of Zion. Our thinking now should be on heavenly things (Col. 3:1-2; Eph. 2:5-6).

“from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ”

- look (553)
- based on custom of Roman ambassadors coming to inspect their colonies

Rather than being caught up by this life we should be of those “who love his appearing” (2 Tim. 4:8), for “unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation” (Heb. 9:28). Like the ambassadors of Rome, he will come to test us, to inspect whether we are living in the heavenlies or have changed citizenship to be of this world.

In the context of this chapter we note that the Judaiser was trying to earn salvation, but the saint had to wait for it, knowing that he is totally dependent on Yahweh’s provision for salvation – Christ.

CONTRAST OF VERSES 19 and 20

VERSE 19

- Mind earthly things (head down)
- End – destruction
- “God” – belly
- Glory in shame

VERSE 20

- Look up to heaven (head up)
 - End – immortality from the Saviour
 - “God” – the Lord Jesus Christ
 - Glory in hope of becoming like his glorious body
-

3:21 Who shall change our vile body, that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body, according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself.

Paul lifts their minds to the exalted hope before them and before all those who love Christ’s appearing – a glorious immortal body.

“Who shall change our vile body”

- change (3345)
- vile (5014)
- “the body of our humiliation” (RSV), “our humbled body” (Roth)

Because of the pride of the flesh we have been given a humbled body. Whether our humbled body will be changed depends on our attitude in submitting to the will of the Father now. Finally at the judgement seat every vestige of pride will be removed and if found worthy our bodies will put on immortality (1 Cor. 15:51; Isa. 40:31; 2 Cor. 5:2-4).

“that it may be fashioned like unto his glorious body”

- fashioned like (4832) from same Greek word as “made conformable” (v.10)
- glorious (1391)

Jesus humbled the flesh and was exalted to immortality (2:8-9). He has set the pattern for all those who would conform to his sufferings. They too will, at his return, be made “like him” in glorious immortality, for they “shall see him as he is” (1 John 3:2; Rom. 8:29-30). The thought sequence is identical to that in Col. 3:1-5, namely, mind those things which are above where Christ sits in power, and not things on earth for hope lies in the life hidden with Christ in God; the body which

enjoys earthly things has been humbled; do this and when Christ comes he will give us life and we shall be with him in glory.

Paul contrasts Christ's 'glorious body' with those who glory in their shame. Even as Christ glorified his Father in his life in a moral sense so he was given the physical glory of His Father (cp. John 1:14; Acts 3:13; John 7:39).

“according to the working whereby he is able even to subdue all things unto himself”

- working (1753)
- able (1410)
- subdue (5293)
- citation from Psa. 8:6 (LXX)

God promised dominion to the Son of Man over all things, excluding Himself (Gen. 1:23-26; 1 Cor 15:24). Through Jesus, this purpose is to be accomplished, and the Father has given to him “all power....in heaven and in earth” (Matt. 28:18; Eph. 1:22; Heb. 2:8). Because Psalm 8 promises Christ dominion over “all things”, death, the last and greatest enemy, shall also be destroyed. For the saints who live prior to the Kingdom Age, this victory over sin and death will take place “at this coming” (1 Cor. 15:23-28). Death will be completely abolished at the end of the 1,000 years. Then there will be “no more sea” (or mortals), “and no more death, neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain” (Rev. 20:11-15; 21:1-8).



Exercise 1

1. *Paul strove to conform to Christ's example and manner of life. Others like Timothy, Epaphroditus and Silas were worthy examples because they followed or imitated Paul. In 1 Tim 4:12, Paul exhorts Timothy to be an “example to the believers in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity”.*

(a) How are you doing as an example to those around you – both those in the ecclesia and those with whom you associate outside?

(b) Is it beneficial to follow the example of worthy brethren and sisters today and to seek their advice?

2. *“For many walk, of whom I have told you often” – in v1 Paul tells the Philippians that he does not consider writing the “same things” to them as tedious. Here he says, “I have told you often”. Compare with Acts 2:23, 31 “I ceased not to warn every one night and day”.*

How do we react to the same brother giving the same message over and over again?

3. (a) Define and analyse the Greek word for:

“conversation” (4175)

.....

- (b) What does it mean to be a “citizen of Heaven” in contrast to living a life minding earthly things?

.....

4. (a) Define and analyse the Greek word for:

“change” (3345)

.....

“vile” (5014)

.....

- (b) The hope of the apostle was a change in nature at the second coming of his Lord. What is the difference between “our vile body” and a “glorious” immortal body?

.....

CHAPTER 4, VERSES 1-3: BE OF THE SAME MIND IN THE LORD

4:1 Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved.

In view of the reward offered to those who don't fulfil their own lusts, Paul exhorts the ecclesia to stand fast.

“Therefore”

Note the connection with previous verses. Paul exhorts them to stand fast because:

1. Christ is coming to bring a reward to the faithful (3:20-21).
2. There is a bad example being introduced by those who fulfil the lusts of their flesh (3:18-19)

“my brethren dearly beloved and longed for”

- dearly beloved (27) – twice in this verse
- longed for (1973)

In verses 1-3 Paul is anxious to stress that he is appealing to them as dearly beloved brethren, not in a desire to criticise or condemn. The terms of endearment he uses are not insincere as it is his close relationship to them that is the basis of his appeal.

“my joy and crown”

- joy (5479)
- crown (4735) – Gk: ‘stephanos’ = “coronal wreath”

At the time when Paul receives a glorious body (3:21), the Philippians will bring eternal joy to him. They will be part of his “prize” in his race for eternal life.

“so stand fast in the Lord”

- stand fast (4739) – see notes 1:27 “stand fast”

Having set the issues clearly before them in ch 3, Paul now pleads with them to stand fast in the truth.

4:2 I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord.

Paul now attempts to resolve a specific problem – the division between sisters Euodias and Syntyche.

“I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche”

- beseech (3870) – Gk: ‘parakaleo’ – “exhort” (Roth. “entreat” (RSV)
- Euodias (2136)
- Syntyche (4941)

The fact that these sisters are named in public shows that the problem was well known in the ecclesia, and could have caused serious division. If we always place the truth above ourselves and are prepared to humble ourselves then all problems between individuals can be solved.

“that they be of the same mind in the Lord”

- mind (5426)

Paul does not attempt to arbitrate between these two sisters. He simply asks them to be like-minded in the Lord. It didn’t matter who was right or wrong. The mind which Paul wanted them to have, was that same mind which was in Christ Jesus (2:5). If we try to assert our own will and personality, problems will inevitably arise. Paul uses this theme of “like-mindedness” often in the epistle as the key to overcoming all our difficulties in life. Our Lord showed the perfect example of not standing up for one’s rights when he died, the just for the unjust (2 Cor 5:14:17). Christ never sought his own justification, but humbled himself to bring the salvation of many. These sisters needed also to humble themselves for the good, not only of themselves, but of the whole ecclesia. Christ showed us the need to forgive each other if we are to be forgiven (Matt. 6:12, 14-15). If we contemplate the forgiveness we have undeservedly received for all of our sins we should be able to forgive our brethren for comparatively minor offences (Matt 18:23-35).

4:3 And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow, help those women which laboured with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellow labourers, whose names are in the book of life.

Paul appeals to his yokefellow in the ecclesia to help resolve the problem of division and restore unity again as they strove for a common goal.

“And I intreat thee also, true yokefellow”

- intreat (2065) “suggests that the petitioner is on a footing of equality or familiarity with the person whom he requests” (Vine)
- true (1103) occurs 4 times in N.T. Used of Timothy (1 Tim. 1:2 “own”), Titus (Tit. 1:4 “own”), and of whether the Corinthians were sincere in their love (2 Cor. 8:8 “sincerity”). A form of this word is used in ch 2:20 of Timothy who “will naturally care for your state”. It therefore means sincere or genuine
- yokefellow (4805) only occ. in scripture. Paul was sharing the yoke of service with this brother or brethren. Vine suggests that “yokefellow” is the proper name, Synzygus, of a brother in the Philippian ecclesia.

We will not know the identity of the yokefellow this side of the kingdom. However, the suggestions include Luke, Epaphroditus, or a brother called Synzygus. Paul could also be making a general appeal to all the sincere workers in the Philippian ecclesia. Whoever the yokefellow was, he was a brother (or brethren) of genuine qualities who worked as one with the apostle and was therefore capable of helping to solve the problem that existed.

“help those women that laboured with me in the gospel”

- help (4815)
- laboured (4866) same as “striving together” in Ch. 1:27

There appears to have been a majority of sisters in the Philippian ecclesia. When Paul, Silas and Timothy first came to Philippi they went down to the river to speak to the women which resorted there (Acts 16:13). Lydia, of course, was the most prominent among the first believers in Philippi. Euodias and Syntyche were among the faithful sisters that had worked hard with Paul in the spreading of the gospel. In that light the division between them was all the more tragic.

“with Clement also”

- Clement (2815) = “merciful”. This is the only mention of him in N.T.

Clement was an outstanding brother and therefore particularly mentioned by Paul. We know nothing about him from the N.T. but perhaps he was noted for his willingness to try to bring peace in the ecclesia.

“and with my other fellow-labourers”

- fellow-labourers (4904)

Paul does not exalt himself above the brethren and sisters; but sees them all labouring together with him for a common cause.

“whose names are in the book of life”

- book of life – for full exposition see Eureka Vol. 1, pp. 360-364. Also cf. Ex. 32:31-33; Dan 12:1; Mal. 3:16-17; Rev 3:5.

Here is a comfort and a warning. They had all been called to life but if they allowed personal arguments to affect the ecclesia they would put their own salvation in jeopardy. Resolution of the problems was therefore crucial.

**Exercise 2**

1. (a) Define and analyse the Greek word for:

“crown” (4735)

.....

- (b) To what is Paul referring by using this word “crown”?

.....

- (c) Find other passages where Paul uses the word “crown”. Do these passages use the word the same way as it is used in verse 1?

.....

2. (a) Define and analyse the Greek word for:

“stand” (4739)

(b) Compare “stand” with the word “rock” (4073). Look at the parable of the man who built his house on the rock in Matthew 7:24 and Luke 6:48. How should we stand fast in the truth? What should be the basis for our lives?

3. “Dearly beloved” – this phrase is mentioned twice in the first verse. Paul uses this phrase to emphasise his feelings about this ecclesia. What other terms does Paul use in his writings which show his love and his concern for his brethren and sisters? (It might be useful to look at the first chapters of all Paul’s epistles to get an idea).

4. Do we “long for” our brethren? How can we develop this thought to others?

5. (a) Define and analyse the Greek word for:

“beseech” (3870)

(b) If we had a dispute with someone else in the ecclesia, how would we go about effecting reconciliation?

(c) What was Paul’s attitude toward these two sisters? If we had to assist others to be of one mind, what steps would we take to help them and to ensure reconciliation?

6. (a) "Same mind" – Paul exhorts Euodias and Syntyche to be of the same mind. How would you describe this mind? (1 Cor 2:16).

(b) Note the other passages in Philippians which deal with being like-minded. What benefits would come from being like-minded? Think of the benefits in terms of our work in the ecclesia and in our daily lives.

7. (a) Define and analyse the Greek words for:

"True yokefellow" (4805)

"Fellow labourers" (4904)

(b) Briefly explain in your own words what type of relationship we should have with each other in the truth.

(c) What do these verses tell us about the brethren at Philippi?

(e) What is the importance of working under the same yoke? Think about the use of yokes and the problems which could arise if two different types of animals were used.

(f) Working together is vital on our walk to the kingdom. What problems could arise due to being unequally yoked within the ecclesial family? Also refer to 2 Cor 6:14.

NOTES

Study Group 6

“STRENGTHENED THROUGH CHRIST”

Philippians 4:4 – 4:23

VERSES 4-9: THE PEACE OF GOD – THE FRUIT OF CHRIST-MINDEDNESS

4:4 Rejoice in the Lord alway: and again I say, Rejoice

Paul encourages the ecclesia to be joyful in the great hope they share.

“Rejoice in the Lord alway”

- rejoice (5463)
- alway (3842)

Joy in the truth is one way to overcome division. If we reflect on the privileges we have in Christ we should be always people of joy, not sadness (Ph. 1:3-12). Our joy should not depend on the circumstances of our lives either – we constantly have reason to rejoice. Note Paul's own example of rejoicing in suffering at Philippi (Acts 16:25). “Yahweh hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad” (Psa. 126:3).

4:5 Let your moderation be known unto all men. The Lord is at hand.

The Philippians were to become known by an attitude of reasonableness in their dealings with all people. Paul reminds them that the Lord is at hand to judge or reward his brethren according to how they have developed such an attribute.

“Let your moderation be known unto all men”

- moderation (1933) usually translated “gentle” from Gk: ‘eikos’ = “reasonable”. “It expresses that considerateness that looks humanely and reasonably at the facts of a case” (Vine).
- known (1097)

In their dealings with all mankind they were to be seen as people who were reasonable, not contentious or trying to get their own way. To adopt this attitude we cannot insist on our own rights and prestige; but rather try to be at peace with all.

“The Lord is at hand”

- at hand (1451) “is near” (Roth., Conc.); allusion to Psa. 119:151; 145:18.

Here is the reason why they were to be reasonable to all men. The Lord is near to us and observes all that we do; hence we ought to show an attitude of reasonableness to all. It is comforting to know that He will also see if we patiently submit to the unreasonableness of others (1 Pet. 2:19-20; 4:19).

Moreover, the day of Christ's coming is also near – no further away than our death – and we will be rewarded in relation to how we have developed such Christ-like characteristics.

4:6 Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.

We should have no anxiety because God is near to help us if we seek Him prayerfully.

“Be careful for nothing”

- careful (3309)
- nothing (3367)
- “Do not worry about anything” (Conc), “for nothing be anxious” (Yg. Lit).

There should be no cause for anxiety in this life for those who have faith that 'the Lord is nigh'. Jesus exhorted his disciples and ourselves not to worry about the things of this life (Matt. 6:25-34), but to put our faith in God. We can have every confidence that He will guide and direct us, and supply us with our daily needs.

"but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving"

- prayer (4335)
- supplication (1162)
- "the first word is used of prayer in general, the second stresses the sense of need" (Vine). The two words are used together in Eph. 6:18 and 1 Tim. 2:1; 5:5.
- thanksgiving (2169)

There should be no cause for anxiety; all our problems should be poured out to the Father, and He will answer them as He sees fit. John says, "If we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us; And if we know that He hears us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of Him" (1 John 5:14-15).

Our prayers should not be selfish (i.e. only containing petitions for ourselves), but should show a spirit of thankfulness, recognising present blessings and past deliverance.

"let your requests be made known unto God"

- requests (155)

Yahweh knows our needs before we ask Him but He still desires us to make our requests to Him (Psa. 50:15). If we are walking with God we will not fail to draw near to Him "casting all our cares on Him" (1 Pet. 5:7); asking His guidance when decisions have to be made and carefully discerning the hand of providence. The saint who lives like that will have peace of mind (v. 7). Not only does our prayer need to be sincere, but our action also needs to be consistent with our requests if they are to be heard (Matt. 6:9-15).

4:7 And the peace of God, which passeth all understanding shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

God promises that peace of mind (defying human comprehension) will be granted to those in Christ whose lives are God-centred and develop the prayerful attitude of verse 6.

"the peace of God"

- peace (1515)

Paul appears to be drawing this idea from Isa.26:3 where Isaiah shows that trust in God (v.6) is the way to peace of mind; "thou will keep him in perfect *peace* whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee". Jesus promised us peace, not as the world gives, but a peace of mind based on our knowledge that God is with us in all circumstances however difficult they might be (John 14:27; 16:33). It is based on a unity of thought with the Father, and the assurance that He has promised us exceeding great and precious promises if we remain faithful unto Him. Paul says in another place, "being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1). Peace can only be "of God"; there can never be lasting peace for the wicked (Isa. 57:19-21).

"which passeth all understanding"

- passeth (5242)
- understanding (3563)
- "which surpasses all comprehension" (NASB)

The peace which we have when we walk with God is beyond human comprehension. Those around us can't work out why our lives are not in constant turmoil like theirs are, neither can they understand why we are not afraid of the future. What great peace the truth offers us!

“shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus”

- keep (5432) “to guard”. See ‘Letter to the Philippians’ (Bro. Barling), p.102
- hearts (2588)
- minds (3540)
- through Christ Jesus “*in Jesus Christ*” (RV, RSV)

Both intellect and emotion (heart and mind) are guarded by the all encompassing peace of God. This peace comes to us through the salvation God worked out in Christ (Rom. 5:1). Only those truly “in Christ” can experience it.

4:8 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.

A mind at peace is a mind rightly occupied. Paul counsels the brethren to think upon wholesome things in order to develop spiritual minds which could be at peace with God.

“Finally, brethren”

- Finally (3063) see notes Ch. 3:1

Paul wants them to particularly remember this last point of exhortation. He now lists the various aspects of spiritual thinking. It would be worthwhile to examine the order in which they are listed, especially to find some link between them.

“true”

- true (227)

Truth is the basis of all spiritual qualities. “A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth good things” (Matt. 12:35). We will never be able to manifest Yahweh’s glory unless we come to know His characteristics, which He wants us also to develop. A spiritual mind therefore is only developed by a constant meditation upon the Word of truth (Psa. 119:9; 97-98).

If we are established in truth, our ecclesia will have no need to combat error. Negative thinking and contention will be banished by a respect for the truth and peace will be the result. “Great peace have they which love Thy Word and nothing shall offend them” (Psa. 119:165).

“honest”

- honest (4586) with other 3 occurrences translated “grave”. From Gk: ‘sebomai’ = “to worship” or “revere”; “honourable” (RV).

This word denotes a seriousness of purpose and dignity in conduct. The person who thinks spiritually is serious in their outlook on life, and this is seen in gravity of behaviour.

“just”

- just (1342) “righteous”

As Paul showed in Ch. 3:9 that righteousness only comes from receiving God’s righteousness, yet we are called upon to elevate our thoughts to the righteousness of God.

“pure”

- pure (53) Gk: ‘hagnos’ usual word translated “holy”

As we contemplate the righteousness of God, one of the essential qualities of the Father is His moral purity. Development of His purity will only come from keeping our minds purified by the Word (Eph. 5:26). James writes, “The wisdom from above is first pure (Gk: ‘hagnos’)” (James 5:3), and John “and every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure” (1 John 3:3).

“lovely”

- lovely (4375) lit. “lovable”, “dear to anyone” (Bull.). Only occurrence. Gk: ‘proshilees’ from ‘pros’ = “toward” and ‘phileo’ = “love”

The truth is the only thing we can hold dear to us. All other pleasing things of mortal existence are temporary. The contemplation of spiritual things, the service of Christ and our brethren and sisters are the only lovely pursuits in this life; all other experiences lose their pleasure and become boring.

“good report”

- good report (2163) “well spoken of” (Str.). Only occurrence. Similar word in 2 Cor. 6:8.

Only things of true value should fill our minds, nothing less than spiritual ideas are worth our contemplation. Certainly nothing of bad report should enter our thinking.

“if there be any virtue, if there be any praise”

- virtue (703) “superiority in every respect; then that which gives man his worth, his moral excellence” (Bull.)
- praise (1868) “praiseworthy” (Vine)
- “If there be any virtue or anything deemed worthy of praise” (Wey).

If there is anything that will exalt our minds or that is praiseworthy we should give our thoughts to that.

“think on these things”

- think (3049) Gk: ‘logizoma’ = “to occupy one’s self with reckonings or calculations, hence to reason” (Bull.). Vine paraphrases: “make those things the subject of your thoughtful consideration.”

This is the catalogue of the spiritual things our minds should deeply meditate upon. There is no room for contemplation of the vanities of life, let alone base and immoral things. All our thoughts should be upon those things that will exalt the mind to the mind of Christ. As young people we sometimes react against people who “study too much”. We must remember that our minds are at a formative stage and we need constant meditation upon the Word if we are to develop spiritual minds. Study or meditation is not only for the studious; it is for all those who desire salvation.

4:9 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.

The only way to find peace with God is to think upon spiritual things and act in accordance with them. Paul again holds himself out as an example to follow in this respect.

“Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me”

- learned (3129)
- received (3880)
- heard (191)
- seen (1492)

Paul is emphasising the point – whether it was learned (by personal instruction), received (by letter), heard (as they heard Paul preach to others) or seen (in action) – they had witnessed those spiritual qualities in Paul’s life.

“do”

- do (4238) = “to practice, do habitually” (Bull.)

Those things which Paul had exhorted them to *think* about also need to be seen in a character developed for them. All the thinking on spiritual things is of no benefit if it doesn’t develop spiritual behaviour (James 1:22-25). The habitual practice of the truth is not possible by commanding ourselves to do it, it can only come by developing a spiritual mind (Eph. 4:21-32, esp. vv. 21-24; 1 Tim 4:13-16).

“and the God of peace shall be with you”

See comments at beginning of verse 8.



Exercise 1

1. (a) How can we show our rejoicing in the Lord? (Note Habakkuk 3:17-18, James 1:2, 1 Peter 4:13)

(b) With whom should we share our rejoicing? Should we rejoice with all men or just with those in the ecclesia? Support your answer with Bible passages.

2. (a) Define and analyse the Greek word for:

“moderation” (1933)

(Note Titus 3:2)

(b) How can we show moderation unto all men without boasting? Think about the saying “actions speak louder than words”.

3. “The Lord is at hand”. What did this mean to the Philippians and what is its special meaning for us?

4. (a) Define and analyse the Greek word for:

“careful” (3309)

“nothing” (3367)

(b) “Be careful for nothing” – If we are not to care for anything, in whom should we put our trust in order that we will be cared for? Look at Mark 10:21-31 and Luke 12:15-24.

5. (a) How important is prayer with thanksgiving? Find examples of this type of prayer in scripture.

(b) “With thanksgiving” – Does this passage imply that we should give thanks to God in all of our prayers? For what should we give thanks in our prayers?

(c) What does this tell us about the way we should approach God?

(d) Are there any other references which tell us or show us by example, the way in which we should approach God? (Hint: think of David and Daniel).

(e) What requests should be made known unto God?

6. (a) Define and analyse the Greek word for:

“peace” (1515)

(b) “The peace of God” – What is the peace of God? How can the peace of God keep our hearts and minds?

7. (a) Fill in the box and give modern day examples of how we can fulfil the task which Paul gave to the ecclesia at Philippi using these attributes. (Hint: think about our ecclesial duties, preaching and work).

Word	Strong's #	Meaning	Example
"true"	227		
"honest"	4586		
"just"	1342		
"pure"	0053		
"lovely"	4375		
"good report"	2163		

(b) Paul asks us to think upon only good and honest things. Why is the control of the thoughts so important and why particularly was Paul exhorting the Philippians to concentrate only on good thoughts and not on evil things?

(c) How far have you come to reaching the type of spiritual thinking described in v.8? What are some of the ways that this can be developed especially at work or school where it is so easy to be overwhelmed by mundane thoughts?

VERSES 10-19: PAUL'S THANKS FOR THEIR GIFT

4:10 But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.

The Philippians had Paul in their thoughts but had lacked opportunity to show their concern for him. Paul now rejoiced in their gift, because he understood that their generosity was for the sake of Christ.

"But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly"

- rejoiced (5463)
- greatly (3171)

In verse 4 Paul told them to "rejoice in the Lord always"; now he turns to one thing which caused him to rejoice *in the Lord*. Notice that rejoicing was *in the Lord*; even people in the world give gifts to their friends. But Paul saw their act as a response to Christ's love; and so it was just as much for Christ's sake as it was for Paul's. Our sacrifices for our brethren and sisters should be a response to Christ's love (1 John 4:9-11; John 15:9-17).

“now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but lacked opportunity”

- at the last (4218) “at length” (Diag, RV, RSV)
- care, careful (5426) translated “mind” 8 times in Philippians; “think” once; “care” and “careful” only in this verse. The RSV translates it, “ye have revived your thoughts for me”
- flourished (330) = “to blossom again” (Vine)
- lacked opportunity (170) only occurrence

There is no thought of complaint in Paul’s words. They had not forgotten Paul but had lacked opportunity to show their concern to the apostle. Now they had shown it through a gift taken by Epaphroditus (2:25; 4:18).

4:11 Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.

Although he thanked them for the gift he could have done without it. For he had learned to be satisfied in whatever circumstances he found himself.

“Not that I speak in respect of want”

- speak (3004)
- respect (2596)
- want (5304) only occurs elsewhere in Mk. 12:44 in relation to the widow woman in her poverty.

Paul has obvious needs in prison but he didn’t see himself as needing anything, and would certainly never have asked for a gift. He had the essentials in life and that was sufficient.

“for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content”

- learned (3129)
- content (842) “sufficient in one’s self, self-adequate needing no aid, hence contented” (Bull.)

In a world which is continually telling us to improve our circumstances by buying new and improved products it is difficult to accept Paul’s words to Timothy “Having food and raiment let us be therewith content” (1 Tim. 6:8). We have been promised our needs (Psa. 37:25; Matt. 6:31-32), and there is no need to strive for more. As young people we are susceptible to advertising. A new car might be a temptation for the brethren, fashionable clothes and hairstyles temptations for the sisters. Once married, the opportunities to covet and spend our lives improving our homes is almost inexhaustible. If that spirit dominates, the truth will be shut out. Instead we should be content with what we have and get on with living the truth. This does not come naturally – it is “learned” by developing total trust in God and making God the totality of our life.

4:12 I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound: everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

Paul had learned to accept both very good and extremely bad situations.

“I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound”

- abased (5013) usual word for “humble”. Same word used Ch. 2:8 “he humbled himself”
- abound (4052)

They had heard of Paul rejoicing in his humiliation in the jail at Philippi. He had been whipped and put in stocks, but he and Titus prayed and sang hymns of praise. Similarly they had seen Paul accepting abundance in the house of Lydia, but he had never become so accustomed to abundance that he couldn’t do without it. Could we survive if all the luxuries and comforts of the twenty first century were taken from us? If our life is built upon total satisfaction with the truth then we should be able to.

“everywhere and in all things I am instructed”

- instructed (3453) “to initiate into mysteries”; “I have learned the secret of” (RSV)

Wherever he was and in every part of life, Paul had learned the secret of facing every possible circumstance.

“both to be full and to be hungry”

- full (5526)
- hungry (3983)

We probably have never experienced real hunger but Paul had. Christ is a true example in this case being able to say that man does not live by bread alone when he was extremely hungry and chose to ignore food to do the work of God (Mk. 3:20, Jn. 4:31-32). In Christ’s mind spiritual things so dominated that even the natural needs of the body of eating and sleeping were neglected.

“both to abound and to suffer need”

- abound (4052)
- suffer need (5302) used of the “destitute” in Heb. 11:37

In all other matters of life Paul had learned to accept abundance or want. Whatever God gave him he willingly accepted.

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

Paul could live through any circumstance because he was motivated by the vision of Christ before him which gave him strength.

- do (2480) “I am strong to endure” (Diag); “I have might for all things” (Roth)
- strengtheneth (1742)

Paul is not so much saying that he can do all things but rather that he can *endure* all things. What is the secret to his success? He is motivated by the spirit of Christ – to crucify the flesh and seek the furtherance of the Gospel at whatever personal cost (Lk. 9:58-59).

4:14 Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction.

Even though Paul could have endured without their gift, Paul commends the Philippians for their generosity.

- Notwithstanding (4133)
- well done (2573)
- communicate (4790) “had fellowship with” (RV)
- my affliction (2347) Gk: ‘thlipsis’ = “pressure” cp. Acts 14:22 “tribulation”

The Philippians didn’t leave Paul to endure his problems on his own, they showed their sharing of his affliction by helping him in material things. They fellowshiped his sufferings as he fellowshiped Christ’s (ch 3:10).

4:15 Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no ecclesia communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only.

The Philippians were unique in their desire to help Paul.

“Now ye Philippians know also”

Paul could not possibly have written these words to an egotistical ecclesia. Although they knew what they had done they were obviously not puffed up by good works. This is a real example for us (Matt. 25:37-40).

“that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia”

- beginning (746)
- departed (1831)

When Paul faced persecution in Berea the brethren sent him to Athens to be followed later by Silas and Timothy (Acts 17:14-15). When Silas and Timothy arrived in Corinth they brought a present from the Philippians (2 Cor. 11:9; Acts 18:5).

“no ecclesia communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only”

- communicated (2841) “fellowshipped”
- giving (1394) only other occurrence is in James 1:17, ‘gift’
- receiving (3028) only occurrence

4:16 For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity.

- sent (3992)
- necessity (5532)

Even before Paul went to Corinth the Philippians had sent a gift to the very next town Paul had stopped at after leaving Philippi, which was Thessalonica (Acts 17:1). They had sent not once, but twice. This brings to at least four the number of gifts sent to Paul; twice at Thessalonica, once in Corinth and once more in Rome through Epaphroditus. In addition they had been more than generous to the Jerusalem poor fund (2 Cor. 8:1-5).

4:17 Not because I desire a gift; but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.

It was not because of what they had done for Paul that he rejoiced, but rather what they had done for themselves – added fruit to their account before God.

“Not because I desire a gift”

- desire (1934) “to seek earnestly or continuously” (Bull.). Usually translated ‘seek’
- gift (1390)

Paul has made it evident that he is grateful but he returns to his early conviction that he does not require it as necessity, for he is content in his Lord (Vv. 11-14). He leaves no doubt in their minds that he is not seeking further favours.

“but I desire fruit that may abound to your account”

- fruit (2590)
- abound (4121)
- account (3056) Gk: ‘logos’
- uses a mixed figure – fruitfulness of a tree – prosperity of a commercial venture

The fruitfulness of the ecclesia in bringing forth good works (like they had manifested in him) was of more satisfaction to Paul than this particular act of kindness. The idea of fruitfulness is drawn out of v.10, “your care of me hath blossomed”. In Ch. 1:11 he told them to be filled with the fruits of righteousness; here was an example of that fruit. It is worthwhile to look at the principle of fruitfulness in the New Testament particularly in John 15. We are called upon to have a faith seen in works of love for others, which will add to Christ’s acceptance of us at his return (Matt. 25:31-46).

4:18 But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God.

Although Paul was pleased with their sacrifice he wanted them to know that they were like an acceptable sacrifice on Yahweh's altar, whose sweet smell was filling the nostrils of the Father.

“But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you,”

- have (568) “to receive in full” (Bull. Str)
- abound (4052)
- “Now I am collecting all and superabounding” (Conc)
- received (1209)
- sent – not in the Greek

Paul had more than enough, having received from Epaphroditus their generous present.

“an odour of sweet smell”

- odour (3744)
- sweet smell (2175)

The same expression is used by Paul of the sacrifice of Christ as a sweet smelling (2175) savour (3744) (Eph. 5:2, and also 2 Cor. 2:14-15). The figure Paul is using then is of the Philippians' gifts, as a burnt offering (speaking of dedication), ascending up as a sweet smell in the nostrils of the Father.

“a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God”

- sacrifice (2378)
- acceptable (1184)
- well pleasing (2101)

Here is the reason why we should care for others – to please God, not ourselves. If we applaud ourselves the attitude can lead to seeking the praise of men (Matt. 6:1-4). The true saint should be oblivious to his own acts of sacrifice (Matt. 25:37-39), doing all things for the glory of God. Notice that Paul calls it “a sacrifice”. Have we forgotten the true meaning of sacrifice? It means suffering to give something for the truth – not just fitting the truth in for our convenience. Yahweh hates robbery for burnt offerings (Isa. 61:8). If we don't truly sacrifice, God will never accept us. How long is it since you really put yourself out for the cause of Christ? Think about it, for sacrifice should be a *daily* experience.

4:19 But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Giving up present riches to help others, would mean eternal riches for the Philippians.

“But God shall supply all your need”

- supply (4137)
- need (5532)

To show Paul such kindness involved real sacrifice on the Philippians' part as they were poor (cp. 2 Cor 8:1-3 RSV). They had deprived themselves to supply his need. He tells them that God is not unmindful of their labours of love and hence they too would have their needs satisfied.

“according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.”

- riches (4149)
- glory (1391)
- “according to his glorious wealth by Christ Jesus” (Diag)

Paul looks forward to the time when the riches of God will be poured on them, and when their every want including eternal life would be satisfied. The exhortation to us is to put aside the affluence of this age and store up treasure in heaven (Matt. 6:19-21). The deprivations of this present time are not comparable to the glories of the future (Rom. 8:18; Matt. 19:29).



Exercise 2

1. We have been blessed greatly compared to our brethren in other parts of the world. Note what Christ says in Matthew 25:31-46. Should we be concerned with our brethren and sisters in far away countries? What mechanisms could we use to assist them?

2. (a) Rewrite verse 11 in your own words

(b) What was Paul's secret in being content and what are the pressures of this age which make us discontented? How can we conquer these pressures and learn to be content with what we have?

(c) Do we sometimes put extraordinary effort into only trying to fulfil our own wants and desires? For what desires should we strive? (Hint: 1 Tim 6:5-11, Heb 13:5).

3. (a) Define and analyse the Greek words for:

"abased" (5013)

"abound" (4052)

(b) When should we be abased, and when should we abound? Compare this to Ecclesiastes 3:1-8

4. What types of situations occur in our lives which can relate to being both hungry and being full? (Think of this in a spiritual sense, as well as a natural sense).

5. (a) To what extent can we do “all things”? How does Christ strengthen us? Look at Mark 13:11 and apply this to v13.

- (b) How does this apply to our day since we do not have the Holy Spirit gifts? (Hint: 2 Cor 12:9-10).

6. (a) What does it mean to communicate with one's affliction? How are we afflicted today?

- (b) How can we communicate with another's affliction? Look at the example of Lazarus and the way that Christ dealt with the circumstances.

7. (a) The Philippians were a wonderful example of selfless giving. What do the scriptures tell us about giving benefits to others and giving material things for the sake of the truth? (Hint: Rom 12:13 and 2 Cor 9:5-15). How does this relate to the way in which we should lead our lives and the way in which we will be judged?

- (b) Paul was most appreciative for what the Philippians had done for him. Think of some practical ways we can show our thoughtfulness and appreciation to others for their work on our behalf.

(c) What does Christ say will happen to those who help those in need? What will happen to those who do not aid their brethren? (Remember v10 and Matt 25:31-46).

8. (a) What causes a sacrifice to become “a sweet smelling odour” to God?

(b) Look at Eph 5:1-2 and Heb 13:15-16. Relate this to the way that we should be living our lives.

9. How does God supply all our needs? Explain how this can be the case in circumstances in which brethren and sisters lack “proper” living conditions.

VERSE 20: ASCRIPTION OF PRAISE

4:20 Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever, Amen.

From the idea of v.19 Paul's mind has been swept into the future and offers praise unto God for the great hope ahead for both the Philippians and himself.

- glory (1391) “the glory” as in Rom. 16:27; Gal. 1:5; Eph. 3:20-21; 2 Tim. 4:18. Only exception is 1 Tim. 1:17. The glory belongs to Yahweh because of the physical perfection and moral qualities Exod. 33:18; 34:6-7.

Yahweh has always upheld His glory. That glory was pre-eminently manifested in Christ – the means through which we are called to salvation. God's glory and name is manifested today through our characters. To honour God in thought, word and action is the highest form of praise we can offer to Him. But Paul looked, not only to glorifying God in the present, but also through the ages of the ages. Hence he anticipated in vision becoming part of the glory himself.



Exercise 3

1. How many times does Paul ascribe glory to God in his epistles?

VERSES 21-23: FINAL SALUTATION

4:21 Salute every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren which are with me greet you.

Paul sends greetings from himself and his fellow workers to all in Christ.

- Salute (782) same as “greet” at end of verse

As the letter draws to a close, Paul greets *every* saint, showing no difference between them (cp. notes 1:1), for they were all dear to him. The brethren with him – one of whom would have been Timothy – join in the greeting.

4:22 All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household.

Besides the special greeting from Paul and his close companions, there is a greeting from all the brethren and sisters of the ecclesia in Rome, particularly those from the Imperial household who had accepted the truth. Some of Caesar's household may have been to Philippi on official business and forged a close relationship with the Philippians.

4:23 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

Paul prays that God's grace might be with them all, through Christ.

Thinking back over the letter we remember that Paul's trial is about to start, that there is the problem of disunity in the Philippian ecclesia and a need to develop the mind of Christ; we remember the danger of Judaism and Paul's antidote and the many exhortations of Ch. 4. In all this there is one thing both Paul and the Philippians needed – God's grace. And in these far off days of the Gentiles we have the same great need for the blessing of Almighty God. Pray God that this study has drawn us closer to Him and His son, that we might receive the one thing we need above all – God's grace.



Exercise 4

1. Note the conclusion that Paul uses. Compare this with the other epistles that Paul writes. Does this have any bearing on the relationship he had with the Philippians?

2. Who were the people of Caesar's household? (Hint: where was Paul when he wrote this epistle?)

3. How can the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with us all (v23)?

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