

Study Group 1 (Philippians 1:1 – 1:30)

“STRIVING TOGETHER FOR THE FAITH OF THE GOSPEL”

- 1:2** The first need in all our lives is to appreciate the grace of God (a basic quality of His character, Ex. 34:6-8). 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.
- 1:8** The depth of love Paul felt for the Philippians was not based on human emotion, but a response to the love of Christ. “If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another” (1 John 4:11)
- 1:9** Again the need for growth and development in the truth is emphasised. To love God is the first commandment and from that comes the second, loving our brethren and neighbours as ourselves. The development of love must be tempered by two qualities – knowledge and judgement. 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** 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.
- 1:14** Most of the brethren were inspired to greater efforts by Paul’s fearless witness for the truth. Enthusiasm is contagious. 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).
- 1:20** 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.
- 1:21** 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)
- 1:27** 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. There is no room for division if we are labouring together as one. Those who bite and devour end up being consumed one of another (Gal. 5:15).
- 1:29** 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).

Study Group 2 (Philippians 2:1 – 1:11)

“ESTEEM OTHERS BETTER THAN SELF”

- 2:5** 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** 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.
- 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).
- 2:7** 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, 52v13). This culminated in suffering to justify many (Isa. 53:11), an idea which leads into the next verse.
- 2:10** 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 (eg 2 Peter 1:1, 11).
- 2:11** 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).

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.

