



REAL JOY
PHILIPPIANS
CCEC Nitechurch
April—June '07

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We want to encourage each other to pray for our non-Christian friends and family

3-1-1 is a guide to help remind us to pray.
 Pray for 3 friends, 1 a week, for 1 minute.
 List the name of your family/friends here.

Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Matt 28:18-20

Papua New Guinea Overseas Christian Leaders Training College
 CCEC has formed a close relationship with CLTC through Overseas Council. CCEC is supporting CLTC in order to enable the college to continue to have the resources it requires to train the people of PNG for ministry.

Maitland Missionary Prayer Night
 Simon & Margie Gilham
 Noah & Madelon
 simonig@hunterlink.net.au
 Simon and Margie planted the Maitland Evangelical Church, which meets at East Maitland School. The church has been meeting since September 2002.

Perth Missionary Prayer Night
 Matt & Cecily Greenwood
 Will, Josh, Tim & Laura
 matt@westco.org.au
 Matt and Cecily planted the Western Suburbs Community Bible Church in Perth. The church has been meeting since 2005.

Berkeley Vale Missionary Prayer Night
 David & Ruth Sheath
 Daniel, Mico & Sarah
 dave@thelakes.asn.au
 David and Ruth planted The Lakes Evangelical Church, which meets at Berkeley Vale School. Some members from CCEC assisted the plant by moving there.

Gorokan Missionary Prayer Night
 Connan & Belinda O'Shea
 Jayden, Joshua & Sarah
 connan@northernlakes.com.au
 Connan & Belinda O'Shea planted Northern Lakes Evangelical Church. The church has been meeting since February 2006. The church meets at Gorokan High School.

Port Macquarie The Point
 Steve & Nicole Covetz
 Matthew, Sarah, Ethan
 Steve & Nicole planted Point Community Church in Port Macquarie. The church currently meets in a local public school and has been meeting since February 2006.



INTRODUCTION TO PHILIPPIANS

Philippi, in north-eastern Greece, was the first major centre in which Paul preached the gospel in Europe. It was already an ancient and historic city when Paul went there. Philip the Second of Macedon took over the region in 356 BC and formally established Philippi as a city bearing his name. In the apostle's time it was a Roman city, with the highest possible privilege for a Roman provincial municipality, in fact it was governed by Roman law and structures in a way most other cities did not experience. Its citizens were Roman citizens, and the constitution was modelled on Rome itself. Latin was spoken and the citizens wore Roman dress. Its background shaped to some extent Paul's manner of preaching (he spoke of the Christian's true citizenship in heaven as opposed to the Roman citizenship the Philippians were justly proud of). It also shaped his behaviour (he was able to claim his own Roman citizenship to good effect).

As to religious life, it appears there were few Jews in the city - (Only ten Jewish men were required for the establishment of a synagogue, and there were none in the city). We need to remember that Claudius (the Roman Emperor) around 49BC had issued an edict expelling "Jews" from Rome which would undoubtedly have influenced Philippi. In the city the pantheon of gods were worshipped. There were sanctuaries for them. The official imperial religion, however, seemed to dominate.

Paul's arrival at Philippi with the gospel on his second missionary journey c.49-52 brought him into contact with this city. As was his custom he looked for a synagogue, and finding none met with a group of women outside the city walls. Lydia (a woman of independent means) was converted. Later, after the healing of the slave girl, Paul and Silas were imprisoned and beaten. During their short imprisonment, the jailer is converted and he and his household are baptised. The apostles are charged as being vagabond Jews. Paul asserts his Roman citizenship. They receive an official apology, and are escorted from the city. It is clear from the letter that an enthusiastic young congregation has been brought into being, though one inheriting its founders sufferings. The gospel is powerful.

It is to this congregation that Paul writes his letter, most likely during his period in jail in Rome around 61 AD.

Some things that stand out in the letter are the following:

- a Thanksgiving for Epaphroditus, their messenger, now on the way home, and, connected with that, thanksgiving for their faithful support of him.
- b Concern lest they be troubled by the 'dogs' mentioned in Philippians 3.
- c Concern that they hold fast in the face of other pressures 1:27ff
- d Concern that they live lives worthy of the gospel, especially in light of "tensions within" referred to in 1:27ff and 2:1-4 and 4:1-3.

Unity and steadfastness are important issues in this letter. What better model of these things than Jesus! In dealing with these issues we see Paul as a man passionate for the gospel and passionate about Jesus. We see his humanness, his ardent love for the Philippians, and his strong feelings towards those who oppose the gospel and try to pervert it.

Above all in the letter we see to the heart of the gospel. "Though the Gospel is capable of doctrinal exposition, though it is eminently fertile in moral results, yet its substance is neither a dogmatic system nor an ethical code, but a person and a life"¹ - the person and life of Jesus. It is the life of Jesus and our life in Jesus that calls us back from all distractions to issues of central concern.

Pray for your time in Philippians that you at the end might be able to join Paul in saying "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain".

You will find that for each week's readings there are five sections (days) which are meant to encourage you to read and think through the Scriptures, meeting with God, and working through the questions provided to increase your understanding and application of the Scriptures.

¹J.B. Lightfoot, *Philippians (The Crossway Classic Commentaries* , Illinois, 1994), p xviii.

Day Five Jesus and Possessions Luke 9:58; 16:1-13

1. Three lessons are taught here:

- a. 16:9
- b. 16:11
- c. 16:13

One is a command. Two are warnings. How do you fare?

PREPARE FOR YOUR GROWTH GROUP

What do we learn about giving from 2 Corinthians 9:6-14?

9:6 _____

9:7 _____

9:8 _____

9:10, 11 _____

9:12 _____

9:13 _____

9:14 _____

Will God describe you as generous or mean?

What action do you need to take?

GROUP PRAYER POINTS

Matt and Cecily Greenwood - Western Suburbs Community Bible Church, Perth
Connan and Belinda O'Shea - Northern Lakes Evangelical Church

RECOMMENDED COMMENTARIES

- Philippians**, J.B. Lightfoot. (The Crossway Classic Commentaries)
- The Message of Philippians**, Alec Motyer. (The Bible Speaks Today)
- Commentary on Philippians**, Peter O'Brien. (New International Greek Testament Commentary)

The above are listed in order of size, the first being 190 pages, the last being 500 pages. As to merit, one would have to favour the last. The earlier commentaries, however, will suit you well in these readings and studies.

THE FIVE PURPOSES OF CHURCH

God has saved us for a purpose - he is a purposeful God! What therefore does he purpose for us as a community of believers?

For the sake of simplicity we have identified five areas. As you and your small group fellowship together over the scriptures this term, consider these five and how they bear on our lives together!

God has called us to:

- MATURITY** growth in our knowledge of him and in our godliness of life
- MAGNIFICATION** growth in our love and adoration of Christ expressed in all of life.
- MEMBERSHIP** growth in the joy of living as a community of renewed people
- MINISTRY** growth in our service of others — especially of our Christian family
- MISSION** growth in our desire and ability to bring the gospel to others

How to use these notes

Bible reading requires effort and concentration for the task is to understand clearly what God Himself has given us. We must not however, approach Bible reading with a merely 'academic' attitude. In the text we are confronted with God Himself. As we read the scriptures we will experience the overwhelming wonder of being prompted by the Spirit to conform our lives to be more like Christ. These notes are not designed as a self-contained group Bible study but

as a stimulus for daily reading and for Growth Group preparation. Don't feel restricted by the questions; they are simply designed to get you thinking.

Here is a guide for how to spend your time.

Before you begin reading pray! Ask that God would enable you to sit humbly under his word, that he might graciously speak to you, and that he would mould you to his character.

Read the section for the day. Use the questions to aid your reflection on each passage, taking notes if it is helpful.

Finally spend some time considering the impact of your reading and then pray again about those things.

Disclaimer!

These studies are an aid to your Bible reading. They are by no means definitive. There are many more issues and implications for reflection than those highlighted in the daily questions.

passed around on Sundays, as we do when we sing. We worship God by our faithful obedience at work, by witnessing to friends...

1. How does God respond when we give to others for the sake of Gospel endeavours?

2. Paul's again expresses his confidence in God. Vs 19
In saying this, what is Paul urging the Philippians to do?

And the glory belongs to God!

3. Why do generous people need to be reminded of this?

Day Four The Macedonian Churches 2 Corinthians 8, 9

1. The Philippians, though not mentioned by name in these chapters belong to the 'Macedonian churches'.

2. What words in chapter 8 describe their circumstances?

3. What words describe their attitude?

4. What did they do?

5. Who, again, is the model of generosity? 8:9

2 What is generosity a 'fruit of'?

3. For every \$100 you receive in income or interest or profit, what proportion do you use to meet the needs of others, i.e. other than your family?
What do you give away?

4. Is it generous giving? How do you determine this?

It might appear that the man giving \$10,000 out of an income of \$80,000 is very generous. However, is he more generous than the woman giving \$1,000 out of an income of \$12,000?

5. In doing this let me warn you of the danger of thinking, as you look at others particularly, "I'm doing fairly well!" "I'm a generous man!" To whom should we be looking for a model of generosity? 2 Cor 8:9 and I John 3: 16-18

Day Three Philippians 4:18-20

The Philippians' gifts are sent to Paul through Epaphroditus. They are sent to Paul, their missionary.

Before God, they are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, and pleasing to God. The language in this verse is the language of OT worship. Sacrifices were a significant part of the way you worshiped God (see John 4:20). Remember in Romans 12:1-2 Christians are urged to offer their bodies as living sacrifices, this being their spiritual worship.

Paul in Philippians is describing giving to gospel endeavours AS WORSHIP. He described many other activities as worship - notably evangelism, prayer, confession. In light of this it is wrong to narrow our understanding of worship to a time of singing on Sunday mornings. We worship God just as much by giving money in the bag that gets

Week 1 THE CHURCH IS BORN

ACTS 16 and PHILIPPIANS 1-4

Day One: ACTS 15:36 - 16:10

1. Why did Paul take Silas with him instead of Barnabas? Can you, or should you, draw any conclusions from the fact of this disagreement? Who else was in the party? (Note 16:3 and 10).

2. What was the purpose of the journey? Several phrases are used 15:36, 15:41; 16:4, 5, 10.

3. How might you demonstrate this evident concern for the ministry of encouragement that Paul showed?

Day Two: Acts 16:11-40

Lydia is described as a worshipper of God, a God-fearer. See Acts 10:1, 2 and 13:49-50 and 17:4 for other occasions this term is used. A "God-fearer" is a gentile attracted to Judaism. Her response to the gospel though is not "common" amongst God-fearers. See Acts 13:49, 50.

1. How do you account for her response? See 16:14.

2. Is this how you account for your faith? What sort of response do you now make in the light of the fact that it was God who did it; that it was God who chose you (Ephesians 1:11, John 6:44), who opened your heart to the truth?

3. Why does Paul insist on a public apology for his imprisonment and beating?

Day Three Acts 16:11-40

Imagine a headline in the Daily Chronicle at Philippi "New Church Begins".

1. You are the Interviewer. Interview Paul, the Jailer or Lydia. Ask them these questions, and write down how you would have answered if you were they.

a) What things were instrumental in this church beginning?

b) What has been your personal experience of God?

c) How do you think this will change your life?

d) Do you expect it will be easy from here on in?

WEEK 8: LET'S LOOK AT THE BUDGET

Day One Philippians 4:10-23 Contentment

1. What do we know of the Philippians concern for Paul from this letter? See 1:4, 1:19, 2:25, 4:14-16, 4:18.

2. Motyer writes: "The Lord uses generous Christians to help needy ones". What is your experience of this?

3. What is Paul's secret of contentment? 4:11, 12

4. Does this mean he wasn't ever in difficult situations, like MINE? See 2 Corinthians 11:16 - 12:10

5. How should verse 13 be understood? How might it be abused?

Day Two Philippians 4:14-17 "Thank you"

After saying 'thank you' Paul writes verse 17.

What does he mean when he says, "I'm looking for what (fruit) might be credited to your account."

1. When? Where?

SERMON NOTES

Day Four Philippians 1 and 2

1. Quickly read through these two chapters and write down three things that you want to change in your life in response to God's Word to you. How will you do it?

Day Five Philippians 3 and 4

1. Write down three areas of your life that you would like to change in response to God's Word to you in these chapters. How will you do it?

PREPARE FOR YOUR GROWTH GROUP

Why, in light of the resolution of the Jerusalem Council not to demand circumcision, is Timothy circumcised? See Acts 15:1-2 for the original dispute. See Acts 15:24-29 for the council's resolution. Galatians 2:1-5 will add something to the picture.

Can you see a principle in Paul's actions that might relate to certain issues today?

Paul and Silas are imprisoned. The Jailer asks what he must do to be saved. What is the answer? (16:31.)

Philippians

Central Coast Evangelical Church

How does the jailer demonstrate his new salvation? How do you?

What picture does Luke paint of the church situation at Philippi?

GROUP PRAYER POINTS

Steve and Nicole Covetz - Port Community Church

Philippians

Central Coast Evangelical Church

What is the remedy for anxiety?

Does the remedy tell you anything about the cause of the anxiety?

Why hearts **and** minds?

GROUP PRAYER POINTS

Christian Leaders Training College - Papua New Guinea

Maitland Evangelical Church

Lakes Evangelical Church

4. Is it true "that to reject Jesus' apostle is to reject the One who sent him i.e. Jesus?"

SERMON NOTES

5. Again, how do you relate the peace of God to persecution, which is said to be fairly normal for Christians living a godly life? (2 Tim 3:12 - he's repetitive isn't he?)

Day Five Philippians 4:1-9

1. Read the passage again, possibly in another translation.
It's a meeting with God. You're reading. You're listening to him. He's speaking. What's He saying? How must you respond to Him?

PREPARE FOR YOUR GROWTH GROUP

How had the women mentioned here helped Paul in his ministry?

Note also in Luke 8:1-3 what is said about the women who ministered to Jesus?

In what ways do these Scriptures influence your understanding of women in ministry?

WEEK 2: PAUL'S PRAYER FOR THE PHILIPPIANS

PHILIPPIANS 1: 1-12

Day One The writer and the readers.

While Timothy is linked with Paul in the opening greeting, it is Paul who is the writer. See 1:3 "I thank my God" and 2:19 "I hope to send Timothy to you soon". That Timothy has had a special place in the Macedonian churches is evident from 2:20-23 cf 1 Corinthians 4:17, 16:10; 1Thessalonians 3:1-4. They are both described as "servants of Christ Jesus".

In some letters, especially those where Paul's authority is called into question he adds that he is an apostle of Jesus - See Galatians and Corinthians. The idea of servants or slaves comes from the Old Testament. See Nehemiah 10:29, Joshua 24:29, Psalm 89:20 and 2 Kings 14:25, where it is a title of honour. However, in a letter that so stresses 'humility' it more likely emphasises Paul's status as a slave to Christ.

Paul uses a series of terms which are used often in the NT.

1. What does he mean by calling the Philippians 'saints' (literally in Greek 'holy ones')? See 1 Peter 2:9 and its OT foreshadowing Ex 19:5, 6. How does adding "... in Christ Jesus" fill out this meaning?

The word "Overseer" is also translated "Bishop". It was an official title in the ancient world for leaders of various kinds. It began to be used in Christian circles to refer to leaders within the Christian community. See also 1 Tim 3. It is synonymous with "elder". "Deacon" means servant. We see the appointment of seven servants in Acts 6. This very likely is the nucleus from which an official order of servants began.

Day Three Philippians 4:6, 7 Anxiety

1. List 3 situations that usually make you more anxious than usual

2. What, from vs.6, is the answer to anxiety?

3. From 1 Peter 5:7 and Mark 4:18, 19 and Matthew - what do we learn about anxiety - its remedy and its effects?

4. The peace of God...how is it described? What will it do? Why hearts and minds?

Day Four Philippians 4:9

1. What you have learned, received, heard and seen in me... What is the importance of these four things put together as here?

2. It is an incredible appeal to one's life and teaching as an example. Does it surprise you?

3. What is Paul's relationship to Jesus?

wrong'; but to Paul each was under the same obligation to make the first move."³

Day Two Rejoice!

1. Joy is a fruit of the Spirit. How does the Spirit enable us to rejoice in difficult circumstances?

2. Gentleness is singled out as a fruit of the Spirit to be displayed to all (as a testimony to Christ). A gentle attitude is encouraged also in 2 Timothy 2:24, Ephesians 4:2; 1 Thessalonians 2:7. What does it mean and what does it do? Proverbs 15:1; 25:15.

We are to do these things, further, in the light of the fact that the Lord is coming soon. It plays a big part in the thinking of the writers of Scripture doesn't it? Does it play such an important part in your thinking, your planning for the future, your decisions to take on a certain job or to move to a certain location, or to get involved with a certain group or society?

Now think of the situation with Euodia and Syntyche. How could we advise them, in the light of these things?

- a. The Lord is near! Bear up Euodia. You've only a little time to put up with Syntyche.
- b. Bear up Syntyche, when the Lord comes your sister will have come to her senses.
- c. Do something! You have to answer to the coming Lord, 2 Cor 5:10. What do you need to do?

³ Alex Motyer, *The Message of Philippians* (Leicester, England: IVP, 1984), 203.

2. What does he mean by the terms 'grace' and 'peace'? How do these relate to "God our father and the Lord Jesus Christ"?

Peter O'Brien writes: "He does not simply wish their spiritual prosperity or their internal condition of contentment; rather, his prayer is that they may comprehend more fully the nature of their relationship of peace which God has established with them".

Day Two Philippians 1:3-6

1. What characterises Paul's prayer?

2. He "remembers them with joy". Why? See verse 5 and 6.

3. What does it mean that they were partners in the gospel? See 4:14-18.

4. How are you a partner in the gospel?

Turn the prayer into a prayer for those in the church for whom you pray, for their remembrance of you in so many ways; for their partnership in the gospel; and for the work of God in their lives, remembering that thanksgiving brings glory to God 2 Corinthians 4:15.

Day Three Philippians 1:7-11

There is an interlude in his prayer - which continues in verse 9. It is a description of his love for the Philippians with whom he longs to be rejoined (Philippians 4:1) and who are partakers with him of the grace of God, no matter what the circumstances; and more to the point, are committed to him and his ministry, and not ashamed of his 'chains'. It is Christ who lives in Paul and whose love for them wells up in Paul whenever he thinks of them.

1. From the prayer vs. 9-11 list the things for which he asks. How are they connected?

That he prays that their love might abound in knowledge and depth of insight would suggest that he is not limiting his prayer to their love for one another, though that is included, but rather, and predominantly to love for God. Such love has great influence in the intellectual and moral spheres as is indicated by what follows.

2. How does such love grow and increase? How will it be evidenced in our lives?

Day Four Learning from Paul's prayer for the Philippians

1. In light of what Paul prays for the Philippians, and the goal of believers to be 'pure and blameless until the Day of Christ' how might you pray for other believers?

WEEK 7: REJOICING IS FOR ALL CHRISTIANS

PHILIPPIANS 4:2-9

Day One Philippians 4:2-9

Imagine you were Euodia or Syntyche. You are immortalised by the mention of your spat! Would you be pleased?!

Remember Jesus tells us that every idle word will be shouted from the roof tops (Luke 12:3). Puts a different spin on what to us can appear private sin.

There is more though.

1. What does disagreement do to the fellowship?

2. How are disagreements resolved?

3. What does disagreement do to our witness before the world?

See the following Scriptures: John 17:20-23; Ephesians 4:1-3; 1 Corinthians 8

"Paul sees disunity as such a solemn and disastrous thing: it is contrary to the apostolic mind; it is a denial of the nature of the church; and it is a flaw in the church's armour against the world. In the light of all this, how noteworthy that Paul (who apparently knew all about the differences between the two women in question) neither specifies the problem nor tries to act as a mediator. He does not sum up their rival claims; he does not say to the one or the other, 'You are wrong; you must apologise.' He does not sit on the fence with "There are two sides to every story; you are both partly right and partly wrong. So kiss and make up.' It is not a matter of who is right and who is wrong or what rightness and wrongness exists on each side. The plea I entreat is made to each contestant alike. No doubt each said, 'I am right, she is

SERMON NOTES

2. What effect will your prayers have on the way YOU relate to those for whom you pray?

PRAY!

**Day Five: A COMPARISON WITH PAUL'S PRAYER FOR THE COLOSSIANS
(Col 1:3-14)**

1. What are the important aspects of Paul's prayer for the Colossians?

2. What points of similarity and difference do you find in this and the Philippians' prayer?

**LIFE TO THE FULL
STARTING MAY 15th**

"Life to the Full" is a six week course held over a **delicious dinner** one night a week, looking at the fundamentals of what the Christian faith is all about. There is no difficult to understand religious language or trappings.

The course will examine the foundational life issues such as:

- * Is the Bible Reliable?
- * How did the Bible come to us?
- * Who is the man Jesus?
- * What is a Christian?
- * Is good, good enough?
- * Why the resurrection matters

PREPARE FOR YOUR GROWTH GROUP

What is the good work that had been begun in the Philippians?

Why could Paul be confident about their standing to the end? vs. 6

On whom was his confidence based? See also 2 Timothy 1:9; 1:12 Romans 8:28-30 and 8:35-39.

What things does Paul expect (and pray) will be the pattern of Christian life for the Philippians?

GROUP PRAYER POINTS

Paul and Sandra King - France

In 3:3, Paul states four traits of a true Christian. What are they? What do they mean?

What would living as an enemy of the cross of Christ look like?

What does this tell you about the importance of the cross?

How does your life 'at present' indicate your belief about your citizenship and future?

Are you "standing firm in the Lord"?

What things can you do, or put in place, to ensure you "stand firm in the Lord"?

GROUP PRAYER POINTS

Colin and Jill Bakon - Ecuador

SERMON NOTES

2. In vs.18, 19 Paul tells us more about the false teachers. What defines them here?

3. The cross for Paul is central to the Christian faith. In what way is that obvious? See 2:6-11; 3:3, 8-11)

4. How do you think these teachers were undermining the centrality of the cross?

5. How are we to be different?

PREPARE FOR YOUR GROWTH GROUP

“I’m going to have a happy smiling face to-day. No matter what!”

“The secret of rejoicing is to think only of happy things - whatever the circumstance - even if I lose my job, my home and my spouse”

How are these attitudes different to 'rejoicing in the Lord'?

Paul repeats himself. He seems to think it is worth it. What do you learn from this?

WEEK 3: CHRIST-CENTRED IS GOSPEL-CENTRED

PHILIPPIANS 1:12-30

Day One: Philippians 1:12-18

1. From the letter it is obvious Paul is in prison. Can you see what verses would lead you to this conclusion?

The question many ask is - where is he in prison?

It has generally been thought that it was in Rome. From Acts we know of four imprisonments - Philippi (Acts 16:23-40), briefly in Jerusalem followed by two years in Caesarea (24:27), and two years in Rome (28:30). From 2 Corinthians 11:23 it seems there were other times not recorded.

Rome is the favoured option however because of his reference to the Praetorium in 1:13, and the greeting from Caesar's household in 4:22. However it has been argued that both Rome and Caesarea seem unlikely because of the distance of Rome from Philippi (about 1200 miles) and the time it would have taken to travel from Rome to Philippi (several months). The three recommended commentaries can give you an outline of the issues involved. If Rome is assumed than this gives a date for the letter of around 61 AD.

2. How does Paul's prison experience confirm that in all things God works for the good of those who love Him, Rom 8:28 and that His grace is sufficient in our weakness? 2 Cor 12:7

3. Paul says that his virtues and deeds apart from Jesus are not merely useless but actually a positive impediment. Why is this so? (To use a cliché!)

4. According to Paul, what is the most valuable thing in life? (1:21, 3:8)

Day Four

1. Make a list of what is valuable (1:9-11, 18, 23-26; 2:2-4, 17; 3:8, 9, 10, 11) and what is relatively unimportant (1:12-18, 23-24; 3:4-8; 4:11-13):

a. Valuable

b. Relatively unimportant

2. In what ways might adopting Paul's value system affect the way you live?

Day Five: Philippians 3:12-4:1

1. What attitude should the mature take?

Day Two: Philippians 3:1-11

1. False teaching was a constant threat to the early church (as it is to the modern church). Paul reinforces some key doctrines. What are they?

2. What seems to be Paul’s overall point in 3:1-11?

Note that 'dogs' is a derisory term used by the Jews of Gentiles. Evildoers - see 2 Corinthians 11:13. For further reading see Galatians 3:12, 5:1-6, 6:12 and 13 Acts 15:5; Romans 2:25-29 and Colossians 2:11.

‘Flesh’ usually refers to our “lower, unredeemed nature, not what is inherently bad but what is the target of sin’s attack and the occasion of our becoming a victim under sin’s dominion”.²

Day Three: Philippians 3: 4-11

In 3:4-6, Paul explains what it means to “put confidence in the flesh.” According to those verse, what sorts of fleshly things could have made Paul feel worthy of God’s approval?

1. In what sorts of fleshly things might you put confidence before God?

2. Yet Paul doesn’t glory in these things, but glories in Christ Jesus. What do you think that means?

² Ralph P. Martin, *Philippians* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1976), p126.

Day Two Philippians 1:19-26 Life or Death!

1. In verse 19 Paul is convinced of three things. What are they?

Note that here the Spirit is the Spirit of Christ, as in Galatians 4:6. It is easy to think of the Spirit as a separate being but he is intimately associated with both the Father and the Son, being referred to as the Spirit of God, the Father (Romans 8:9) and the Spirit of Christ. Additionally he is sent by both the Father and the Son. John 14:16, 17; Romans 8:9 and John 15:26, 16:7. We may be able to distinguish him from the Father and the Son, but never separate him.

2. How will being convinced of these same three things change the way you approach prayer?

3. And Suffering?

Day Three Looking death in the eye!

1. Paul has expressed great confidence in the face of death. What is the ground of his confidence? How do these Scriptures help you face death? Hebrews 2: 14-18; 9: 27, 28; 2 Timothy 1:10-12; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 Corinthians 15: 48,49; 58,59 John 3:16, 36; 10: 28; 1 John 3:3

Day Four Christian suffering

Paul indicates here that it is a privilege for Christians to 'suffer for Christ'. Phil. 1:29. He rejoices in his own sufferings and claims that they have worked out for the furtherance of the gospel. The New Testament from Gospels to Revelation speak of the sufferings of God's people, seeing behind them God's adversary (Revelation 12). Consider these words of Jesus: Matthew 5: 11,12; 10:34-36; 16:24,25; John 15:18-25, 16:33 and these words of Paul: 2 Timothy 1:12; 2:8-10; 3:13; 2 Corinthians 1:5; 11: 16-33 and 12:7-10 and Philippians 3:10.

1. What emerges for you in your understanding of suffering as a Christian?

Day Five

PAUL IS THROUGH AND THROUGH A GOSPEL MAN. HIS LIFE IS DOMINATED BY THE CROSS. HIS CIRCUMSTANCES ARE INTERPRETED IN ITS LIGHT.

Re-read chapter one of this letter.

1. How does the passage you've read this week demonstrate this?

2. How does Paul's example in this regard, in this chapter, challenge or encourage you?

3. How does the gospel affect the choices I make about life such as marriage, work, church, money, the future, church planting, house and farm, treasure on earth and security?

WEEK 6: ENEMIES WITHOUT AND WITHIN

PHILIPPIANS 3

Day One: Philippians 3:1-3

The section begins with the word "Finally". The same word is used in 1 Thess 4:1 which, by the way, is followed by two whole chapters. I mention this since some think this last part of Philippians, while coming from Paul was from another letter and somehow added on here. I mention it to show that it does not necessarily mean "this is the end" (you may have heard some sermons like this!). The word is also used in 1 Corinthians 4:2 and 7:25 where it is translated 'now' and 'from now on', and in 1 Corinthians 1:16 where it is translated 'beyond that!' There's a lesson to be learned here. Words derive their meaning from their use and context.

1. "Rejoice" - what makes you rejoice? Remember, there a difference between joyful and happy. He is not saying to them, "Be cheerful! Smile!"

2. Paul is suffering, yet rejoices. Why? See 1:18, 27-29; 2:18; 4:4.

3. Here are some other causes for rejoicing, despite circumstances - Rom 8:28-30. Can you think of others? Why not list them and give thanks.

SERMON NOTES

PREPARE FOR YOUR GROWTH GROUP

Preaching Christ for different reasons. What motivates those to whom Paul refers in 15-18 in preaching the gospel?

What is Paul's reaction?

How must this situation be different to that referred to in Galatians 1: 6-9?

What does it mean to say "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain." vs. 21?

What, for Paul, is the point of continuing to live?

What makes his own decision about life and death difficult? What convinces him that he shall continue to live?

HOWEVER, whatever happens, what are the Philippians to do?

GROUP PRAYER POINTS

Peter and Joanna Shaw - Botswana

SERMON NOTES

PREPARE FOR YOUR GROWTH GROUP

How is Epaphroditus like Jesus?

What kind of men (and women, note in Acts how often women played a significant role in Paul's ministry) are worthy of honour?

What the community honours soon becomes that which we seek to emulate. Do you agree?

What does our community honour?

How does the Christian community absorb their values and likewise honour what they honour?

What should we be honouring?

GROUP PRAYER POINTS

Day Four The example of Paul 2:17-18

1. What do you think verse 17 means in plain language? Does it relate to his imprisonment? (See 2 Timothy 4:6.)

2. For some further background to the language of "drink offering" see Genesis 35:14; Exodus 29:40, 41; 30:9; Lev 23:13, 18. How was the drink offering related to the sacrifice?

3. In what sense does what Paul say here of himself, reflect the attitude of Jesus in Philippians 2:1-11?

Day Five The example of Timothy 2:19-24

Timothy is now presented to us as a Christ-like example also.

1. Why will Paul send Timothy?

2. What does he say about Timothy as a fellow minister?

3. When he says "I have no one else like him" I take it he was referring especially to those with him at Rome. In what sense is Timothy an example of Jesus as we've seen him in 2:1-11?

WEEK 4: CHRIST-CENTRED IS CHRIST-LIKE

PHILIPPIANS 2: 1-11

Day One

In your readings for this week it is suggested that you read this passage each day and try to recall as much of it as you can.

1. Consider in more detail the first four verses, ending with the injunction "Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others." Reflect on the difficulty the disciples themselves experienced in being like this - Mark 10:35-45. Why is it so hard to share other people's space?

2. What must be rejected if we are to live in unity and harmony?

Pray over these verses.

Day Two

1. How is 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 a further comment on what is being encouraged in 2:1-4?

2. Does this mean that Christians will agree on all things?

3. What arguments does Paul use in 1 Corinthians 8:9-13 to promote amongst Christians the attitude encouraged in Philippians 2:1-4? See also Romans 12: 9-21.

4. List three possible situations in Christian fellowship in which some of the attitudes that Paul says are inconsistent with our profession to be followers of Christ, might be seen.

Day Three

1. How are verses 1-4 connected to 6-11.

2. Are you conscious of shaping your attitudes to be like those of Jesus? How would you go about gaining his attitudes?

Day Four

Verses 6-11 are generally recognised as a pre-existing hymn that Paul has inserted into this spot. The implication of this is that only 30yrs after Jesus moved about Palestine a body of agreed fact concerning Jesus' pre-existence, deity, incarnation, death and exaltation had ALREADY become common. So much so that it had become shaped into a poetic form.

1. What is it about the example of Jesus that condemns self interest, jealousy, backbiting and putting others down?

The word translated 'humble' here it was not considered a virtue in antiquity and was translated 'mean spirited'. In the Old Testament where it is esteemed, Micah saw that it flourishes in relationship with God. Micah 6:8

Consider these Scriptures: Colossians 1:28, 29; Galatians 4:19; Philippians 1:5, 9, 10 and 19; Philippians 2:1; Romans 8:13; Ephesians 1:18,19.

4. In these verses we are told to work, knowing that God works. How do these ideas go together?

Day Three Philippians 2:14-16

Do everything without grumbling or complaining; without arguing and dissension.

There is an echo here of the OT description of the generation of Israelites who passed through the wilderness under Moses' leadership. See Deuteronomy 32:20 and Numbers 11:1-6. In Acts 6 we read of a group in the Jerusalem church complaining against another ethnic group within the church. Our complaints, our grumbling might not be addressed to God, but in what sense is it true that in grumbling and complaining "our problem is with God"?

1. Why are we to "do everything without complaining or arguing"?

Take a further look at Ephesians 1:4, 5:27; Colossians 1:27 and Jude 24 to understand this phrase, "blameless and pure". The second phrase "a crooked and perverse generation" again describes the wilderness generation of Moses' day (Deuteronomy 32:5). It also describes the Jews of Jesus' day, (Matthew 17:17 and Acts 2:40). However, notice here it is used to describe the whole unbelieving world. We live in a world under judgment, but as the next phrase shows, not a world without hope (see Daniel 12:3).

2. How do believers shine? See also vs. 16.

WEEK 5: CHRISTIAN LIVING AND CHRISTIAN ATTITUDES

PHILIPPIANS 2:12-30

Day One 2:12, 13

1. Although the NIV translation begins a new paragraph at verse 12 there is a close connection to what has gone on previously. How is verse 12 and following connected?

2. What does he call for in verse 12?

3. What does it mean to “work out your salvation with fear and trembling”?

4. The phrase “fear and trembling” is found in the OT in Exodus 15:16 Isaiah 19:16 and Psalm 2:11 amongst others and in the New Testament in 1 Corinthians 2:3, 7:15; Ephesians 6:5 and here.

Day Two

1. What is the significance of the word “for” in vs. 13?

2. What is the result of God’s work in us?

3. What do you think is his “good purpose”?

Day Five

O'Brien comments: "He did not exchange the nature of God for the nature or form of a slave but He displayed the nature of God in the form or nature of a slave, one without any rights whatever. Jesus is truly Man, but not merely Man."

1. What did God do in response to Jesus humility in being a servant and dieing obediently? Vs 9-11.

2. In what sense are these final words paralleled in Isaiah 45:22-25? Before whom shall men bow in the Isaiah passage, and what is thereby taught in this hymn about Jesus?

3. What place does Jesus now occupy in the universe?

4. What place does he occupy in your life?

5. Are there specific ways you can apply Paul’s command in verse 5?

PREPARE FOR YOUR GROWTH GROUP

Because Jesus possessed and expressed the essence of Godhead, he had the right to all the worship and lordship the Father had. Yet what was Jesus' attitude toward his rights?

What does this attitude tell you about the humility Paul urges in 2:3? (For instance, how is Jesus' humility different from under-rating oneself or feeling worthless?)

Verse 7 says Jesus made himself nothing (or more literally 'emptied himself'). Other scriptures stress that Jesus remained fully God while on earth (Colossians 1:19, 2:9; Heb 1:3). Therefore, of what did Jesus empty himself in becoming human?

The hymn describes three steps down, before God exalts him. What are they?

From your knowledge of the Bible, why did Jesus suffer like this? In other words, for what purpose did he give up his rights, humble himself and die?

Does this sharpen the reason we are to likewise humble ourselves?

GROUP PRAYER POINTS

Jono and Amy Vink -Tanzania

SERMON NOTES