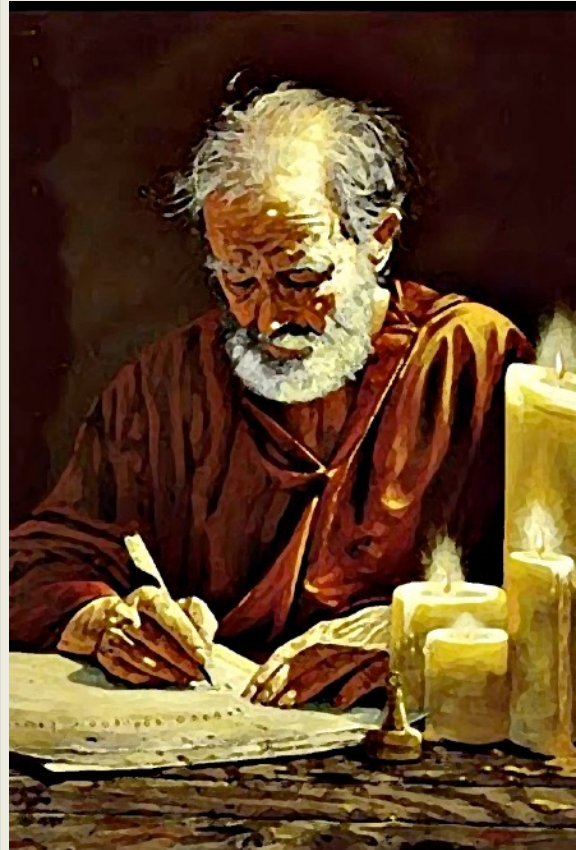


Living Well

Philippians

Beginning
Partnering
Advancing
Humbling
Working
Pressing on
Rejoicing
Receiving



St Luke's - Autumn 2024

The letter to the Philippians

In this Autumn term at St Luke's, our themes for both Sermons and Connect Groups come from the book of "Philippians."

This letter has only four chapters. It has only 104 verses. Yet it is amazingly profound.

Its author is in prison, and the recipients are both citizens of Philippi and citizens of heaven (3:20)!

These many years later, we read this part of God's Word and

- we marvel at one of the most amazing passages about Christ in the whole Bible
- we are urged to live holy lives and shine like stars in a dark world
- we are encouraged to press on towards the goal of fulfilling God's call in our lives
- we are taught how to rejoice, how to pray and how to find peace
- we learn how we can trust God in all circumstances, even in suffering

These Studies

It is worth reading this introduction and getting to know the background of the city of Philippi and Paul's interactions with the church there.

The first study reflects on how the church began – from Acts 16. The other studies are taken, in order, from the letter of Philippians. At the end of each section, there is a space for you to write what you will do and what you will pray, as a result of reading this passage.

There is a short appendix, with an appropriate map of the region, and some references to specific words that are frequent in this letter.

As usual, there are probably typing errors and wrong references – mea culpa.
God bless, Andrew

The City of Philippi

In 361 BC a number of Greek settlers took over the little village of Krenides – which means “springs.

In 356 BC Philip II of Macedon annexed the whole region and established Philippi as a city bearing his own name.

It became a military strong post to guard the gold which came from local mines, and the proceeds enriched Philip each year.

In 168-167 BC the Romans conquered the region of Macedonia.

In 42 BC Mark Antony and Octavian defeated the Roman Republican forces. The victors settled many of their veteran soldiers in Philippi and established it as a Roman colony. The city was given the high honour of the *ius Italicum* (law of Italy) which meant that it was governed by Roman law. They were exempt from taxation and enjoyed land ownership. The population would have been between 5,000 and 10,000, made up of Romans, Greeks, Egyptians, and just a few Jews.

Its citizens were Roman citizens, its constitution was modelled after Rome, its architecture copied Roman styles - Latin was widely used and the citizens wore Roman dress.

The city religious life was very different though. There was worship of the Emperor, Greek gods, Roman gods, the local goddess of Artemis, Egyptian gods and more.

Interestingly in Acts 16:13 Paul finds a number of God-fearing women who gathered outside the city, near the river, on a Sabbath. To have a regular Jewish synagogue, you had to have ten men – so probably there was not that number of Jewish men in the city at that time.

Paul the missionary

After his conversion, Paul spent ten years or so in the Roman provinces of Cilicia and Syria (see Galatians 1:21). Then a believer called Barnabas called Paul to Syrian Antioch where the church had grown rapidly and was more Gentile than Jewish.

After a while the church in Antioch commissioned Paul and Barnabas to take the good news to Cyprus and Galatia. They succeeded in founding churches in several cities. Indeed, the mission to the Gentiles was so successful that the apostles in Jerusalem invited Paul and Barnabas to a council to clarify exactly what God expected of Gentile believers (Acts 15).

After the council in Jerusalem, Paul left Antioch with a new missionary partner, Silas, to revisit the church Paul had founded in Galatia. In a town called Lystra they invited young Timothy to join their mission team.

Paul wanted to spend more time in Asia Minor, but the Holy Spirit seemed to be guiding them away from further evangelism there. Then Paul had a vision of a man urging him to “come over to Macedonia and help us” (Acts 16:9). So the team set out for Macedonia and the first city they visited was Philippi.

Paul’s mission team was scarcely in Philippi for a few weeks or months when they had to leave.

The new believers lived in a city where

- some people had been economically hurt by the missionaries
- the magistrates had been embarrassed
- many would have been prejudiced against what looked like a Jewish cult.
- discrimination and persecution were probably the order of the day.

Yet the church flourished!

Paul and the Philippian Church - Partners

The Philippian Christians remained Paul's most loyal supporters. They sent him money when he was founding the church in Thessalonica, so that he would not have to live off this new church (Philippians 4:16). Later when they heard he was low on funds in Corinth, they sent money again (2 Corinthians 11:9).

Ten years later, Paul was imprisoned (probably in Rome) the Philippian church sent Epaphroditus to bear a gift of money to Paul, and to take care of him when he was under arrest.

However, Epaphroditus became severely ill, and Paul felt he should send him back to Philippi to complete his recovery. So he sent Epaphroditus with a letter – which is what we know as “Philippians.”

So, this letter: -

- explains the unexpected return of Epaphroditus
- thanks the Philippians for their gift
- informs them about his circumstances
- encourages them to lead a life worthy of the Gospel.

Philippians is a letter packed with treasure - I find it interesting that Philippi was originally near some gold mines!

In letters such as 1 Corinthians and Galatians, we find Paul in a stern mode. In Philippians we see him warm and pastoral, a friend rather than just a leader.

There is the (ever-present) danger of those who would subvert the gospel (see 3:1-11) but the overwhelming tone of the letter is positive and joyful.

Outline(s) of Philippians

A quick Outline

Cheaper 1	Living for Christ	(e.g. 1:27)
Chapter 2	Thinking like Christ	(e.g. 2:5)
Chapter 3	Knowing Christ	(e.g. 3:10)
Cheaper 4	Relying on Christ	(e.g. 4:13)

A longer Outline

1. Paul's account of his present circumstances
 - (a) 1:1-11 Thanksgiving and Prayer
 - (b) 1:12-30 Paul's imprisonment advances the gospel

2. Paul's appeal to have the mind of Christ
 - (a) 2:1-4 exhortation to humility
 - (b) 2:5-16 Christ's example of humility
 - (c) 2:17-18 shine like stars
 - (d) 2:19-24 the example of Timothy
 - (e) 2:25-30 the example of Epaphroditus

3. Paul's appeal to have the knowledge of Christ
 - (a) 3:1-9 warning against wrong confidence
 - (b) 3:10-16 exhortation to know Christ
 - (c) 3:17-21 warning against wrong living

4. Paul's appeal to have the peace of Christ
 - (a) 4:1-3 peace with others
 - (b) 4:4-9 peace with the Lord
 - (c) 4:10-19 peace in all circumstances
 - (d) 4:20-23 conclusion

How the Church in Philippi began

A: Read Acts 16:6-40

B: Verses 6-8 "Come over and help us"

Question 1

A closed door (verse 7) leads to a very different opportunity (verse 10). Have you experienced that?

C: Verses 11-15 The conversion of Lydia

Question 2

"The Lord opened her heart" (verse 14). What first opened your heart to the good news?

D: Verses 16-24 Uproar in the city

Question 3

Paul showed great discernment in perceiving the counterfeit encouragements of the servant girl (verse 17). He was also clear in his disdain for involvement in fortune telling (verse 16).

What is your reaction to these events?

Question 4

What financial concerns keep people away from faith today (verse 19)?

E: Verses 25-34 Singing and Praising

Question 5

Despite a false trial, being stripped and beaten and thrown in jail, Paul and Silas are worshipping late into the night (verse 25)

Why do you think Paul and Silas were singing and praising?

What are we like under pressure – how do we react to tough times?

What practical hints can we share with one another for continuing to praise and thank God despite our circumstances?

F: Verses 35-40 **“Not likely”**

The Good News Version of verse 37 has Paul saying “not likely” when they are asked just to go quietly away!

Question 6

When should we make a stand and demand an apology/ action from others? And when should we just “let it go?”

G: **The beginning of the church at Philippi**

The humble beginnings of the Philippian church did not look on paper to be the makings of a wonderful church – an odd bunch of converts to say the least – a business woman and her household, a slave girl, and a gaoler and his family

The Holy Spirit seems to make a special work of bringing together unlikely relationships.

Question 7

How can we take practical steps to allow the Holy Spirit to make us (a motley crew!) blend together as a church with a loving, joyous and friendly fellowship?

Suggestions for prayer: -

1. Over the summer holidays there will have been many Christian gatherings, for old and young. Some will have come to faith for the first time – let’s pray for them to continue well.
2. Let’s pray for St Luke’s that we will be a loving, friendly and joyful church.

<p><u>Living Well - during the coming week</u></p> <p><i>Can you jot down some reflections after this study: -</i></p> <p>Something To Do</p> <p>Something To Pray</p>

Partnership in the Gospel

A: Question 1

If you are corresponding with someone at some distance from you, how do you begin your letter/ email?

B: Read **Philippians 1:1-11**

C: Verses 1-2 **A Christian defined**

(1) A Saint

It might seem strange to us that Paul should address his readers not as “Philippians” but as “the saints.” Through the New Testament however, the word “saint” is the customary description of an ordinary Christian. The word “Christian” in fact occurs only three times in the New Testament, whereas the word “saint” occurs more than sixty times.

Question 2

What is implied by calling a Christian a “saint?”

(2) In Christ Jesus

This is a characteristic phrase of Paul

In this letter, Paul anchors much of the Christian life in one's relationship to Christ: you may like to look up some (or all) of these verses and notice the “in Christ” or “in the Lord” – see appendix.

Question 3

What does this phrase “in Christ Jesus” mean to you? Has it changed over time?

D: Verses 3-5 **Joyful Prayers**

Question 4

“Praying with joy” - what does that mean? How might that phrase influence our own prayers?

E: Verse 5 **Partnership in the Gospel**

The word partnership (Greek word koinonia) has meaning such as: “close association involving mutual interests and sharing association, communion, fellowship.”

Question 5

Can you recall a particular time when a partnership in the Gospel really stirred you?

F: Verse 6 Assurance – the work will be completed**Question 6**

How does this verse help us in times of uncertainty?

G: verse 7-8 Paul's affection for the church

The Philippian church was supporting Paul when he was in prison. Perhaps we might be tempted to “drop someone” off our prayer list when they are not active in Christian work!

H: verse 9-11 Paul's Prayer

“Love” can mean all sorts of things to all sorts of people. But here Paul links love with knowledge and depth of insight

Question 7

What do you think that means?

I: verse 10 Discerning what is best**Question 8**

What do you think of the phrase that is sometimes used “Good is the enemy of the best”

J: verses 11 A clear focus**Question 9**

How does this verse help us to have the right perspective?

Suggestions for prayer: -

1. Though in prison, Paul has a great concern for the church at Philippi. Can you think of a church from your past? Is there something special you could pray for them?
2. Let's pray for us all to have a clear Christian focus and spiritual discernment.

Living Well - during the coming week

Can you jot down some reflections after this study: -

Something To Do

Something To Pray

The Gospel advances even though Paul is in prison

A: Question 1

Do you find yourself thinking, “if only ... I was youngerI had more money I had more time?”

B: Read Philippians 1:12-30

C: Verses 12-14 Christ is preached

Paul is in prison. However there are various discussions about where that might have been: was it

- In prison at Ephesus, or
- in prison at Caesarea, or
- in prison at Rome?

The most likely suggestion is Rome – that seems to fit best.

“According to Roman custom he was bound by the hand to the soldier who guarded him, and was never left alone day or night. As the soldiers would relieve guard in constant succession, the praetorians one by one were brought into communication with the prisoner of Jesus Christ, and thus he was able to affirm that his bonds had borne witness to the Gospel throughout the imperial regiments.” (Lightfoot)

Can you imagine the impact on your life being chained to Paul for a six hour shift! Possibly many soldiers became Christians, and their influence would have spread to their unit and their families.

Question 2

Have you been encouraged to share your faith by the example of others? (see verse 14)

D: Verses 15-18 Wrong Motives

I don't think that Paul writes about those who are wrong in their doctrine – but those whose motivation is suspect and see Paul as a rival in faith.

“At the end of the Day, after all their efforts to oppose Paul, they have only succeeded in doing the very thing that matters most to him and the thing his friends also do; they have preached Christ.” (Frank Thielman , Philippians)

E: Verse 18-20 Rejoicing that Christ will be honoured

We have noted already in Study One the place of joy in this letter – see also the appendix relating to verses on joy.

Question 3

How can we have the sort of confidence that Paul has in the midst of problems?

F: verse 19**Prayer Matters**

Prayer is powerful.

- Prayer is not just thinking good thoughts
- Prayer is not just a psychological exercise to help us feel better
- We believe that prayer touches God – and through that lives can be changed

Question 4

Can you think of occasion(s) where prayer had a powerful affect?

G: verses 20-26**For me to live is Christ****Question 5**

How would you explain “for me to live is Christ” to someone else?

See story in appendix – you may like to use the words of “For me to live is Christ” as a prayer (or even a song – if you know the tune)

H: Verse 22-26**To be with Christ****I: Verse 27-28****Live a life worthy of the Gospel**

Paul focuses on three aspects of our behaviour: -

- Unity of spirit (1:27)
- Contending for the faith (1:27)
- Courage in the face of opposition (1:28)

J: verses 29-30**The privilege of suffering**

Paul’s words are reminiscent of the words of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5:10-12) Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

¹¹ “Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. ¹² Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Question 6

How does God give us courage in times of testing?

Suggestions for Prayer: -

1. Paul writes from prison. Can we pray for Christians who are suffering for their faith?
2. Let’s pray for the Gospel to advance in our locality

Living Well - during the coming week

Can you jot down some reflections after this study: -

Something To Do

Something To Pray

The example of Christ

The Philippian Christians are urged

- To think like Christ
- To see things like Christ
- To form their opinions like Christ

This is based on the fact that they are united with Christ, and this relationship should lead them to become more like Christ

Read Philippians 2:1-11

A: verse 1 remember some of the blessings of Christ

Paul lists some of the blessings of Christ: encouragement, unity with Christ, comfort, fellowship, tenderness, compassion.

Question 1

Which of these benefits of belonging to Christ have particularly appealed to you at a certain stage of your Christian experience?

B: verse 2 a call to unity

Having made his appeal (in verses 1) Paul gets to a command - a call to unity.

Have the

- same attitude of mind
- same spirit
- same purpose

Question 2

Is Paul appealing for some sort of politically correct group thinking?

Question 3

In other places (e.g. 1 Corinthians 12:4-11) Paul appeals to the diversity amongst Christians. How can we balance the aspects of unity and diversity at the same time?

C: verses 3-4 Humility and not selfishness

Paul brings

- Something negative to avoid
- Something positive to pursue

Selfish ambition and vain conceit are seen in all works of life: politics, business, church etc

Question 4

How do you react when you see these qualities (selfish ambition and vain conceit) displayed?

Sadly human beings can twist even good things into something not so good!

For example:

- There can be a false humility that is fishing for compliments in order to make us feel good about ourselves
- Looking to the interests of others can veer over into busy-bodying

Question 5

How can we rightly and appropriately look to the interests of others?

D: verses 6-11 the ultimate example

Many Bible expositors think that this is an early Christian hymn

I think of this passage (the life of Christ) as a Big letter U

Starts in glory Ends in glory



The cross – at the lowest point

Jesus starts in the glory of heaven

(then moving down the left hand side of the U)

He came to earth as a human being

(then moving further down the left hand side of the U)

He died for our sin on the cross

(a the lowest point of the U)

(then moving up the right hands side of the U)

He returned to the glory of heaven

E: The Three Minds

(a) The mind of Christ verses 6-7

- The eternal becomes incarnate (a human being)
- The incarnate becomes a curse (on the cross He died for our sins)

Question 6

During Communion what comes to your mind about Jesus?

(b) The mind of God – verse 8-9

- Jesus is given the name above all names
- Jesus is to be the object of universal worship

Question 7

What goes through your mind when we sing songs/ hymns about the “name of Jesus”?

(c) The mind of the Christian – verse 5

We have this amazing hymn about Christ, but this passage will not allow us to evade the personal question

“What does this mean for you?” “You are in Christ – you must be like Christ”

In the Appendix, you will find a Liturgical Version of these verses concerning Christ. You may like to use that as a prayer.

Also you will find the Nicene Creed, and notice how many points of similarity between these verses and that early Christian creed.

Suggestions for prayer: -

1. Let us thank God for both the unity and diversity amongst Christians.
2. Let us pray that there will be a great impact when we sing of the exalted Jesus.

Living Well - during the coming week

Can you jot down some reflections after this study: -

Something To Do

Something To Pray

God is at work

Question 1

When you hear the phrase “God is at work” what do you think of?

Read Philippians 2: 12-30

A: verse 12 Salvation

In the New Testament, Salvation has three tenses

“I have been saved”	in the past	we call that Justification
“I am being saved”	in the present	we call that Sanctification
“I will be saved”	in the future	we call that Glorification

In this verse I think that Paul is speaking of Sanctification – the process by which we now become more like Christ – and we have to put in some effort!

Question 2

How can we understand this verse as addressed to a Christian community and not just an individual?

B: verses 12-13 God is at work

There is a lovely balance
“Work out your sanctification ...” **and**
“God is at work”

Question 3

How can we achieve this godly balance of God’s part and our part?

C: verses 14-16 The church in action

(a) Paul brings a negative note: no complaining and arguing

(b) Paul brings a positive note

- He wants to see them with the qualities of
Blameless, pure, and without blemish (*being*)
- He wants them to
Shine like stars (*doing*)
Look up Daniel 12:3 for the Old Testament background
to this thought - and also Matthew 5:14-16
- He wants them to
Hold out the Word of life (*speaking*)
I think this means both
Keeping the Word of Life safe, and
Holding it out for others to receive

Question 4

Paul brings before his readers (and us) a very high expectation! How can we live up to this?

D: verses 16-18 Paul's pride and Joy

E: verses 19-24 The example of Timothy

Question 5

Are there some significant aspects of Timothy's character that are of interest?

F: verses 25-30 The example of Epaphroditus

He is described as: a fellow worker, a fellow soldier, a messenger, a minister

Question 6

What makes a Christian honourable?

Suggestions for prayer: -

1. Pray for Christians in places where there seems much darkness ("shine like stars")
2. Pray for our own witness to others ("hold out the word of life")

Living Well - during the coming week

Can you jot down some reflections after this study: -

Something To Do

Something To Pray

The importance of Pressing On in our faith

Read Philippians 3:1-4:1

This study is rather different – we are taking themes rather than going through verse by verse.

A: Dogs and Enemies

Paul has some harsh words for some groups of people – he calls them “dogs” and “enemies of the cross.” For such a gentle letter, these words come as something of a shock. Notice though that he has spoken to the Philippian church about this before (verse 1)

So, who are these people?

(a) Dogs – verses 2-4

In Middle East of those days, dogs were not a man’s best friend. They were thought of as an unclean scavenger, and to call someone “a dog” was a significant insult.

The dogs that Paul writes of are what we call the “Judaizers” – that is those Jewish Christian who taught that someone had to become a Jew first (by circumcision) before they could become a Christian.

This issue was a sharp one for the early church – you can read more about it in Acts 15. What we call “the Council of Jerusalem” decided in favour of Paul and his friends and opposed to the Judaizers.

(b) Enemies of the cross (verses 18-19)

Are these the same sort of people that Paul has criticised in the opening verses of this chapter? Or are they different?

Paul writes about these “enemies”: -

- their end is destruction
- their god is their belly – they worship themselves
- they glory in things of which they ought to be ashamed
- their mindset is definitely earthbound (and not heavenly).

- (c) **My best guess is that** “dogs” and “enemies” are two different groups of people: -
- The dogs, the Judaizers (verses 2-4) are **“Gospel plus”** people. That is, they take the Christian Gospel and **add** things to it – e.g. they add circumcision
 - The enemies of the cross (verses 18-19) are **“Gospel minus”** people. That is they take the Christian gospel and **subtract** things from it – e.g. they subtract Christian morality

Questions

1. Why do you think Paul is so concerned about these matters?
2. If he had left these words out of this letter, what might have happened to the church at Philippi?
3. What might Paul have written to the contemporary church in the UK?

B: Knowing Christ – verses 7-11

- (a) Knowing Christ is of surpassing greatness
- (b) The word “know” has a rich Old Testament background. You might to look up, for instance, Jeremiah 31:33-34.

(c) Righteousness

Paul contrasts two types of righteousness

- Source of Righteousness: Law, and
- Means of righteousness: personal obedience

OR

- Source of righteousness; God, and
- Means of righteousness: faith

(d) Knowing Christ means ...

Paul’s confidence is in Jesus and in knowing Him, which Paul places over and above everything else. This knowledge is relational but much more than simply a relationship. This knowing Christ involves:-

- being right with God because of being united with Jesus
- knowing Jesus as Lord - the one whom God has exalted to the highest place
- participation in the resurrection as well as the suffering of Jesus
- ultimate life and knowing Jesus’ resurrection and its power both now and in the age to come

(e) Knowing You - by Graham Kendrick

You can find the words of this song in the appendix - you might like to use it as a prayer

Questions

4. What does knowing Christ mean to you?
5. How would you describe (to an interested non-Christian) that your faith is about a relationship and not a religion?

C: Pressing on – verses 12-16

(a) Running the race

There are several occasions where Paul uses the imagery of a runner to illustrate the Christian life.

For example 1 Corinthians 9: 24-27

You've all been to the stadium and seen the athletes race. Everyone runs; one wins. Run to win. All good athletes train hard. They do it for a gold medal that tarnishes and fades. You're after one that's gold eternally.

I don't know about you, but I'm running hard for the finish line. I'm giving it everything I've got. No lazy living for me! I'm staying alert and in top condition. I'm not going to get caught napping, telling everyone else all about it and then missing out myself.

(Message version)

(b) Further to go

- I've not arrived (verse 12)
- I belong to Jesus, so I press on (verse 12)
- I leave the past and concentrate on the future (verse 13)
- It is God's call and revelation that fire maturity (verses 14-15)

Questions

6. Do I live in the realisation that more growth is an option?
7. Is my spiritual progress slowed down because my life is more about me than Jesus?
8. Am I hindered by past hurts, failures or successes?

D: A heavenly mindset – 3:20-4:1

Citizens of Philippi had the same rights and privileges as the citizens of Rome because Philippi was a Roman colony. Likewise we Christians experiences the privileges of a heavenly citizenship.

Paul uses this idea of being a citizen of heaven to include both the present(i.e. a way of living in contrast to that of the enemies of the cross) and the future certainty (i.e. Jesus’ return and the ultimate consummation).

The Second Coming of Christ is a foundational Christian doctrine. Yet sadly it can get distorted in two very different ways: -

- Some sections of the contemporary Church ignore this doctrine – some even deny it
- Other Christians have introduced complicated and speculative theories about how it will happen.

Paul writes simply “ we eagerly await.”

In 4:1 we have a special word “therefore..” In the light of the Second Coming of Christ, let us stand firm and be steadfast in our life now

Questions

9. The season of Advent is often celebrated nowadays often as “getting ready for Christmas” rather than looking forward to the Second Coming of Christ. Why do you think this is? And what have we lost in this shift of understanding?
10. What do you think of the quote from C. S. Lewis. He wrote “aim at heaven and you get earth thrown in – aim at earth and you get neither.”

Suggestions for prayer: -

1. Pray for writer, thinkers, and theologians for spiritual discernment in their work
2. Pray for us all to know Christ more

<p><u>Living Well - during the coming week</u></p> <p><i>Can you jot down some reflections after this study: -</i></p> <p>Something To Do</p> <p>Something To Pray</p>

Rejoice in the Lord

Question 1

What is the best thing that has happened to you this week?

Read Philippians 4:2-9

A: verse 2-23 Disagreement

Paul knows these two Christian women well – he has worked with them. He uses the word “plead” twice, once for each of them – the word means “make a strong request, implore.” Presumably this letter would have been read aloud in the Church at Philippi – I wonder what these two women would have thought when their names were mentioned?

B: verse 4-5 Rejoice in the lord

See notes on “Joy” at the end of these notes.

This is not just an encouragement “to be happy” or “have a good day.” This is a command to **rejoice in the Lord**.

This rejoicing is not to be occasional, but consistent and continual. In 1 Thessalonians 5:17 Paul urges his readers to “pray without ceasing” – here he instructs us to “rejoice always.”

Question 2

How can we develop a joy in the Lord regardless of our circumstances?

C: verses 6-6 God’s peace

(a) Don't be anxious

The Greek word for anxious means: “to be apprehensive, be unduly concerned.”

(b) Anything and everything

There is comprehensiveness in this verse!

(c) Bring requests to God

There are several words used here: -

- Prayer – prayer addressed to God
- Petition – urgent request to meet a need
- Requests ask for, demand
- Thanksgiving the expression of gratitude

(d) Peace

The word “Transcends” is to surpass in quality or value, be better than, excel.

Questions

3. What sort of things make us anxious?
4. How can thanksgiving transform our prayers?
5. Can you think of a time when God’s peace was so helpful?

D: verses 8-9

Think about these things

Our minds are important. Paul lists 8 things to prompt healthy thought patterns: - True, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy

Interestingly Paul uses the word “mind” ten times in this letter, and he also uses the word “think” five times. If you add the occasions he writes “remember” you have a total of sixteen references to the mind!

Question 6

What can you focus on in your mind that will be helpful?

Running through this passage is the idea of peace

- being at peace with one another
- knowing peace in the everyday challenges of life, and the specific challenges in terms of opposition to Christian faith in Philippi
- seeking peace by focusing on what is true, good and lovely rather than focusing on the challenges, concerns and opposition

Suggestions for prayer: -

1. Pray for God’s peace for those who find that difficult to experience
2. Pray for positive, godly thoughts to fill our minds

Living Well - during the coming week

Can you jot down some reflections after this study: -

Something To Do

Something To Pray

Read Philippians 4:10-23

Paul concludes with some personal notes. Throughout the letter, the close and warm relationship between Paul and the Philippians has been evident. This close relationship is also seen in Paul's willingness to receive from the Philippians, given the fact that he refused help from the Corinthians (see 1 Corinthians 9:11f)

Paul acknowledges the gift that Philippians have sent via Epaphroditus.

There are several reasons why Paul is careful about who he receives money from and how

First, he does not want to be seen as one of the travelling philosophers, who were dependent on gifts of money and were therefore sometimes seen in a bad light and could be influenced by their benefactors

Secondly, the norms of patronage in the Greco-Roman world meant that gifts were expected to be repaid either by gifts or a similar value or by flattery. Paul does not want to be under the influence or authority of those he is seeking to share the good news of Jesus with - he might be pressurised to change his message.

Third, giving thanks might give the impression that he wants the Philippians to send more, and Paul does not want to make the Philippians feel obligated to send further gifts.

Therefore, Paul is very careful to say he is content. He is not self-sufficient, but God-sufficient.

Paul focuses on the relationship and partnership between himself and the Philippians – they have shared in giving and receiving over time. It is a deep three-way relationship rooted in Jesus, so that the gift they have given is in effect given to God. Their God will in turn supply their needs.

Question 1

How do you react when you receive a gift? An expected one? An unexpected one?

A: verse 10**The Philippians' care for Paul**

The Philippians had sent money to Paul on several occasions. He wants to express his thanks without seeming needy or greedy

Question 2

How can giving to mission be a ministry of joy?

B: 4:11-12**Poverty and Wealth**

In prison, Paul needs the help of others. He has to pay for his rent and his food.

Here are two big (and difficult) questions – but you may like to consider them briefly.

Questions

3. What should Christians think about wealth?
4. What should Christians think about poverty?

C: 4:11-13**Contentment**

"I have learned the secret of being content" ... gives the impression that at some time in the past Paul learnt this lesson

Verse 13 is sometimes quoted out of context as though Paul can now do anything. In context, it means that Paul can rely on Christ's strength to face any circumstances that come to him in the course of his life and ministry

Questions

5. What is the basis of Paul's contentment?
6. Does this contentment undermine ambition?
7. How can we achieve this kind of contentment?

D: verse 14-18**Investment in ministry**

In the early days of his ministry, it seems that the Philippian church was the only regular contributor to Paul – they were his financial lifeline in the early days.

E: verse 19**An offering**

Paul moves from commercial language (verses 14-18) into sacrificial and worship language

F: verses 19-20**God's generosity**

Paul offers a wonderful promise. The Philippians were generous givers – God will supply their needs. The extent to which God will meet our needs is relative to the scale of His bank account, and not ours!

Question 8

What do we learn from these verses on this subject: -

(a) Matthew 6:31-34

So do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' ³² For the pagans run after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them. ³³ But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. ³⁴ Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.

(b) Luke 6:38

Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you."

G: verses 21-23**Final words**

The mention of Caesar's household does not prove that Paul was in Rome but it is another way in which Paul refers to a spiritual revival because of his imprisonment amongst his guards.

In those early years, for the Christian church, the Roman Emperor was something of an arch-enemy – and here are his Roman guards sending their greetings to the Christians in Philippi!

Suggestions for prayer: -

1. Pray for our mission partners at St Luke's: for safety, health and success in their work.
2. Pray for ourselves to be good givers and good receivers.

So, what have you learnt from these studies in Philippians?

Can you write something down which will remind you in the future?

JOY is a significant word in the letter to the Philippians

1:4 In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with **joy**

1:18 But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I **rejoice**.

1:25-26 Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and **joy** in the faith, ²⁶ so that through my being with you again your boasting in Christ Jesus will abound on account of me.

2:2 then make my **joy** complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.

2:16-18 But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and **rejoice** with all of you. ¹⁸ So you too should be glad and **rejoice** with me.

2:28-29 Therefore I am all the more eager to send him, so that when you see him again you may be glad and I may have less anxiety. ²⁹ So then, welcome him in the Lord with great **joy**, and honour people like him,

3:1 Further, my brothers and sisters, **rejoice** in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you.

4:1 Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my **joy** and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends!

4:4 **Rejoice** in the Lord always. I will say it again: **Rejoice!**

4:10 I **rejoiced** greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it.

In Christ – in the Lord

1:1 To all God's holy people **in Christ Jesus** at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons

1:14 And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident **in the Lord** and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear.

1:26 so that through my being with you again your boasting **in Christ Jesus** will abound on account of me.

2:19 I hope **in the Lord Jesus** to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you.

2:24 And I am confident **in the Lord** that I myself will come soon.

2:29 So then, welcome him **in the Lord** with great joy, and honour people like him,

3:1 Further, my brothers and sisters, rejoice **in the Lord!** It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you.

3:3 For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast **in Christ Jesus**, and who put no confidence in the flesh—

3:8-9 What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found **in him**, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith **in Christ**—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith.

3:14 I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward **in Christ Jesus**.

4:1 Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm **in the Lord** in this way, dear friends!

4:2 I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind **in the Lord**.

4:4 Rejoice **in the Lord** always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

4:7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds **in Christ Jesus**.

4:10 I rejoiced greatly **in the Lord** that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it.

4:21 Greet all God's people **in Christ Jesus**. The brothers and sisters who are with me send greetings.

Fellowship – Greek: Koinonia

1:5 In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy ⁵ because of your **partnership** in the gospel from the first day until now,

1:7 It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart and, whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you **share** in God's grace with me.

2:1 Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common **sharing** in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion,

3:10 I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and **participation** in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,

4:14 Yet it was good of you to **share** in my troubles.

4:15 Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church **shared** with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only;

When I was at Theological College we undertook various placements: some in churches, some in the community (e.g. schools, hospitals).

At one time, I was on a team which conducted a service in a Hospital Ward on a Sunday afternoon. I wonder if one would be allowed to do that nowadays!

Our service consisted of one or two songs, a Bible reading, a short talk, and some prayers. On the team one of our students was an excellent singer, and I was the very poor guitarist. We would play the song "For me to live is Christ, to die is again," from Youth Praise. Some may remember it! (The words are below)

After a while, we wondered whether the opening words might be a bit strong for those in a hospital ward – speaking about death.

So we tried another Youth Praise song- possibly known to some – "Can it be true?" Well, our rendition of that song was so feeble that we felt God saying to us "go back to For me to live is Christ." Which is what we did.

Chorus:

For me to live is Christ, to die is gain.
To hold His hand and walk
His narrow way.
There is no peace, no joy, no thrill,
Like walking in His will.
For me to live is Christ, to die is gain.

Now once my heart was full of sin and shame.
'Till someone told me Jesus came to save.
When He said "Come home to me"
He set my poor heart free.
For me to live is Christ, to die is gain

Now there are things that I still do not know,
But of this one thing I'm completely sure:
He who called me on that day washed all my sin away.
For me to live is Christ, to die is gain.

Liturgical Prayer – based on Philippians 2

(gradually getting quieter)

Leader:	Equal with God:
ALL	Jesus is Lord
Leader:	Emptied himself:
ALL	Jesus is Lord
Leader	Came as a slave:
ALL	Jesus is Lord
Leader	Found as a man:
ALL	Jesus is Lord
Leader	Humbly obeyed:
ALL	Jesus is Lord
Leader	Went to his death:
ALL	Jesus is Lord
Leader	Death on a cross:
ALL	Jesus is Lord

(gradually getting louder)

Leader	God raised him up:
ALL	Jesus is Lord
Leader	Gave him the name:
ALL	Jesus is Lord
Leader	Higher than all:
ALL	Jesus is Lord
Leader	Every knee bow:
ALL	Jesus is Lord
Leader	All tongues confess:
ALL	Jesus is Lord

The Nicene Creed

This has its roots in the Council of Nicaea in 325AD. The ending was modified at the Council of Constantinople in 381AD.

We believe in one God,
the Father, the Almighty,
maker of heaven and earth,
of all that is,
seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ,
the only Son of God,
eternally begotten of the Father,
God from God, Light from Light,
true God from true God,
begotten, not made,
of one Being with the Father;
through him all things were made.

For us and for our salvation he came down from heaven,
was incarnate from the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary
and was made man.

For our sake he was crucified under Pontius Pilate;
he suffered death and was buried.

On the third day he rose again
in accordance with the Scriptures;
he ascended into heaven
and is seated at the right hand of the Father.

He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead,
and his kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit,
the Lord, the giver of life,
who proceeds from the Father and the Son,
who with the Father and the Son is worshipped and glorified,
who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church.

We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins.

We look for the resurrection of the dead,
and the life of the world to come.

Amen.

“Knowing you Jesus” is a song by Graham Kendrick. He wrote this about its composition: -
“A major Christian conference in the UK had circulated a number of songwriters asking them to consider writing specific material to accompany the Bible readings and teaching at their event the following year. The book of Philippians had been chosen,

I began to read through the book meditatively, asking God to draw my attention to anything which might become the seed of a song. I had come to the famous passage where Paul lists his impressive qualifications, and then dramatically sweeps them all aside for the sake of one supreme aim - to know Christ. At this point my heart was stirred by the theme of knowing Jesus, and in an attempt to make it a personal song directed to him, I began to experiment with the phrase 'knowing you' as the moment of release of the song. “

*All I once held dear, built my life upon
All this world reveres and wants to own
All I once thought gain, I have counted loss
Spent and worthless now, compared to this*

*Knowing You, Jesus, knowing You
There is no greater thing
You're my all, You're the best
You're my joy, my righteousness
And I love You, Lord*

*Now my heart's desire is to know You more
To be found in You and known as Yours
To possess by faith what I could not earn
All-surpassing gift of righteousness*

*Knowing You, Jesus, knowing You
There is no greater thing*

*Oh to know the power of Your risen life
And to know You in Your sufferings
To become like You in Your death, my Lord
So with You to live and never die*

*Knowing You, Jesus, knowing You
There is no greater thing*

*Knowing You, Jesus, knowing You
There is no greater thing
You're my all, You're the best
You're my joy, my righteousness
You're my all, You're the best
You're my joy, my righteousness
You're my all, You're the best
You're my joy, my righteousness
And I love You, Lord*

