

In the Service of the Gospel

The Letter of Paul to the Church in
Philippi

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1st Edition 1/2015

2nd Edition 7/2015

Introduction

Philippians – Servant life

1. In Service for the gospel
2. Spirit of service
3. Dedication to service
4. Encouragement for service

Themes:

1. Hope of Christ
2. Mind of Christ
3. Knowledge of Christ
4. Peace of Christ

Consider this thought thread:

1. (1:3-8) – joy in their participation in his ministry
1. (1:19-23) – rejoice that the gospel is preached
2. (2:1-4) – joy of the fellowship of one another
3. (3:1-2) – joy in knowing the Lord and fellowship with him
4. (4:4-9) – rejoice in the hope and peace of the Lord

Purpose of the letter:

The church at Philippi had sent a gift to Paul in Rome by the hand of Epaphroditus (4:10,18).

Paul uses this occasion:

- to thank them
- to comfort them concerning his situation as a prisoner for Jesus Christ (1:12-14).
- of his plans to send Timothy soon (2:19-24)
- and why he considered it necessary to send Epaphroditus back to them (2:25-30).
- may have been a problem at Philippi involving two women, for Paul has a few words to say concerning them (4:2-3).

The church:

- During his second missionary journey (49-52 A.D)
- The Lord was calling them to go to Macedonia
- With the conversion of Lydia (Ac 16:13-15) and the Philippian jailor (Ac 16:25-34), the church was established at Philippi.
- When it became necessary for Paul to leave, Luke seems to have stayed at Philippi (based upon careful observations of personal pronouns; e.g., "we, they" (Ac 16:12; 17:1). As Paul left Macedonia, the church at Philippi became a significant source of support (4:15-16; 2 Co 11:9). Paul visited the church at Philippi again on his third missionary journey (Ac 20:3,6).
- Context – tensions within the congregation.

Thanksgiving and Prayer

1:3-18

1. Paul was thankful for the church at Philippi because thinking about them gives him great joy (1:3-6)
 - Why is Paul so thankful for these brethren? Why do they give him such joy whenever he thinks of them?
 - The impact of the brethren on you:
2. Where is Paul when he writes this letter? (1:7-8)
 - How might that impact how he feels about them?
 - From your own life, how does our life's situation impact how we feel about one other?
3. So he did not fail to fervently pray for them. What praying for? (1:9-11)
 - their love will flourish -- grow more and more
 - they will learn how to love one another appropriately -- have greater knowledge and understanding with love
 - they will see the difference between what is important and what is not; what is right and good and true and what is not -- they may have the ability and will to approve what is excellent
 - that they will be pure and blameless for the day of the resurrection
 - they will bring glory and praise to God by becoming filled with the spirit, or the fruit, of righteousness
4. The gospel preached was fruit of their love for Paul and faith in the ministry of the gospel (1:12-18)

The fruit of their love and faith with Paul:

 - the gospel was preached to a people may not have heard it otherwise
 - the gospel was heard with power of the boldness and spirit of a prisoner
 - others were made bolder to speak and proclaim the gospel
 - 1 Corinthians 1:28-30
 - Whether their motives were pure or not, Paul rejoiced that the gospel was preached.
 - Pure motives for preaching the gospel:
 - Impure motives for preaching the gospel

Living Worthy of the Gospel

Philippians 1:19-30

1. Paul rejoiced for three reasons: (1:18-20)
 - the prayers of the church at Philippi,
 - the comfort of the Holy Spirit sent by Christ,
 - his hope for deliverance.
 - Compare 2 Corinthians 4-5, 2 Timothy 4.
 - How do the prayers of others help us?
2. Paul then offers a declaration of faith; his single-minded approach to life: (1:20-23)
 - “I am not ashamed” – live or die it does not for God will use the events and circumstances to bring Christ more honor and glory, no matter the situation may be; they did not stop Paul but only gave him another opportunity!
 - “To live is Christ” – the only important thing about living is Christ
 - “To die is gain” – live or die serving Christ I can’t lose
 - “Living is an act of service” – for me to be with Christ is a powerful hope but to stay and serve the gospel is the greatest need and work.
 - “Your faithful life gives me joy”
 3. The life of faith is a life of service for salvation: (1:24-26)
 - what -- Consider Christ (Mark 14:33-36)
Question: How far will I go to serve the gospel?
 - how -- Titus 2:11-14, Ephesians 5:1-11, Mark 8:34-38
Question: How do I live the life of grace?
 - why? --How does my life impact the preaching and work of the gospel?
4. So this requires that the church must (1:27-31):
 - stand firm in one spirit with one mind (of the gospel) – in the same purpose
 - stand firm in the power (of the gospel) – courage in the face of those who would stand against you
 - (2 Thessalonians 1:5-10) (1 John 2:15-17) – Why would I who know the gospel and have obeyed it ever turn on God and turn away from the gospel by continuing to practice the sin?! I love the sin and not God, I love the world’s way and not God’s way.
 - Consider James 2:14-26
 - (1 John 3:4-9)
 - This is all for Christ’s sake.

Christian Fellowship in the Service of the Gospel

2:1-11

1. Our fellowship as a church is to provide (1):
The blessings and benefits of Christ – think about what you have in Christ, think about what this fellowship gives you (the expressions, functions, and enrichments of our fellowship of the gospel in Christ)—the gospel lifts us up to live above the turmoil of the world:
 - *blessing #1:* encouragement
 - *blessing #2:* comfort
 - *blessing #3:* united with Christ
 - *blessing #4:* tenderness
 - What do we have when it does not function with these?
2. To have this fellowship requires we have (2):
Paul issues a call for the call to the unity of this fellowship:
 - same mind – common attitude, thinking, likeminded; agree with one other; mutual agreement
 - same love – common desire or will; show a mutual love, demonstrate your love for one another
 - same spirit – mind, heart, and soul; “deep-spirited friendship”
 - same purpose – full accord; common interests and thinking
 - What would we have if not these?
3. Then, we must not do anything from (3):
Warning against selfishness:
 - selfish ambition – do not push your own way
 - rivalry – do not be driven to get your own advantage
 - vain conceit – do not believe that only your way is the right way, that it has to be your way. But only act in humility, humble spirit (4):
 - “put yourself aside long enough to help another”; don’t be interested only in yourself so you will care for the well-being of others
 - How do we do that?-- by thinking of the other person as better than yourself, more worthy than yourself; that your happiness does not depend on it being your way.
 - What will happen to a church that does not have a humble spirit, when its people are not of a humble spirit?
5. Example of how to do this is Jesus Christ himself (5-8):
What did he do -- so willingly gave up his own interests in Heaven
Why did he do it -- we need him to for our interests in the need for salvation and redemption
The heart of humility -- Think of yourself the way Christ thought of himself!
 - nature of God (6) – spirit, not touched by the creation
 - clinging to equality (6) – not something he should do for his own benefit when laying it aside was necessary to save His creation from the ruin and destruction

of sin and the rule and power of Satan; “he did not think so much of himself that he had to cling to the advantages of that status no matter what

- emptied of himself (7-8) – “he gave up everything, Even his place with God,” for the needed redemption of the lost creation; “he set aside his privileges of deity and took on the status of a servant” in the material form of a human.
 - obedient to death (8) – he did not “claim any special privileges” but lived kind of selfless obedient life that God requires and died the same because it was required; his selfless obedience caused the horrible death by crucifixion on the cross.
 - How far will we go?
6. God exalted Jesus to the highest place (9-11)
God rewarded Christ with the highest exaltation possible in Heaven – and so God will reward all of his servants on earth with their place in Heaven
- name above every name – Jesus, Lord (9-10)
Colossians 1:15-18
 - every knee to bow (10-11)

The Spirit of Service and Salvation

2:12-30

To live my life worthy of the gospel is to live this life of service. So, we must work out our salvation and our motivation is the service of Jesus Christ who gave his life to serve for our redemption! He served God to save us; he served that God would redeem us and adopt us to be his own family (Ephesians 1:5-11). He is our example of the spirit and the motive of our service to God. We humble ourselves to God and we will be humble toward one another.

1. Live the life that gives meaning to your salvation: (12-13)
- What we do?
“work out your salvation” – you have been living an obedient life now keep it up and continue to live this way; do not stop but increase your efforts.
 - How are to do it?
“with fear and trembling” – with respect and reverence for God and his will; “obey God with deep reverence shrinking back from all that would hinder you and displease God
 - Why do we want to do it?
“Because God is working in you” – he works in you giving you what you need to please him
 - How does God do this work?
 - a) He gives us access to Him to partake of his divine nature (2 Peter 1:3-4)
 - b) He gives us his truth to teach and train us to refuse sin (Titus 2:11-12)

- c) He gives us the strength of his Spirit to live our lives in holiness, righteousness, and godliness, to be his workmanship, no matter the struggle or conflict (Ephesians 3:14-19)
 - d) He give us his revelation to train us in the discipline of seeking and serving God (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
 - e) He gives us his Spirit to lead us to walk in the path the allows us to live out our faith in love (Galatians 5:1-7, 16-24)
 - f) He gives us the clothes of the new man (Colossians 3:1-17)
 - g) He gives us the goodness of life to help purify and direct our mind and spirit (Philippians 4:8-9)
 - full measure of devotion
 - Why do we need to work it out and God needs to work in us?
 - a) Ecclesiastes 7:29
 - b) Romans 7:17-19
 - c) Galatians 5:16-17
 - d) 1 John 2:15-17
2. Then you will be the children God our Father desires us to be: (14-17)
 - We will do everything readily and joyfully and not whining, bickering or second guessing God
 - We will be blameless and pure, uncorrupted and clearly identifiable as God's children
 - We will live as God's children without any fault
 - We live as the light this world desperately needs:
 - Our faith will move to sacrifice our very lives in our God, as Paul may be called to sacrifice his for the ministry and service of the gospel
 3. Example of Timothy (19-24)
 - Timothy is our example that one can be and is expected to be devoted to the church, as was Paul
 - How will we go for the church and her work?
 4. Example of Epaphroditus (25-30)
 - Epaphroditus is our example that one can be and is expected to be devoted to one another, as was Paul
 - How can we honor God's servants?
 - How far will we go for one another?

The Desire To Know Christ

3:1-21

1. Our joy is not in trusting ourselves (3:1-6).
 - Paul wants us to be prepared and ready for, protected from, the dogs that will steal away our joy and steal us away from Christ.
The nature and character, the heart and soul, the dogs, the enemies of the church:
 - Paul's example
 - Stay clear of any teacher and teaching that is not the work of what Jesus Christ has done -- and do not allow them to steal you away from Christ and rob you of your joy of serving Him.
2. Our joy is in the desire to know the Lord, our fellowship with Him, and to serve Him (3:7-11).
 - How did Paul feel about, what did he think of, those things that once were important to him
 - Why? They were replaced by a desire to know Christ and fellowship with Him. Paul devoted his life to serving God *by following Christ*.
 - All Paul wanted was Christ and to belong to him
 - What did Paul want to know of Christ?
3. Our joy is in the goal we gain when we know Christ. (3:12-21)
 - This knowing and gaining is a lifetime pursuit or journey
 - How?
 - The goal is the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus
 - Beware in this journey
 - Paul describes the unfaithful disciples, believers who are not true and loyal
 - But not us—we seek to gain Christ: (1 Corinthians 15)
We have a better life.

The Peace of Our Joy In Christ

4:1-23

Final Encouragements – Some things to do:

1. So, stand firm in the Lord that you do not lose what you seek to gain (1-3)
 - Brothers and Sisters in God's family – bathe in your love for the brethren and your joy from their faithfulness
 - Entreat the faithful servants to keep the peace through faithfulness – feed and encourage the peace that is found in the forbearance of the brethren; show them how to get along

2. The peace that is found in the joy of the Lord (4)
 - Rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I say rejoice!
 - Take delight in the Lord and Savior; take delight in being his humble servant because you take delight in him
 - Be filled with gladness and delight over the Lord and your relationship with him -- we live in the midst of a world in turmoil and we live by a doctrine that is exacting; yet, we live from a love and faith and hope that transcends this material existence and, so, we rejoice.
3. The peace that is found in gentleness and kindness (5)
 - Let your gentle spirit be known for the Lord is near
 - by the spirit of a good disposition toward others, especially the brethren; kindness not retaliation
 - There is peace in the kind and gentle spirit we give to others and receive from others
 - There is peace in your soul when you when you possess a forgiving spirit because you believe, you possess a genuine trust, that our Lord and Savior has redeemed you from condemnation that faces the unbelieving and wicked world and that he will vindicate you and make things right in his time and manner.
 - So, you endure the world with a gentle spirit not a weak spirit; a spirit that fights for the salvation of the lost while it does not cower at their unbelief and wickedness (Romans 12:18-21)
 - Is Paul saying that a motive for living by this kind and gentle spirit is that the the Lord is soon coming to resurrect his followers and take them home and their journey will be complete? (1 Corinthians 15:50-58)
4. The peace that is found in prayer (6-7)
 - Do not be anxious but in all things make your requests known to God
 - Do not be overly concerned, does not mean “unconcerned” – not fearful or fretful
 - But in every arena of your life and every matter in each arena make your requests known to God
 - Then, when there is conflict, the peace of Christ will protect you from the fear that may come with that trouble, protect you from the urge to quit
 - We have this peace because we belong to Christ and we belong to Christ by him God redeemed us and adopted us to be his children; he will not abandon us!
 - Why will our human minds fail us?
5. Practice what brings you the peace of Christ (8-9)
 - Find your peace in being a right thinking person by meditating:
 - Find the peace of Christ in thinking about the good things that are given us by Christ that are good and worthy of praise (as we look at each of these, determine why they are good for us and worthy of our praise):
 - a) what is true – not deception, not false; it is in fact what it appears to be; it is truth
 - b) what is honorable – precious, valuable; the extent to which something or someone is worthy of attention, consideration, and thought
 - c) what is right – just
 - d) what is pure – excellency; not contaminated or polluted, not stained or

corrupted

e) what is beautiful – lovely; pleasing and agreeable

f) what is respected – commendable; that which is worth not paying attention to other things

- Fill your mind with these things and these things are found only in God and are given to us only by God
- The peace that Christ alone can give is found in these things because in this state of mind God will be with you; meditate on the goodness of God that is found in Christ that we have because we are in Christ.
- Too many live and are troubled because of what they do dwell on in their thoughts!

6. The peace that comes from trusting Christ (10-23)

- Found in his thanksgiving for the loving care and goodness of the brethren, even when they were unable to act on it; found in trusting Christ in the love of the brethren
- Found in trusting the care of Christ no matter what is your life's situation or circumstance
- Found in trusting the strength Christ gives you in whatever you must do