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PHILIPPIANS

THE BOOK OF
PHILIPPIANS

Greeting

1 Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus,

To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons:

2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thanksgiving and Prayer

3 I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, **4** always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, **5** because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. **6** And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. **7** It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. **8** For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. **9** And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, **10** so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, **11** filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

The Advance of the Gospel

12 I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, **13** so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. **14** And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

15 Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will. **16** The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. **17** The former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment.

18 What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice.

To Live Is Christ

Yes, and I will rejoice, **19** for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, **20** as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. **21** For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. **22** If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. **23** I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. **24** But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. **25** Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith, **26** so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again.

27 Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, **28** and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God. **29** For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, **30** engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

Christ's Example of Humility

2 So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, **2** complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. **3** Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. **4** Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. **5** Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, **6** who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, **7** but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. **8** And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death

on a cross. **9** Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, **10** so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, **11** and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Lights in the World

12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, **13** for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

14 Do all things without grumbling or disputing, **15** that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, **16** holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. **17** Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. **18** Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.

Timothy and Epaphroditus

19 I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you. **20** For I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. **21** For they all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. **22** But you know Timothy's proven worth, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel. **23** I hope therefore to send him just as soon as I see how it will go with me, **24** and I trust in the Lord that shortly I myself will come also.

25 I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need, **26** for he has been longing for you all and has been distressed because you heard that he was ill. **27** Indeed he was ill, near to death. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. **28** I am the more eager to send him, therefore, that you may rejoice at seeing him again, and that I may be less anxious. **29** So receive him in the Lord with all joy, and honor such men, **30** for he

nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me.

Righteousness Through Faith in Christ

3 Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you.

2 Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh. **3** For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh—

4 though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more:

5 circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; **6** as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

7 But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

8 Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order 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 comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— **10** that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, **11** that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Straining Toward the Goal

12 Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.

13 Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead,

14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. **15** Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. **16** Only let us hold true to what we have attained.

17 Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. **18** For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the

cross of Christ. **19** Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. **20** But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, **21** who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

4 Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.

Exhortation, Encouragement, and Prayer

2 I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. **3** Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. **5** Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; **6** do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. **7** And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. **9** What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

God's Provision

10 I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. **11** Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. **12** I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. **13** I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

14 Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble. **15** And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and

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receiving, except you only. **16** Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again. **17** Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit. **18** I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. **19** And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. **20** To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Final Greetings

21 Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me greet you. **22** All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household. **23** The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

PARTNERS IN THE GOSPEL FOR LIFE*Partners in the Gospel***INTRODUCTION**

The book of Philippians was written by the apostle Paul to a group of very special friends in the city of Philippi. Read through Acts 16:11-40 so that you can understand the background to this church. They were facing a number of challenges. First, there was division in the church. Much of the letter is concerned about living for others rather than self. Paul even mentions two people by name who are at odds with one another. Second, the church was facing opposition because of their faith. Third, a group of leaders were promoting some kind of legalistic righteousness in the church—they were looking to their own efforts and religious achievements to commend themselves to God. Paul addresses these and other concerns in a number of different ways.

The theme of the letter can be summed up in Ch 1.20-24. Read it before you get underway with the rest of the study.

INVESTIGATE

Read Philippians 1:1-8

1. What do we learn about the relationship between Paul and the Philippian Christians? How did he feel about them? vv 3-4, 7-8

2. What are Paul and the Philippians partners in - what do they have in common? v 5 and also Ch 4:10-19

3. Partnership is mentioned in verse 5. What does this section and ch 4 teach us about why Paul wrote this letter? v 3-6

THINK IT THROUGH

1. What are the specific ways in which we as a church/group/individual are partners because we are Christians together?
2. What are some of the ways in which we can be partners together as a church/group etc in the Gospel?
3. Does our fellowship sometimes seem shallow? If so, why? If not, what keeps it from being shallow?
4. From what we have seen of the fellowship/partnership between Paul and the Philippians, what are some ways in which we can express and deepen our fellowship with:
Our Friends

People from the Church

People Serving Jesus in Other Parts of the World

4. Who is the focus of the prayer?

5. What is Paul's ultimate desire in this prayer? v 11

6. What will bring glory to God?

THINK IT THROUGH

1. What is the result of having love but no knowledge?

2. What is the result of having knowledge but not love?

3. Why do love, knowledge, and depth of insight go together?

4. List some of the things you pray for from day to day. How do they compare with this prayer?

PARTNERS IN THE GOSPEL FOR LIFE **3**

Finding Freedom

DISCUSS

What sorts of things have caused frustration for you this week?

How do we think we will escape the frustrations we face from day to day and find freedom?

INVESTIGATE

Read Philippians 1:12-30.

1. List everything that we learn in this passage about Paul's circumstances.
2. How does Paul react to His circumstances? vv 18-19
3. In what ways have Paul's circumstances served to advance the Gospel? vv 12-18
4. What does this tell us about Paul's aims and goals?

5. How does Paul summarise the aim of his life? Vs 21-23

6. Can anyone stop Paul from achieving his aims in life?

What if he is thrown into prison? Vs 12-18

What if he dies? Vs 21-23

What if he is freed from jail? Vs 24-26

7. Paul had a number of reasons to feel frustrated by life. How does he keep a positive attitude in the midst of all his stresses?

8. Most of us think freedom in life means being above the troubles and frustrations of this life. In the light of this passage, what is Paul's idea of what it means to be free in life

THINK IT THROUGH

1. Think back to some of the frustrations you listed earlier on in the study. Why do you feel trapped and frustrated by these things?
2. How could adopting Paul's goals and priorities change the way you generally respond to life?
3. Discuss some specific circumstances you have faced or will face and then talk about how Gospel priorities will change the way you have responded or will respond to these circumstances.
4. What is a key characteristic of living a life worthy of the Gospel?
vv 27-30
5. How does this change the way you see relationships with other Christians? *Read John 17:20-23.*
6. As you close tonight's study, think about your own priorities and concerns. Ask yourself where you need to change in your thoughts, attitudes, and actions. Pray for God's grace and help to be different and therefore a credit to God and His Gospel.

PARTNERS IN THE GOSPEL FOR LIFE

4

Jesus on Unity

DISCUSS

What causes people and communities to be torn apart?

INVESTIGATE

Read Philippians 1:27-2:11.

1. Note all the places where "unity" (or similar words/phrases) is mentioned in this passage. Explain what these words/phrases mean in your own words.
2. What sort of unity is Paul talking about? With whom are we to be united? By what are we to be united? *1:27; 2:1-11*
3. What makes this unity so difficult?
4. How has opposition and suffering affected this church in Philippi? *1:28; 2:3-4,14*
5. How does Paul want them to understand persecution? *1:28-30*

6. What does Paul do to motivate the Philippians to live out the unity they have in Christ? 2:1,5-11

7. What are the results of being united? 1:27-28; 2:2-4,12-18. List all the different things he mentions in the passages listed above.

Read Philippians 2:5-11

1. Paul ultimately encourages us to be like Jesus in the way he thinks of others before himself. Jesus did not give his life for us because we are better than Him. The passage clearly says He is God. What motivated Jesus to die on a cross?

2. What will it mean for us to have the same attitude as that of Jesus Christ?

Looking out for the interests of others involves Jesus being interested in the well-being of all people. As Paul says in *1 Timothy 2:1-7*: "...God wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth". Ultimately God has a worldwide agenda and has a desire to see all men come to know His Son as Lord and Saviour. We know that many will not trust Jesus and so they will be separated from God forever. But our responsibility is to be like Jesus. The church is not just for a small clique of people who want to be separated from the world. Ultimately, we are to put God's

PARTNERS IN THE GOSPEL FOR LIFE*Meeting the Challenge***DISCUSS**

Read through the following passages and talk about what it means to live a life worthy of the Gospel.

Philippians 1:27-2:2; 2:3-11; 2:14-16

INVESTIGATE

Read Philippians 2:19-30.

1. In this passage Paul tells us about Timothy and Epaphroditus. In what ways are they like Christ?

Read Philippians 2:12-13.

1. What am I instructed to do?
2. What does God do?
3. In verse 12, "work out" implies a continuous, sustained, strenuous effort to carry through with our Christian lives to the end. It doesn't refer to working for our salvation - we know that comes to us as a gift through Christ.
This "working out" means effort from ourselves and it implies an ongoing process.

What does this mean for our lives? How do we work out our salvation?

4. What does "fear and trembling" have to do with this?
5. Where is God at work in our lives - according to these verses?
6. Why do we need God to be at work in this way?
7.

How will we know that God is at work in our lives? Will we necessarily feel him at work in our lives?
8. Why is it worth putting effort into "working out our salvation" and changing?

THINK IT THROUGH

There are a number of different ways in which people view the Christian life. Many of these views are dangerous and can lead to all sorts of problems in our lives.

1. One view sees the process of change in the Christian life as an instantaneous business. It takes a crisis experience, a full surrender, a letting go and leaving it to God etc before we can be different. How do these verses help us to see that there are no instant fixes?
2. Another view of the Christian life is that we just have to think positively and then we can become what we want to be. We have what it takes inside of us to change and be different. How do these verses help us to see through this view of life?
3. How do we show that we believe God needs to "make us willing and able" to change?
4. What does this process of change involve practically for us?
5. Think of different things that you struggle with in life. How can you apply the things you have learned to this particular area of your life?

PARTNERS IN THE GOSPEL FOR LIFE

6

True Confidence

DISCUSS

1. What would you include on a resume for a job application?

2. What would you include in a resume when applying for membership in a church?

INVESTIGATE

Read Philippians 3:1-11.

1. Make a list of all the credentials Paul includes here in vv 5-6?

2. Which of these credentials were his own achievements and which were given to him?

3. What part did these credentials play in his life? How important were they to him? v 7

4. How does Paul think about these credentials now? v 7

2. How should we think about our achievements and credentials?

3. Why is Paul so harsh with the "dogs" he mentions in vs 2?

4. What role does obedience to God play in salvation?

5. What are some of the achievements/credentials people look to as a means to be saved?

6. How do we as Christians get tempted to put confidence in the flesh?

7. What are some of the symptoms of trying to save ourselves by our own efforts?

8. What can we do to prevent ourselves from "putting confidence in the flesh'?

PARTNERS IN THE GOSPEL FOR LIFE **7**

Going for Glory

DISCUSS

What are some of the goals people have for their lives?

INVESTIGATE

Read Philippians 3:10-4:1.

1. Paul compares the Christian life to a race. Where did this race start and what is the end Paul has in mind? (See also 3:7-9)
2. According to the passage, in what ways is the Christian life like a race? vv 12-14
3. Why is Paul's view of the Christian life relevant for us? v 15
4. What is the goal of the Christian life? What are we meant to be running towards? vv 11-14
5. What does Paul say about the goal? vv 12-14

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6. What is the prize that Paul talks about here? Think back to some of the things Paul has mentioned throughout this letter so far, e.g. 1:6,9-11,20-23; 3:10-14, 20-21

7. What role did this prize play in Paul's life? 1:20-23; 3:12-14

8. In what way does Paul run this race? How does he describe his attitude as he runs? Vs 12-14,20

9. How do you think Paul dealt with his past sins and regrets? How could he forget when he had sinned against God and had even been involved in the murder of a number of Christians? Look back to 3:7-9

Read Philippians 3:10.

10. Why do you think Paul wants to know the "fellowship of sharing in his (Christ's) sufferings"? Vs 10

Standing Firm

DISCUSS

What has unsettled you or threatened your commitment to Christ?

INVESTIGATE

Read Philippians 4:1.

1. How does what Paul has said in Ch 3 help us "to stand firm in the Lord"?

Read Philippians 4:2-20.

2. What may have threatened the ability of the Philippians to stand firm? vv 2-19

3. What effect does the tension between the two ladies (mentioned in ch 4) have on them and the church?

4. What does Paul do about the problem? How does this help us to think about solving conflict in the church? vv 2-9

5. What effect does anxiety have on each of us and how do we cope with it?

6. How does Paul recommend we deal with anxiety? vv 4-7

7. Verse 5 tells us the "Lord is at hand/near". What difference does that make in our anxiety?

8. In vv 10-19 Paul discusses contentment. What does he mean by contentment?

9. Why does Paul have to learn to be content even when he has plenty?

10. What *are* the things we believe will make us content and happy with life, and what are the things that tend to make us restless and dissatisfied?

11. Think through the book of Philippians and try and work out how Paul learned to be content.

THINK IT THROUGH

1. How is contentment different to the "Don't worry, be happy" attitude?
2. Why do we battle to pray when we are anxious?
3. Can Christians really expect to be content before they get to heaven?

* * * * *

What are the main things you have learned from this study and from the book of Philippians as a whole?