PHILIPPIANS

Philippians
Key Verse:

INTRODUCTION TO PHILIPPIANS

Philippi was a Roman colony and a leading city in Macedonia. A main highway to Rome passed through the center of town. There were few Jews there, and no synagogue. Acts 16:11-40 describes how Paul pioneered the church in Philippi. He preached to some women by the riverside, and Lydia was converted. This event marked the entrance of the gospel into Europe. It changed the course of world history. The Philippian Christians were active in their support of Paul, and this letter is a missionary letter, thanking them for their support, and reporting on his work. At the time of writing, Paul was under house arrest in Rome. Even though he writes from prison, he is full of joy and thanksgiving. This letter has been called the "Epistle of Joy." Let's learn Paul's secret of joy in all circumstances.

Outline of the Contents

1:1-11 -- Greetings, thanksgiving, and prayer

1:12-30 -- Paul's chains advance the gospel

2:1-18 -- Have the same attitude as Jesus

2:19-30 -- Timothy and Epaphroditus

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4:2-9 -- Exhortation to rejoice and pray

4:10-23 -- Thanksgiving for gifts and final greetings

THANKSGIVING AND PRAYER

Philippians 1:1-11

Key Verse: 1:6

1. Grace and peace (1-2)

Paul describes himself and Timothy as servants of Jesus Christ. God's blessing of grace and peace is not just a formal word. Life and forgiveness and mission are God's gifts of grace; peace is his best blessing.

2. God will finish what he started (3-8)

The believers in Philippi are his partners in the gospel. They were the first European believers, and they continue to be his most faithful supporters in prayer and in material things. Whenever Paul remembers them, he is full of joy and gratitude. He

s confident that God will finish the good work he started in each of their lives. Even though he is in a Roman prison, he is full of joy and thanksgiving.

3. Prayer topics (9-11)

Paul prays that love may abound in knowledge and insight. Real love is not a selfish emotion. Love seeks the highest and best good of the loved one. Real love keeps us pure and blameless, and produces the fruits of righteousness. This makes our lives glorify God.

Prayer: Lord, for the sake of your name, finish the good work you have started.

One Word: God will finish what he started

BECAUSE OF MY CHAINS

Philippians 1:12-18a

Key Verse: 1:13

1. The gospel is advanced (12-14)

Paul's great desire to preach the gospel in Rome had been fulfilled--but in a strange way. He was sent to Rome in chains, as a prisoner, to stand trial before Caesar. But this did not daunt him. He boldly preached Jesus to his Roman guards and to others in the palace. They realized that he was in chains for Christ. They could see Christ's love shining from his life. Many came to know Christ. More than this, most of the fearful and hesitant brothers became bold. They were encouraged by Paul's courage and joy.

2. In every way Christ is preached (15-18a)

Paul's imprisonment led many people to talk about Jesus. Some preached Christ for the wrong motives; some for the right motives. Paul didn't argue or try to analyze each person's motives. He rejoiced that Christ was preached, for he was not promoting himself but Jesus. Paul rejoiced to see God turn adversity into fruitful victory.

Prayer: Lord, give me courage to use even adverse circumstances to speak for Jesus.

One Word: Rejoice when Christ is preached

FOR ME TO LIVE IS CHRIST

Philippians 1:18b-26

Key Verse: 1:21

1. Facing the future with courage (18b-20)

Paul's one clear life purpose was to exalt Jesus Christ. He rejoiced that many believers all over the world were praying for

him, and so he was confident of his release--one way or another. He would either be released by death to go to heaven, or he would be released alive to continue preaching the gospel. He only asked for sufficient courage to glorify Jesus in life or in death.

2. To die is gain (21-26)

Paul was ready to live and he was ready to die. He did not fear death, because death was graduation into heaven to be with Jesus forever. He said, "I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far." But he still had work to do for Jesus, so he was confident that he would not die yet. He believed that he would again be with his beloved brothers in Philippi.

Prayer: Lord, take away all fear of death and help me to live for Jesus. Help me to exalt Christ by my life and by my death.

One Word: To live is Christ; to die is gain

THE PRIVILEGE OF SUFFERING FOR CHRIST

Philippians 1:27-30

Key Verse: 1:29

1. In a manner worthy of the gospel (27-28)

God doesn't promise anyone a trouble-free life. Anything can happen. But no matter what happens, we must conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel. Paul encourages us to contend as one man for the faith of the gospel. When opposition arises, we must not be frightened in any way. Fear makes people compromise or quarrel among themselves. We must stand firm and stand together. When we do, it is a sign to unbelievers that they will be destroyed and we will be saved--and that by God.

2. It has been granted to you to suffer (29-30)

Everyone experiences some suffering and hardship at sometime in life. God grants believers the privilege of suffering for Jesus. Pointless suffering in the world makes us sorrowful and fatalistic; suffering for Jesus is suffering with Jesus. This enables us to know and love Jesus more, to grow in his image and to glorify God. Let us give our sufferings to Jesus and struggle in prayer to overcome our sufferings by faith.

Prayer: Lord, help me to conduct myself in a manner worthy of the gospel; teach me to rejoice in suffering for Jesus.

One Word: In a manner worthy of the gospel

CONSIDER OTHERS BETTER THAN YOURSELF

Philippians 2:1-4 (Thur.) March 5

Key Verse: 2:3

1. United with Christ (1-2)

A Christian is one who is united with Christ in his death and in his resurrection. This mystical union is the work of the Holy Spirit. We find personal joy and fulfillment through our relationship with Christ. When we have fellowship with the Spirit and are comforted by Jesus' love, we are set free from seeking love from people. Instead, we have love to give to others. If we love Jesus, we can have unity with other believers. We can overcome small differences and share one purpose--to obey Jesus' world mission command.

2. Be united with one another (3-4)

If Jesus is in our hearts, we must love and respect others. There is no room for jealousy in a heart where Jesus lives. Human comparisons make one either feel inferior or become conceited. Our motive for action must not be selfish ambition, but love for Jesus and a desire to please him. We should see ourselves and others with Jesus' eyes. And we must not be selfish or indifferent to others' needs.

Prayer: Lord, I am a debtor to your love. Help me to love and respect others.

One Word: Love others with Jesus' love

HAVE THE ATTITUDE OF CHRIST

Philippians 2:5-11 (Fri.) March 6

Key Verse: 2:5

1. He humbled himself (5-8)

We must have in us the mind of Jesus. He was humble. Even though he was in nature God, he did not flaunt his deity and power. He put on human flesh and came to dwell among us; he even took the nature of a servant. He lived a selfless life serving weak, ungrateful and sinsick people. He taught us what it means to obey God. He did not doubt God's love, even when he was hanging on the cross. He was obedient even to death.

2. God exalted him (9-11)

God exalted him to the highest place, for God exalts the humble and humbles the proud. Humble Jesus was born in a manger. He died for my sins. But now he reigns in glory. His name is above every name, and every knee in heaven and on earth and under the earth must bow to him, and every tongue confess that he is Lord.

Prayer: Lord, you who died to be my Savior now live to be my King. Come and rule my heart and life. Plant in me the humble mind of Jesus.

One Word: Have the attitude of Jesus

SHINE LIKE STARS

Philippians 2:12-18

Key Verse: 2:14,15

1. For it is God who works in you (12-13)

God works in and through us to accomplish his own good purpose--to mold us into the image of Christ, and through us to bring the gospel of Jesus to the world. We must cooperate with him. We do this when we have an awesome respect for God, and humbly obey his word. This is what it means to "continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling."

2. Shine like stars (14-18)

We live in a crooked and depraved generation, but this is not an excuse to be crooked and depraved. Rather, we must be blameless and pure children of God who shine like stars in the dark night. How can we do this? First, we must cooperate with God who is working in us, by doing everything without complaining or arguing. Second, we must hold out the word of life to all those around us. Paul rejoiced in the face of martyrdom because his sheep shone like stars. God would win the victory through them.

Prayer: Lord, continue to work in me until I can shine like a star.

One Word: Shine like stars

JESUS' BUSINESS, NOT MINE

Philippians 2:19-30

Key Verse: 2:20,21

1. Timothy looked out for Jesus' interests (19-24)

Timothy, a young man from Lystra, was picked up by Paul on his second missionary journey to be an intern shepherd. He traveled with Paul, and learned his love for Jesus and his shepherd heart for God's sheep. At a time when most people were selfish and were busy doing their own business, Timothy was concerned about Jesus' business. He was Paul's spiritual son. He served Paul sacrificially, and was a useful man to God.

2. Epaphroditus was a fellow soldier (25-30)

Epaphroditus was from Philippi. He had brought letters and gifts to Paul in prison, and, evidently, had become seriously ill in Rome. Paul regarded him as a fellow worker and fellow soldier. He was worthy of honor because he risked his life and almost died in the service of Christ.

Prayer: Lord, help me not to be selfish, but to look out for Jesus' interests rather than for my own. Help me to be a good soldier for Jesus.

One Word: Put Jesus' interests first

THE SURPASSING GREATNESS OF KNOWING CHRIST

Philippians 3:1-9

Key Verse: 3:8

1. No confidence in the flesh (1-6)

Paul had every reason to be proud of his human background and achievements (4-6), but these things did not bring him joy. He gloried in Jesus only. He calls those who taught that circumcision was necessary to salvation, "dogs." It was because they put confidence in the flesh--in religious ritual and in human achievement rather than in Jesus' saving work on the cross.

2. To gain Christ (7-9)

Knowing Christ Jesus surpasses everything else in greatness. It is worth losing everything to know Jesus. In order to obey Jesus' command to preach the gospel to the Gentile world, Paul became an outcast from his own people. He even went to prison. But he had no regrets. He had the most precious thing: He had Jesus, and a right relationship with God through him.

Prayer: Lord, I know that material possessions and human achievements are rubbish compared to the surpassing worth of knowing Christ. Renew my joy in him daily.

One Word: Rejoice in Christ alone

TO KNOW THE POWER OF HIS RESURRECTION

Philippians 3:10-16

Key Verse: 3:10

1. I want to know Christ (10-11)

Surely Paul knew Christ. But who can know the depths of Christ's love and power? We can know the power of Christ's resurrection when we share in the fellowship of his sufferings, and become like him in his death. Christ suffered because of the sins of the world. The sinful imaginations of the hearts of men grieved God in Genesis 6. The unresponsive and unrepentant people of Jerusalem made Jesus weep (Lk 19:41). Jesus died on the cross because of my sins. When I repent, lay my sins on his cross, and die to my sinful nature, I can die with Jesus and live with him (Ro 6:5). When I accept his mission for a lost world, I can share in his sufferings.

2. I press on toward the goal (12-16)

A mature Christian is a growing Christian. The race of life is not over until we cross the finish line of heaven. If we don't keep on growing, we slip backward.

Prayer: Lord, teach me to hate the sins that grieve you. Help me to die to myself daily and receive your grace of forgiveness so that I may know you better.

One Word: That I may know Christ

OUR CITIZENSHIP IS IN HEAVEN

Philippians 3:17-21

Key Verse: 3:20

1. Enemies of the cross (17-19)

Paul loved the cross of Jesus because through the cross he knew God's love and his grace of forgiveness. Paul set an example to follow. He warns us not to live as enemies of the cross. Self-indulgence is an enemy of the cross. To allow one's mind to be occupied with thoughts and plans of how to indulge one's appetites makes one an enemy of the cross. Paul says that the destiny of enemies of the cross is destruction.

2. Citizens of heaven (20-21)

Citizens of heaven are those who eagerly await a Savior from there--Jesus. If we set our minds on Jesus and put our hope in him, he will work in us by his almighty power to mold us into his image and prepare us for our heavenly home.

Prayer: Lord, come and rule my heart and thoughts. Help me not to think about food or clothes or cars or computers, or spend too much time in front of the TV. Help me to fix my thoughts on Jesus, and pray for his work and his people.

One Word: Live as a citizen of heaven

HAVE GOD'S PEACE

Philippians 4:1-9

Key Verse: 4:6,7

1. Agree with each other in the Lord (1-3)

Problems can be opportunities to grow in faith. Paul exhorts 2 sisters to agree in the Lord. He doesn't say why they disagreed or who was right. We must contend with the world in the cause of Christ, but we must agree in the Lord with one another.

2. Rejoice in the Lord and pray (4-7)

When difficult or frustrating problems arise, we must not be anxious or irritable. First, we must rejoice in the Lord; second, we must put the problem before God in prayer, with thanksgiving. Then God's peace will rule our hearts and minds.

3. Think about such things (8-9)

We become like what we think about. Christ must rule our thought world. He does not want us to think about garbage, but

ıbout what is true, noble, right and pure.

Prayer: Lord, forgive me for worrying instead of praying. Come and rule my thought world; clean out all of the garbage, and dwell within.

One Word: Think on these things

I CAN DO EVERYTHING THROUGH CHRIST

Philippians 4:10-23

Key Verse: 4:13

1. I have learned to be content (10-13)

Paul rejoiced because of the practical concern for him which the Christians in Philippi showed in sending Epaphroditus with some material aid. But he did not rejoice because of the personal material gain. He had learned the secret of contentment. What is that secret? It is Christ. Paul did not depend on material things, but on Christ. And he found that one who trusts Christ can do everything through him who gives abundant strength.

2. Real partners in the gospel (14-23)

Paul rejoiced to see the giving spirit of the believers in Philippi. Giving is the mark of a growing Christian. Jesus' people give to please Jesus. And God blesses and meets the needs of those who trust him and give sacrificially.

Prayer: Lord, help me not to be a selfish Christian, but a giving person who can share in Christ's work. Help me to believe that I can do everything through Christ who strengthens me.

One Word: I can do everything through him