

Let's Worship God

9th-14th September 2019
Philippians



PHILIPPIANS:
PRESS ON WITH JOY



Monday - Philippians 1:1-2: A Joyful Greeting

We are going to be studying Philippians using notes written by Rev. Philip Dunwoody. Receiving a letter probably doesn't seem very exciting for us today. But imagine you were one of the young British soldiers sent off to fight in the First World War in 1914. You have no WhatsApp or FaceTime or Skype - not even a landline telephone. Your only way of hearing from your loved ones would be by letter. Think how encouraging it would be to hear from them, huddled in your trench, while the war rages around you.

The people to whom Paul wrote this letter lived in the city of Philippi (in modern-day Greece). They weren't fighting a war with guns and knives, but they were in a spiritual warzone, surrounded by people who had entirely different beliefs from them. And yet Paul begins his letter with great joy. First, he describes himself and his young friend, Timothy: **servants** of Jesus Christ (verse 1). This word could also be "slaves". In Paul's world a slave's life was entirely directed by their master: he told them when to get up, what to wear, how to manage his house. The slave didn't make any decisions for themselves. Paul says he and Timothy are slaves of Jesus - but Paul was **delighted** about it, even though he was writing to the Philippians from prison.

Secondly, Paul describes the Philippians: **saints** (verse 2). Most people today think that hardly anyone is a saint. Paintings of "saints" usually show someone very old, holding a Bible, who looks far more important than us. But in the New Testament, this is a description of **all Christians**. It means we are **different**, set apart, holy. It's not that we're any better than other people by nature; it simply means that we belong to Jesus, and live in obedience to God's Word. The Philippians lived in a city that was proud of its identity. Philippi was like a mini version of the great city of Rome - everything from its architecture to its fashion designs. But Paul reminds his readers that they are saints: holy people, different from the Romans and everyone else; servants of the greatest Master of all. If you are a Christian, this is who you are as well: a slave, and a saint, of Jesus Christ.

Questions

1. What impact should it have on our daily Christian lives to know that we are slaves and saints of Jesus?

Prayer Points

1. Pray that we would have a "servant attitude" towards Jesus.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

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. Philippians 1:6

Praise: Psalm 116:8-11 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.



Tuesday - Philippians 1:3-11: Joyful Prayer

In most of Paul's letters he includes the things he has been praying for his friends in Philippi. How encouraging it is when we know someone is praying for us! Notice, first of all, Paul prayed **regularly** for **all** the Philippians (verses 3 & 4). He says he prays for "all" of them "always". In verses 7&8 he describes the affection he has for them, how he "yearns" for them all. As their founding pastor, Paul knew the Philippians by name and need - and he loved them deeply. Even when he was away from them, he kept praying for them. It's good for us to keep prayer lists or journals, and to remember to pray for those we love, whether friends, family or neighbours. Paul prayed with **thankfulness** for the Philippians (verse 3). He calls them his "partners in the gospel". The Philippians hadn't abandoned their belief in Jesus, even after Paul had had to leave them and even though they were a small group. We don't have to be preachers or missionaries to be "gospel partners"; we just have to be faithful and courageous in holding to the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection. Paul also prayed with **confidence** in Jesus' return (verse 6). He encouraged the Philippians that when Jesus returns, they will be rewarded for their faith. What an encouragement that is for us when we are ignored, mocked, or even persecuted - one day, Jesus will reward us for honouring him!

Finally, Paul prayed for the Philippians' **growth** as Christians. When a baby is born, his parents want to him grow bigger and stronger. Paul wanted the Philippians to grow spiritually, in their love (verse 9) - most likely love for each other and for Christ - knowledge and holiness (verses 10-11). Notice that Paul prays for both love and knowledge: Christians need compassion for each other, love for their Lord **and** an increasing knowledge of God's Word. Here is a model for all our prayers: regular, thankful, confident, praying that God would grow us and others in our Christian faith.

Questions

1. Which aspect of Paul's "model prayer" do you find hardest to practice?

Prayer Points

1. Pray for the help of the Holy Spirit to pray regularly, thankfully and confidently.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

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. Philippians 1:6

Praise: Psalm 9:1, 4-6 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.



Wednesday - Philippians 1:12-18: Joy in the Advance of the Gospel

By the end of the First World War, after three years of being stuck in the mud of the trenches, a remarkable new weapon was enabling the British Army and her allies to make advances on the battlefield. It was called the tank. With this new weapon, the Allies were able to **advance**. This military word means "to blaze a trail". In Philippians 1:12, Paul says that he has seen the "advance" of the gospel. He was writing these words while under house arrest in Rome, yet he is delighted to report that the gospel is spreading. How?

Firstly, through **unexpected opportunities**. The last few chapters of Acts give us the details (see Acts chapters 21-28), but Paul had arrived in the city of Rome as a prisoner. He probably wrote the letter of Philippians whilst chained to a soldier, who guarded him day and night. He wasn't free to go where he wanted or see the people he loved. But Paul hadn't huffed or complained. Instead, he says in verse 13 that all the soldiers who guarded him - and even some of the servants of Caesar - knew that he was a Christian. He spent his time telling whoever he met about Jesus! And so, the gospel advanced. We tend to avoid anything the least bit unpleasant. But when we do suffer, whether it's sickness, unemployment, loneliness, or even imprisonment, we can use it as an opportunity to be witnesses for Jesus.

Secondly, Paul says the gospel advanced through **bold believers** (verse 14). Other Christians in Rome became braver about sharing their faith when they saw Paul's example. In fact, he says some of these people share the gospel for rather self-ish reasons (verse 17). But Paul isn't worried about that. In verse 18, he says he **rejoices** in the advance of the gospel, however it happens. When we read the stories of Christian missionaries or preachers from the past, or of our brothers and sisters around the world today facing persecution, it should make us **bold, brave**, to play our part in the advance of the gospel.

Questions

1. What unexpected opportunities have you had to tell people about Jesus? What stops us from taking these opportunities?

Prayer Points

1. Pray that we will be ready to be witnesses in the unexpected opportunities God gives us.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

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. Philippians 1:6

Praise: Psalm 40:8-10 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.



Thursday - Philippians 1:19-26: A Life Worth Living

In this passage Paul tells us three important things about himself. Firstly, he says he is **eager** - eager to honour Christ each and every day (verse 20). This is far from easy - notice Paul says he **desires** to do this; he doesn't say that he always does it perfectly. To "honour" Christ is to live in obedience to him, a life of holiness (see verses 1&2). For the young person this could mean rejecting the interests of a potential husband or wife because that person is not a believer; it could mean refusing to lower standards of effort in the workplace despite what others may be doing; it means honouring the Lord's Day each week in a world that doesn't. Paul is eager to honour Christ each day - even while he spends time in prison.

In verses 21-23, Paul tells us that he has a **personal preference**: he wants to "depart and be with Christ". Paul would love nothing more than to go to heaven and see his Saviour face to face! What could be better! Paul isn't saying he just wants to escape all his problems, but he is saying that to be with Jesus would be **better** than anything else.

Are we excited for heaven? Are we looking forward to seeing Jesus face to face? One writer has said: "We should never think of heaven without thinking of Jesus Christ". Jesus is what makes heaven, **heaven**. To be with him will be better than anything we ever experience on earth.

Finally, Paul tells us that although his preference is to be with Jesus, he is **content** to be on earth (verse 24). Paul knows that, as long as he's alive, he can help the church - people like the Philippians. For this reason, he is content to wait a little longer to see Jesus.

As long as we are alive, we have an opportunity to serve Jesus and his church. Whether this is through preaching or cleaning toilets, organising events or praying in our homes, how might we use our lives to serve our King?

Questions

1. In what areas do you find it most difficult to "honour" Jesus?

Prayer Points

1. Ask for the help of the Holy Spirit to honour Jesus in daily life.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

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. Philippians 1:6

Praise: Psalm 84A:1-2, 8-10 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.



Friday - Philippians 1:27-30: Citizens of Heaven

Some of our English Bibles have translated verse 27: "Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ..." Another way of saying it is: "Only **behave as citizens** worthy of the gospel of Christ..." The people who lived in the city of Philippi were very proud to be able to say they were **Roman** citizens. The other towns and cities nearby were Greek: they spoke Greek and had Greek beliefs. Philippi was a Roman city in a Greek world. Whilst they had no problem with their Greek neighbours, the Philippians were proud to be Roman. But Paul is writing to the church in Philippi. He wants them to think of themselves not just as Roman citizens, but as citizens of **heaven**. He tells them about two traits that citizens of heaven should have.

Firstly, heavenly citizens **stand firm together** (verse 27). Soldiers on a battlefield are strongest when they stand **side by side**. Paul is warning the Philippians that they will not survive the temptations of Satan and the pressures of the world as individuals; they need one another. Christians today are no different. God has given us the church, where we encourage each other, pray for each other and support each other. This is one of the reasons we should commit ourselves to weekly worship and fellowship - so we can help one another to **stand firm**.

Secondly, heavenly citizens **suffer for their Saviour's sake** (verse 29). Paul tells us not to be frightened by those who oppose us (verse 28). We should not be at all surprised when people disagree with us or even hate us for our Christian faith (see John 15:18-25). In fact, Paul actually describes this kind of suffering as a **gift** from God - this is what the word "granted" means in verse 29. It is when we suffer for the sake of Christ that we appreciate a little more the tremendous sacrifice he made for us, through his far greater suffering on the cross. Whether we lose a friend, a reputation, or even a job, suffering for Christ draws us closer to our glorious, suffering Saviour.

Questions

1. Why is it so important that we not only stand firm in our faith, but stand firm **together** with other Christians?

Prayer Points

1. Pray for unity in your local church family.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

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. Philippians 1:6

Praise: Psalm 124 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.



Saturday - Philippians 2:1-4: Joyful Unity

It is very humbling to consider that one of the things that Jesus prayed for his church was that we would be one (see John 17:20). This is something that local congregations have to take very seriously. In these verses Paul describes the power for unity. He mentions both Jesus and the Holy Spirit in chapter 2:1. If we are alive in Christ by faith, then the Holy Spirit provides us with the power we need to stay united together: "encouragement", "comfort", "affection", "sympathy". Put simply, this is showing a greater concern for the needs of others than for ourselves.

This isn't something that human beings have by nature: we are born selfish sinners, with a "me first" attitude. Paul warns this against this attitude in verses 3-4. He makes clear that our selfish nature is one of the greatest threats to the unity of the church. To counter this threat, Paul uses a key New Testament word in verse 3, a word which we will think about much more next week - humility. Rather than do things with a "me first" attitude, Paul says that "in humility", we are to consider others "more significant" than ourselves.

Humility is the key to unity. Someone has described humility not as thinking less of yourself (i.e. a sort of false modesty, claiming you have no real gifts) but rather thinking of yourself less. Perhaps I like the thanks and praise I get for doing three or four jobs in the church, but Person X became a member a year or two ago, and they have the gifts to do one of these jobs. Humility prompts me to give it to them. Or Person Y was chosen as an elder or deacon instead of me. Humility prompts me to accept the decision of God's people, and serve the church in other ways, gladly and whole-heartedly.

Humility doesn't come naturally to us, but the Holy Spirit can give it to us - particularly if we often fill our minds and hearts with thoughts of Jesus' humble sacrifice on the cross, in our place, for our sins. More on that next week.

Questions

1. What are some of the things that could disrupt the unity of your church family?

Prayer Points

1. Pray for the preaching and hearing of God's Word tomorrow.
2. Use prayer points from your congregation.
3. Pray for family matters.

Memory Verse

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. Philippians 1:6

Praise: Psalm 133 - See www.rpglobalalliance.org for Psalm tune helps.

The goal of Let's Worship God is to encourage and help you in your worship of God each day.

**God tells us that
Ezra read from
the book of the Law
day after day
and that
the people of God
were filled with joy!**

Let's Worship God is produced for the RP Global Alliance
by the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Scotland.

If you have any queries please contact - admin@rpglobalalliance.org