

PHILIPPIANS

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit.
Rather, in humility value others above yourselves

Philippians

To begin the session on Philippians we will have a test to establish prerequisite knowledge. Answers below. You may check each answer before attempting the next question, if you wish. Let's see how we do.

TEST:

- 1) Where was Philippi located?
- 2) Who is the city of Philippi named after?
- 3) Who was Phillip?
- 4) What famous battle took there?
- 5) Does anyone remember, where in the Bible we read about Caesar Augustus?

ANSWERS: 1. Philippi was located in Macedonia (just north of Greece) about ten miles inland from the Aegean Sea.

2. Philip of Macedon; Macedonia is one of the northern most Greek provinces.

3. Alexander the Great's father; he laid the groundwork for the Greek Empire and when he took over Philippi he really encouraged Greek immigration to the Area.

4. The Battle of Philippi which was around 300 years after it was named Philippi; this was an important battle in the Roman civil war in which Caesar Augustus won.

5. The Christmas story, remember, "In those days Caesar Augustus issued a decree that the entire Roman world should be taxed... (Luke 2:1)."

Historical Introduction.

Now about this famous battle of Philippi that Augustus fought here less than 100 years before this letter to the Philippians was written: there may even still be one or two veterans around; it would be like us reflecting on WWI. It is still in our general consciousness and just like the world changed after the World Wars in our time, it changed significantly by the Apostle Paul's time as well.

Following the Battle in 31 B.C., in which Caesar Augustus defeated Antony, the status of Philippi was elevated. The change in status provided the citizens with numerous advantages, including autonomous government, immunity from tribute (taxes), and treatment as if they actually lived in Italy. Luke calls Philippi 'prote' ("first, chief") of the district of Macedonia (Acts 16:12) Philippi is an important, significant and wealthy city in the Roman Empire when Paul wrote this letter to the Christians here around AD55. He founded the first Christian Church in Philippi in AD50.

¹ Jack Finegan, IDB, K-Q, p. 786. Cited in Homer A. Kent, Jr. PHILIPPIANS *The Expositor's Bible Commentary* Pradis CD-ROM:Philippians/Introduction to Philippians/Background of Philippians, Book Version: 4.0.2

Philippians 1

I. Read Philippians 1:1-2

1. Who wrote this letter?

- a. Read 2 Corinthians 1:1, Colossians 1:1, 1 Thessalonians 1:1, 1 Timothy 1:1-2, Timothy 1:1-2. What do we know about the significance of each of these writers to the early Church?

2. To whom is this letter written?

- a. What is a 'saint'?

3. What are 'overseers' and 'deacons' (see 1 Timothy 3)?

III. Read Philippians 1:3-11

1. Why does Paul thank God as he remembers the Philippians?

- a. Do we do this and do we thank God specifically for others who are?

- b. Who is going to complete the good work in the saints (Christians) lives in Philippi?

2. Where is Paul (and under what conditions) as he writes this letter?

- a. What is Paul's prayer when he is in these conditions?

- b. Do we pray for the same types of things when we suffer in life now, like Paul suffered then? Why or Why not?

c. Should we pray for the same type of things? Why or why not?

d. From where do these things come? Do we have them in our lives? Why or why not?

IV. Read Philippians 1:12-30

Verses 12-14

1. What was the result of Paul being imprisoned?

a. Does that change his actual imprisonment in anyway?

2. Do we concentrate on spreading the gospel when we are going through difficult times? Should we?

a. Does Paul complain to his friends about his troubles? Should we?

b. What effect does Paul's sharing the gospel (good news of Jesus' death, resurrection, and impending return) have on his fellow saints ('brother's in the Lord')? Does it have that effect on us? Why or why not?

c. Should it? Why or why not?

Verses 15-18

3. Why do people tell others about Jesus here?

a. Does it matter to Paul? Why or why not?

4. What is Paul's response to people trying to increase his suffering?

Verses 18-26

5. Why is Paul continuing to rejoice?

6. What does Paul mean when he writes - Verse 21 - "for to live is Christ and to die is gain"?

a. Does he want to die to escape his circumstances? What then is the benefit of dying?

b. Does he want to live in order to indulge in his circumstances? What is the benefit of living?

c. Do we feel this way today? Why or why not?

Verses 27-29

7. What does Paul, who is imprisoned for sharing his faith, desire for those who are sharing the faith and are not (yet) imprisoned?

a. Does he want them to go into hiding?

b. Does he want them to stop sharing the gospel so as to save themselves from the suffering that he is experiencing?

c. What should we do?

Philippians 2

I. Read Philippians 2:1-11

1. How should we and the Saints (Christians) in Philippi act towards and think about each other?
2. Why should we do this? How will/would Paul feel about this?

Verses 5-11

This pericope (Verses 6-11) commonly thought of as a hymn, has been called “one of the best known and most influential passages in the Pauline corpus.”²

3. In Philippians 2:6, what does it mean to be 'thē̄visible form of God' (*Morphē*; NIV: 'nature of God')? See Colossians 1:15.

4. What does Paul mean when he asks us to be of the same mind of Jesus Christ?
5. What happened as Christ humbled himself? (Not exploiting equality with God, v. 6)
6. What does Paul mean by the comments in verses 9-11? (See also Isaiah 45:23, Matthew 28:18; Acts 2:36; Romans 1:3-4, 10:9; 1 Corinthians 12:3)

II. Read Philippians 2:12-18

1. What does it mean to “work out our salvation with fear and trembling”?
 - a. How can we do this?

² Mona D. Hooker, *The Letter to the Philippians* NIB XI. 501

- b. Why should we do this?
- 2. How can we be made blameless? Or how do we appear and/or act when we are blameless?
- 3. What makes Paul happy here?
 - a. What should be our response to this? Why?

III. Read Philippians 2:19-3:1a

- 1. What do we know about Timothy?
 - a. Why does Paul wish to send him?
- 2. Who is Epaphroditus?
 - a. Why will Paul send him?
 - b. How should the Saints (Christians) in Philippi greet him? Why?
 - c. How does this apply to us here today?

Philippians 3

I. Read 3:1-8

Verses 1-4

1. What is traditional Abrahamic circumcision (Genesis 17:1-27, Exodus 12:43-48, Leviticus 12:3; see also Deuteronomy 10:16, 30:6, Jeremiah 4:4)?

2. Mutilators of the flesh (See Acts 15:1-21, Romans 4:9-12; see also Deuteronomy 10:16, 30:6, Jeremiah 4:4, Colossians 2:11 & 3:11, Romans 3:30, Galatians 5:2-3):
 - a. What does it mean to mutilate the flesh?

 - b. Who are the 'mutilators of the flesh'?

 - c. Why does Paul call them 'dogs'?

Verses 5-6

3. What does it mean here to 'have confidence in the flesh' (See Galatians 5:1-15)?

4. Why has Paul reason to be confident in the flesh?
 - a. Who are the people of Israel (See Genesis 32:22-32, 46:8-27)?

 - b. What is a Benjaminite (See Genesis 35:16-21; 1 Samuel 9:1-2, 27-10:2; Joshua 18:11-18)?

 - c. What is a Pharisee (See Matthew 23:1-36; Acts 15:1-5, Acts 23:6-10)?

 - d. What is this 'Law' to which Paul refers (See Deuteronomy 10:1-22)?

5. Is Paul confident in the flesh? Should he be? Why (not)?

Verses 7-11

6. What gains did Paul have?

- a. Why does he now count these gains as losses?
- b. What does it mean to count everything as loss, as garbage (rubbish)?
- c. Why does Paul count everything as garbage?
- d. Do we count everything as garbage? Should we?
- e. Why and how has Paul suffered loss?

7. What is righteousness?

- a. From where does Paul's and every Saint's (Christian's) righteousness come?
- b. Who and what does Paul want to know?
- c. What does it mean to know this?
- d. How can he know this?
- e. Why does he want to know this?

II. Read 3:10-4:1

Verses 10 – 16

1. What is Paul's goal?
 - a. Why is this his goal?
 - b. Has he obtained it?
 - c. How long will he try to reach it before moving on to something else?
 - d. What should be our response to Paul's writing about this goal?
2. What should mature people do?
 - a. How do we do this (See Philippians 2:1-11)? Are we mature?

Verses 17 – 4:1

3. What is it to which Paul is referring that we have attained that we should hold onto?
4. Who does Paul ask us to imitate? In what regard?
5. What does it mean to be an enemy of the cross?
 - a. Why does cry for the enemies of the cross?
 - b. How are Saints (Christians) different from the enemies of the cross? Are we?

6. Who are we expecting to return from heaven?
 - a. What does it mean to be a 'citizen of heaven'?
 - b. What will happen when he returns from heaven?
 - c. How?
 - d. What will happen to all things when he returns from heaven?

7. What should we be doing in preparation for Jesus' return?

Philippians 4

I. Philippians 4:1-9

Verses 1-7

1. What does it mean that one's name is written in the book of life?

2. What should our response be when life becomes difficult or troublesome (Verses 4-7)

3. When we are especially tempted to worry, what should we do instead?
 - a. Have you? What was the result?

 - b. What should we think about?
 - i. Should we get worked up about political parties and platforms?

 - ii. Should we get worked up about terrorism and plagues?

 - iii. Should we carry the weight of the world on our shoulders? Why (not)?

Verses 8-9

4. What does Paul mean when he asks us only to think about the things mentioned in verses 8-9?
 - a. Are we supposed to ignore injustice?

 - b. What are we supposed to do?

II. Read Verses 10-20

Verses 10-14

1. What does it mean to rejoice in the Lord?
2. Why does Paul rejoice in the Lord?
3. How did the Philippians share in Paul's distress? How can we share in each other's distress?
4. How can one survive in times of plenty and how can one survive in times of need? (vs.12-13)

Verses 15-20

5. What was the relationship between the church at Philippi and the apostle Paul?
6. How does Paul feel about the Philippian church people?
7. What does he have faith that God will do for the Philippian church people?

- a. What does that mean?

III. Read Verses 21-23

1. What does it mean to greet every saint in Christ Jesus?
2. What does it mean for the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ to be with your spirit?

Further Reading

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