

PREVIEW OF PHILIPPIANS

Philippi is sometimes called “the birthplace of European Christianity” because the first converts of any organized missionary work in Europe were gained there. Lydia and her household and the town’s jailer and his household were among the first in Philippi to respond to the Gospel. The apostle Paul was on his second missionary journey.

By the time Paul wrote the Epistle to the Philippians, the congregation was about ten years old. The church had an organized structure, including bishops and deacons. Evidently the church was prospering, because Paul gave little correction in this epistle but many words of thanksgiving and commendation, and directives for joyful Christian victory. Paul wrote to the Philippians while he was in prison. This fact enhances the epistle’s meaning. None of his other letters is more cheerful and inspiring; his joy is obvious in spite of the mistreatment he suffered. From this we gather that his theme, although unstated, is Christ’s sufficiency for a joyful Christian experience. In his personal testimony, which seems to permeate the whole epistle,

Paul indicated how we too may experience the joy of the Lord. If the Book of Philippians has a key verse, it may well be “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (1 :21). This verse explains better than any other the reason for Paul’s joy.

Present day chapter divisions separate the different sections of Philippians. Chapter 1 explains the quality of faith necessary to experience joy in the midst of difficulty. Chapter 2 elaborates on the mind of Christ, especially His deep humility, and holds it forth as the pattern for us. Chapter 3 gives Warning and instructions for success in reaching the Christian’s goal. Chapter 4 outlines the conditions for spiritual rest and peace.

If we follow all the instructions in the Book of Philippians, we will realize a life of joyful triumph over all kinds of distress.

Lesson 8 February 21, 2021

Magnifying Christ

Lesson Scope: [Philippians 1](#)

References in brackets relate to Lesson Scope unless noted otherwise

Lesson Focus:

Philippi was a significant city in north-eastern Macedonia, in what is now Greece. Paul and Silas established the church in Philippi when they visited the city on their second missionary journey (Acts 16). This is the first record of taking the Gospel to Europe. Paul wrote this letter to the church at Philippi while he was in prison at Rome. He wrote to tell them of his care for them, to tell them of his affairs, and to encourage them to faithfulness regardless of circumstances. The cheerful tone of this letter is remarkable, considering his circumstances. Only the Christian can experience true meaning and purpose in life. Christ's work in the heart gives the perspective and power needed to glorify God in every circumstance. While our circumstances today are quite different from Paul's, this passage is still pertinent to us. We live in a time when self-promotion is as rampant as ever, even among religious people. True liberation is found when we lay egos aside and serve the Lord in sincerity, trusting that "all things work together for good to them that love God."

Lesson Aim: To portray characteristics of a life that magnifies Christ.

Theme Verse: [1 Corinthians 6:20](#). For ye are bought with a price: therefore, glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's.

Lesson Text:

"Filled with the Fruits of Righteousness"

[Ephesians 1:1-11](#) ^(KJV) Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus: ² Grace *be* to you, and peace, from God our Father, and *from* the Lord Jesus Christ. ³ Blessed *be* the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly *places* in Christ:

⁴ According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the

world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: ⁵ Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, ⁶ To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. ⁷ In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace; ⁸ Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence; ⁹ Having made known unto us the mystery of his will, according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself: ¹⁰ That in the dispensation of the fulness of times he might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; *even* in him: ¹¹ In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being pre-destinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the counsel of his own will:

“Set for the Defence of the Gospel”

[Philippians 1:12-26](#) ^(KJV) But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things *which happened* unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; ¹³ So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other *places*; ¹⁴ And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much bolder to speak the word without fear. ¹⁵ Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will: ¹⁶ The one preaches Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds: ¹⁷ But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel. ¹⁸ What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice. ¹⁹ For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, ²⁰ According to my earnest expectation and *my* hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but *that* with all boldness, as always, *so* now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether *it be* by life, or by death. ²¹ For to me to live *is* Christ, and to die *is* gain. ²² But if I live in the flesh, this *is* the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not. ²³ For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better: ²⁴ Nevertheless to abide in the flesh *is* more needful for you. ²⁵ And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of

faith; ²⁶ That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again.

“Striving Together for the Faith”

Philippians 1:27-30 ^(KJV) Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; ²⁸ And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God. ²⁹ For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; ³⁰ Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear *to be* in me.

Questions for Study

“Filled with the Fruits of Righteousness”

1. What was Paul’s prayer for the church?
2. What are some marks of fervent Christian love?
3. What does it mean to “approve things that are excellent”?

“Set for the Defence of the Gospel”

4. What was Paul’s situation? How did he view it?
5. How can we defend the Gospel?
6. What are the rewards for serving Christ?

Striving Together for the Faith”

7. Explain the two viewpoints in verse 28.

“Striving Together for the Faith”

8. What unifies the believers?

Analysing the Passage:

To “approve things that are excellent” (1:10) is to test or distinguish whether a thing is good or evil and then to deliberately choose to make the good a part of our lives. “The things which happened unto me” (1:12) refers to Paul’s imprisonment. The unexpected result of Paul’s imprisonment (1:14-18) was that others were preaching the Gospel boldly. Some preached out of pure motives; and others, in a spirit of envy and competition. Rather than be discouraged that others were preaching out of insincerity; Paul was thankful that the Gospel was being spread. The word defence in verse 17 means “answer” or “a speech in defence.” The

Gospel is in no danger of being overthrown, but God calls us to give logical explanations and practical teaching to convince others also. The word conversation (1:27) means “manner of life.”

Principles and Applications

“Filled with the Fruits of Righteousness”

1. Salvation through Christ motivates the Christian to serve his fellow men (1:1). As recipients of the love of God, we count it our highest calling to be “the servants” of Jesus Christ. Christians are the hands and feet of Jesus in this world, doing good to those around them. “Freely ye have received, freely give” (Matthew 10:8).

2. Appreciation for our brethren is enhanced as we intercede on their behalf (1:3-6). The brotherhood should be an inspiration to us in our Christian life. Our salvation and reconciliation with God are experiences shared with fellow believers. We both show and cultivate our love for the brethren when we intercede for them in prayer.

3. A life that magnifies Christ will continually evaluate practices and influences that come along (1:9-10). Jesus is our perfect example; we magnify Him by patterning our lives after His. Our lives are made up of a succession of choices. We do well to consider our motives for doing the things we do. In order to magnify Christ, we must be emptied of pride and carnality.

4. A life that magnifies Christ will continue to grow in fruitfulness (1-10-11). The fruit of righteousness in a believer’s life is possible only by magnifying Christ through connection to the Vine, Jesus Christ. In order to be filled with the fruits of righteousness, we must be emptied of self. Superficial service has no place in the life of the believer. Following Christ in sincerity is an experience of lifelong growth.

“Set for the Defence of the Gospel”

5. When we surrender to the situations in our lives that God allows, we bring glory to Him (1:12-14). The trials of life are tests God allows for our benefit and His glory. We magnify Christ when we rely on Him for our source of strength to overcome temptations and face life’s challenges. The man of God trusts God to turn setbacks into blessings. When we can face life calmly, to God be the glory!

6. The Christian is glad to defend the cause of the Gospel (1:15-18). Paul boldly chose to preach the Gospel even though it meant imprisonment

and eventually death. Today we may face scorn for our stands on non-resistance, nonconformity, and morality; but may we never be ashamed of our Lord.

7. A life that magnifies Christ will be an encouragement and spiritual help to others (1:14-26). Paul's servant heart is clear to see in these verses. While he could have wished to die and trade this old world for glory, he still desired to encourage his fellow believers. We magnify Christ by following Him in His example of service.

“Striving Together for the Faith”

8. The Holy Spirit will be a unifying force among those who are seeking to magnify Christ (1:27-28). The church must stand ready and united against the evil one. When church members share the desire to magnify Christ, unity is possible, and the battle against worldliness and pride is greatly advanced. God achieves His purposes through harmony, not individualism. The Spirit in our lives enables us to face our generation's tests together as a brotherhood, without being terrified.

Important Teachings:

1. Salvation through Christ motivates the Christian to serve his fellow men (1:1).
2. Appreciation for our brethren is enhanced as we intercede on their behalf (1:3-6).
3. A life that magnifies Christ will continually evaluate practices and influences that come along (1:9-10).
4. A life that magnifies Christ will continue to grow in fruitfulness (1:10-11).
5. When we surrender to the situations in our lives that God allows, we bring glory to Him (1:12-14).
6. The Christian is glad to defend the cause of the Gospel (1:15-18).
7. A life that magnifies Christ will be an encouragement and spiritual help to others (1:14-26).
8. The Holy Spirit will be a unifying force among those who are seeking to magnify Christ (1:27-28).
9. The Christian can magnify Christ by life or by death (1:20-21).

Answers to Questions

1. What was Paul's prayer for the church?

He was thankful for their fellowship. He desired that they would abound and be faithful until the day of Christ. He wanted them to experience God's richest blessings.

2. What are some marks of fervent Christian love?

Sincerity with God and man is a mark of Christian love. Producing the fruits of righteousness shows love for God and our brethren.

3. What does it mean to "approve things that are excellent"?

We need to consider our actions and attitudes and make a difference not only between good and evil but also between the good and the excellent.

4. What was Paul's situation? How did he view it?

He was in prison. Others were taking advantage of his absence to promote themselves and discredit him. He left the matter in God's hands. He was satisfied that whether he was called to live and continue serving or to die and be with Christ, he was in God's perfect will. He rejoiced that the Gospel was being preached and left the preachers' motives with God.

5. How can we defend the Gospel?

The Gospel is powerful and not in danger of defeat; however, God uses mortals to spread the heavenly Good News on earth. We defend the Gospel by allowing it to control every aspect of life and so having no inconsistencies. We praise God for His blessings to us, never boasting.

6. What are the rewards for serving Christ?
We live in the peace that all is well whether we live or die. We know that our labour is not in vain. We look forward to being united with Him in eternity.

7. Explain the two viewpoints in verse 28.

The adversaries thought that the Christians' lack of fear was evidence of their insanity. The Christians, on the other hand, took their persecution as validation of their salvation, because Jesus said that whoever believes in Him will suffer with Him.

8. What unifies the believers? Our common salvation, the same Spirit dwelling within, and the same Master all serve to unite the believers.

Summarizing the Lesson:

What a lofty calling—to magnify the Lord Jesus Christ in our life. May we like John the Baptist say "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:30).

Research Guide

1. Consider the similarities between Romans 8:28 and this passage.
2. Read these other Scriptures: Luke 14:8-11; John 15:13-14; 1 Corinthians 13:4-7; Galatians 6:9-10; 2 Timothy 2:24-25; 1 Peter 3:4.