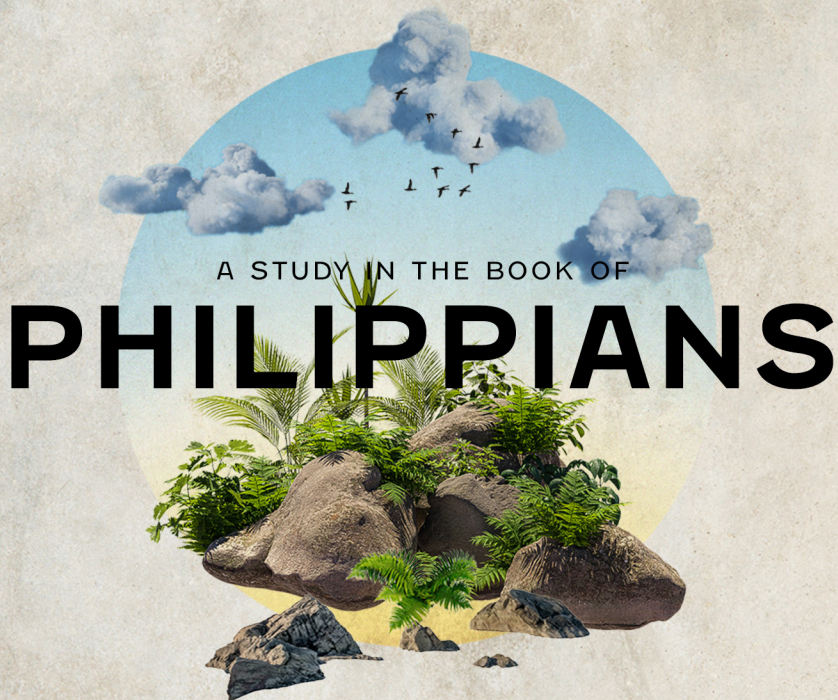




FALL 2024



MURRIETA MEN

PHILIPPIANS

Fall 2024 Study Notes

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Study Schedule	7
Interpreting the Bible Well.....	9
Introduction to Philippians.....	15
Session One - Philippians 1:1-11.....	19
Session Two - Philippians 1:12-30.....	27
Session Three - Philippians 2.....	36
Session Four - Philippians 3.....	47
Session Five - Philippians 4:1-9.....	55
Session Six - Philippians 4:10-23.....	60
Small Group Contact Info.....	67
Small Group Prayer Requests.....	68

PHILIPPIANS

STUDY SCHEDULE

Sept. 3 rd	Fellowship Hall
Sept.10 th	Small Groups Session 1
Sept. 17 th	Fellowship Hall
Sept. 24 th	Small Groups Session 2
Oct. 1 st	Fellowship Hall
Oct. 8 th	Small Groups Session 3
Oct. 15 th	Fellowship Hall
Oct. 22 nd	Small Groups Session 4
Oct. 29 th	Fellowship Hall
Nov. 5 th	Small Groups Session 5
Nov. 12 th	Fellowship Hall
Nov. 19 th	Small Groups Session 6
Nov 26 th	Fellowship Hall

INTERPRETING THE BIBLE WELL

This study requires you to look at the Bible for yourself. Whether you are confident doing this or not, you should keep in mind that the Bible is understandable and approachable but that interpreting is an art and science which takes discipline. Use these basic interpretative principles each week as you approach the text.

Prepare Yourself

Pray

Before coming to the text, focus yourself and pray that the Lord will give you wisdom. The Bible is not a secret God is keeping from you, but you need the Holy Spirit to guide you in reading it.

Serve

Studying the Bible well is an act of service. The others in your group will benefit from your studying. However, Christ teaches us to look first at ourselves before trying to help someone else. Apply the text first to your own life, then share what you find with others.

Keep it About Jesus

We have a natural tendency when interpreting the Bible to jump to ourselves. In looking for what the Scripture says about us, we tend to inadvertently cut Jesus out of the Bible, missing the point for ourselves in the process. Use this rule of thumb: if what you found would make equal sense to a Jehovah's Witness, Mormon, or even an upstanding non-religious person, you have not found the gospel in the text. Likely, you have found a means for behavior modification. For example, is Philippians 2 only about being humble, or about a humble Jesus to whom we respond in humility?

Ask simple questions of the Bible that give a lot of interpretive traction, such as: "What does this tell me about God, His people, the world, and how these interact?"

Stick to What is There

It is very irritating when someone takes something important that you are being careful to communicate well and twists, ignores, or doesn't pay attention to your words. Have you started to tell someone something only for them to immediately spin off into what they want to discuss, rather than what you brought up? We should not do that with the Bible. Not every passage is giving the sum total of Christian truth, nor does every passage relate to everything on your mind. When interpreting, keep disciplined to stay focused on the topic at hand. Avoid rabbit trails when interpreting the Bible.

More extreme and egregious than rabbit trailing is manipulating your interpretation. Do not force the Bible to say what you wish it said. The doctrine of special revelation is that God has spoken to us through the Word from outside our experience and understanding so that we could discover Him in ways we never would have arrived at on our own. This requires that we let Him speak to us without us trying to change what He is saying. Likewise, not every interpretation is equally legitimate. While a specific application or outcome of Scripture may be personal to you (e.g. the area of your life that needs to respond to Christ's humility), the general interpretation of Scripture is not personal. You may respectfully disagree with someone's interpretation that clearly does not align with the text.

Stay Informed

This study guide will give you historical and grammatical notes to help you interpret from the text. While no one needs to be a Bible expert to interpret Scripture, we have information available to help us see the things that the earliest readers of the Bible would have known. We don't live in the First Century Mediterranean world and we don't speak Greek. Use the notes to help you see what is under the surface of the text.

Give it Time

Interpreting well takes time. During the week, give yourself some time with the passage. Read it several times, slowly. Pray and meditate on it. You will be surprised what you see simply by spending time in the passage.

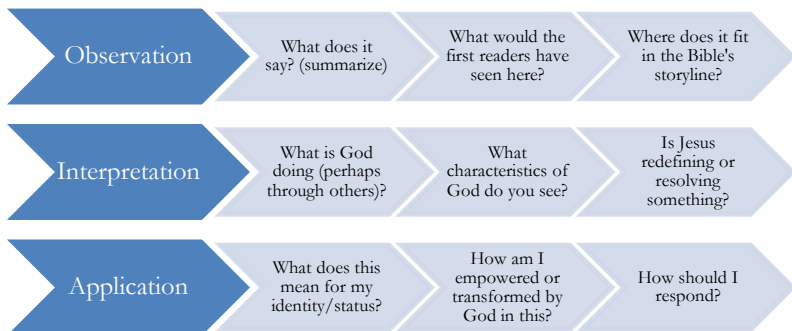
Interpreting also takes time because it is a skill that grows with years of practice. If this is new for you, look forward to your growth in the coming years!

The discussion questions will give you some places to aim your reading, but you will still need to exercise Christ-centered interpretation. These questions are a helpful framework for interpreting the Bible. You may not be able to answer all of them each week, nor will the study ask you to. However, they are a useful tool for you going forward.

Interpretive Questions

You can get a lot of traction out of simple questions of the text such as, "What does this tell me about God, His people, the World, and how these interact?"

However, here is a more thorough set of suggested questions. The most difficult to answer is "What would the first readers have seen here?" The study notes are there to help answer that for you.



If you would like to submit a question on Philippians, use this link or QR code:

<http://flr.ms/aO1>



These notes are based on the ESV translation.

A Note on Sources

Since this is not written for public consumption outside our church or for publication, sources do not receive proper citation. Instead, this is a list of works whose content is included:

A.T. Robertson, *Word Pictures in the New Testament*. Broadman Press, 1933.

Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament*. IVP Academic, 1993.

D. A. Carson, R. T. France, J. A. Motyer, and G. J. Wenham, eds. *New Bible Commentary: 21st Century Edition. 4th ed.* InterVarsity Press, 1994.

Gerhard Kittel, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, and Gerhard Friedrich, eds. *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Eerdmans, 1964.

John F. Walvoord and Roy B. Zuck, Dallas Theological Seminary. *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: An Exposition of the Scriptures*. Victor Books, 1985.

Ralph P. Martin, *Philippians: An Introduction and Commentary. Vol. 11. Tyndale New Testament Commentaries*. InterVarsity Press, 1987.

William Arndt, Frederick W. Danker, Walter Bauer, and F. Wilbur Gingrich. *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*. University of Chicago Press, 2000.

INTRODUCTION TO PHILIPPIANS

Geography

Philippi was in Greece at the top of the Aegean Sea, across from modern day Turkey. In the first century, it was the main city of the province of Macedonia and marked an entry-point of the gospel into Europe. The city was a key stopover for land and sea routes to Rome.



History

Philippi was named for Philip of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great, who spread Greek power and culture around the Mediterranean and into the Middle East and beyond. Mark Antony and Octavian won a series of major battles just outside Philippi, expanding the Roman Empire. Ten years later, however, Octavian's army

defeated Antony's and Octavian established a Roman colony at Philippi. As a colony, Philippi's citizens enjoyed tax and legal privileges as Roman citizens. The land was considered a part of Rome itself. Octavian brought in 500 Roman military veterans who had supported Antony - thus the colony would have a strong Roman cultural bent. However, it was a mixture of Thracian, Greek, and Roman culture and religion.

Timeline

It is unclear when and where this letter was written, but it is during one of Paul's imprisonments. Traditionally it has been believed that Paul wrote the letter while he was in prison in Rome. If that is the case, the letter was written between 58-62 AD.

Paul first visited Philippi during his second missionary journey after he and Silas were prevented by the Holy Spirit from going to Asia (modern-day Turkey). The establishment of the church at Philippi is recorded in Acts 16.

Worldview

The Greco-Roman worldview of the first century AD involved a mixture of a pantheon of gods and goddesses, largely taken to be allegorical rather than literal by the intellectual elites but still held by the general population as real gods interacting with the world. The gods and the many myths about them made up the beliefs

about all the given forces in one's life, with a god over various aspects of the world.

Rationality and reason had been highly regarded for centuries as Greece established sophisticated schools of philosophical thought. The Romans had adopted and adapted much of Greek religion but added a practical and legal bent to their society. Laws and governance took center stage in order to order society and rule an empire, rather than philosophy for its own sake.

The Thracian culture around Philippi was on the decline at the time this letter was written. The Romans had largely reduced its influence as they conquered Thracian territory. Thracians were a shamanistic warrior culture that revered nature.

Occasion

Paul wrote to the Philippians for several reasons:

1. To commend Timothy and Epaphroditus to them and let them know that Paul planned to visit them.
2. To thank them for their generosity to the church at Jerusalem, which was facing persecution and famine. They also gave to Paul's ministry.
3. To instruct the Philippians as they lacked unity.
4. To encourage them as they faced persecution.

Themes

Paul writes about a number of themes within this short book. Joy, anxiety, unity, humility, and a heavenly focus on the incarnation of Christ and the Day of the Lord are all included.

SESSION

1

PHILIPPIANS 1:1-11

1 Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons:

Paul and Timothy

Ancient letters began, rather than ended, by saying who the sender was. The mention of Timothy here does not mean that Timothy was equally writing the letter alongside Paul. We know this because Paul refers to Timothy in the third person and does not say "we" in the letter. We can think of Timothy as a co-sender, but not a co-author, in the sense that he serves alongside Paul and is going to Philippi with Paul's authority.

servants

This term in Greek, *doulos*, can also be translated as slave. As slavery was extremely common in the Roman empire and many slaves functioned more like household servants than laborers, we can take Paul's statement as very

strong, but should not equate it with an Old Testament idea of a bondservant. In the Old Testament law, a slave was only a slave temporarily and all were to be set free every seventh year. If a slave wanted to remain with his master, he could be a freewill bondservant who was committed to his master permanently. While this is commonly taught as the same as the Greek word *doulos* in the New Testament, the church at Philippi would likely not be familiar with the Old Testament idea. *Doulos* was the standard word for a slave. But many slaves in the Roman world were well-treated and more powerful, wealthy, and secure as slaves than as free. Those serving in households often became the confidants and right-hand assistants of their masters.

To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi

The letter was written to the Christians in the city. "Saints" is a common word Paul uses for believers, not for a higher class of human. The letter was not to a single church, as the ancient churches functioned more as a network of house churches than individual congregations. The overseers and deacons mentioned are likely the leadership of those house churches, rather than being the regional leaders per se.

Discussion Question 1

What does the Roman idea of slaves tell you about Paul and Timothy's relationship with God?

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

partnership in the gospel (v. 5)

The word translated "partnership" in the ESV is also translated as "fellowship" or "participation" in other English translations. While any of these are accurate, we should not think of this as an easy, friendly fellowship but as the shared life and work of evangelism and establishing the Church. The term was used culturally for financial

participation as well, so that Paul is likely referring to their generosity.

at the day of Jesus Christ (v. 6)

The Old Testament makes a number of references to a future "Day of the Lord." This is the chapter of the story of the world in which God establishes His rule and judges all people in order to conquer His enemies and rescue His people. It is described as a "great and terrible" day of destruction and wrath. However, the New Testament gives greater clarity on the Day of the Lord, so that we now understand that this is not a single day, but rather a long period of time. It began as the prophetic mantle passed from John the Baptist, the last Old Testament era prophet, to Jesus the prophet who would supersede Moses (Dt. 18:18-19). Jesus explains that John the Baptist is the new prophesied Elijah whom Malachi predicted would come prior to the Day of the Lord (Mal. 4:5; Mk. 9:13; Matt. 11:14). In a sense, the Church Age in which we live, is shared with the Philippians in being the "end of the age" (I Cor. 10:11). Note that it is the ultimate culmination sense of the Day of the Lord that Paul assures the Thessalonians has not yet come (II Thess. 2:2). Since Malachi said that Elijah/John the Baptist comes before the Day of the Lord, but does not say how long before, we understand that the Day of the Lord is a process of Jesus ascending to the throne and putting His enemies under His feet. The process is ongoing and will culminate at His return, establishment of the Millennial

Kingdom, and the final judgment. We can therefore understand that Paul is referring to this big biblical process of Christ conquering when he writes about His work in us. Notice that Paul mentions the Day again in verse 10.

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.

Discussion Question 2

How do you feel about your fellow Christians? How do you pray for them?

Discussion Question 3

Why does love require knowledge and discernment?

Discussion Question 4

What does it mean that Paul calls both his imprisonment and his defense and confirmation of the gospel, areas of grace?

Discussion Question 5

How does this passage tell us we are found blameless at the Day of Christ?

Discussion Question 6

Do you have any other takeaways from this passage?

SESSION

2

PHILIPPIANS 1:12-30

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.

throughout the whole imperial guard (v. 13)

The imperial (some translations have "praetorian") guard was an elite class of Roman soldiers. This could very well mean that Paul was in prison in Rome when he wrote the letter, but the imperial guard also had units stationed in

other places in the empire. No matter where Paul was imprisoned, he had profound influence on the muscle of the Roman government.

Discussion Question 1

What is your response when you or others suffer for following Jesus?

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. 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.

This will turn out for my deliverance (v. 19)

Because the Greek word for "deliverance" can also be translated as "salvation", some have read this as Paul referring to salvation from sin. But it makes much more sense to understand it as talking about earthly rescue. The phrase is a reference to Job 13:16 so we can see that Paul is referring to earthly problems. In verse 20, he says that he hopes to not at all be ashamed. While being put to shame is one way the Old Testament talks about being judged and punished eternally, in context here Paul is

talking about being vindicated (proved right) in his suffering. He is saying that he does not want to give the gospel a bad reputation.

Paul was a Roman citizen in prison due to his following Christ. As fellow Christian Roman citizens, the Philippians would have been paying close attention to his case as it could set legal precedence for them.

eager expectation (v. 20)

This is one word in Greek and is also coupled with "hope" in Rom. 8:25. It is a very strong word meaning the full and confident awaiting of a sure thing.

in the flesh (v. 22, 24)

Elsewhere in the New Testament, the "flesh" is used to mean the fallen human nature, the aspect of our being that is tempted by evil and indulges its own selfish and destructive desires. However, the term also means one's physicality. Paul here is using the term to mean a physical life. For context, notice that he says, "in

my body" in verse 20. He is talking about living on here on earth and about honoring God in his body's suffering - whether suffering in life or through death. Culturally, it would have been strange in Greek thought to talk about honoring God with your body. Greek philosophy believed in a separation of the physical and spiritual in all things, from inanimate objects to people. The Greeks believed that there was a perfect cosmic version of physical things - and ideas - of which all we experience is only a flawed imitation. The goal was to downplay or separate from the physical and live only in the spiritual. Paul is coming against this idea by saying that he wants to glorify God both in his spiritual aspect and in his physical life. In fact, the sum of Bible teaching on the body shows that God designed bodies and spirits to be so intertwined that only death, which was not His original design for humans, could separate them, and that would be only a temporary separation until bodily resurrection.

Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. (v. 22)

This phrase is somewhat off-putting. It sounds like Paul is saying that he is sitting around trying to decide if he will die, or even somehow commit suicide. However, Paul did not likely have the ability in prison to kill himself. Also, across the breadth of his writings, we know that he believed firmly in God's sovereign providence to decide all things (Rom. 8:28). Paul would have been very familiar with the Old Testament instruction to choose life (Dt. 30:19). However, we cannot discount Paul's deep distress. He is at the point that he would rather be dead. This was not the only time he wrote something like this (II Cor. 1:8). He seems to be saying that he wavers between wanting to die and wanting to live, and only wants to live for the good of the gospel and the Church, knowing that God will ultimately choose.

Discussion Question 2

Where is the line between unity for the gospel's sake and confrontation or separation from people who claim

Christ but have doubtful character?

Discussion Question 3

Is advancing the gospel the most important thing in your life? Can you say that for you to live is Christ?

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.

manner of life (v. 27)

The word translated in ESV as "manner of life" has been translated as "conduct" (NKJV) or "conversation" (KJV), or as a command: "Conduct yourselves" (NASB and NIV) and "Live your life" (HCSB). The term was a cultural one in the first century and is difficult to fully translate. It is a word that signified being a good citizen - our public activity and civic relationships. In chapter 3, Paul will call the Philippians citizens of Heaven, but he introduces the idea here.

the same conflict (v. 30)

The word translated "conflict" can also be translated "contest" and was used of athletes in competition. Paul seems to be saying that the Philippians strive on his team against an enemy.

Discussion Question 5

How is Christ honored in your suffering?

Discussion Question 6

What does your way of relating to the world say about your God? In other words, what would an unbeliever think about Christ if they watched your life?

SESSION

3

PHILIPPIANS 2

1 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.

Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus (v. 5)

The context of I Cor. 2:16 is helpful here. There Paul says that we do not understand or give advice to God, but that we do share in the mind of Christ. Believers partake in the divine nature (II Pt. 1:4) through the Holy Spirit in us. We do not see only from our own human perspective but with the perspective of Christ Himself.

in the form of God (v. 6)

The Greek word translated "form" here does not mean that Jesus was imitating or made

to seem like God, but that He is God - His nature is divine. Possibly Paul is speaking in terms of their Greek notion of forms being the ultimate pure version of something. He is saying that Jesus has all the attributes of deity. Likewise, Paul says that Jesus took the form of a servant. Taken together, we understand that Jesus' true divine nature involves being a servant. On the other hand, Paul says that He came in the likeness of men. The word translated "likeness" means appearance. We know that Jesus was not only a man, but was indeed human - He had a human and divine nature. We can understand Paul to be saying that Jesus was always truly God yet came and appeared to be only a man.

a thing to be grasped (v. 6)

The Greek word here can mean an advantageous opportunity or privilege. The phrase can mean that Jesus did know that being divine did not line up with privileging Himself, but is better understood as meaning that He

refused to use His divine position to keep Him from having to come as a man to suffer and die.

emptied himself (v. 7)

There is long-standing theological debate around this verse. Without getting into all the particulars, the general question is whether and how God could truly be humiliated. Did Jesus "offload" certain divine attributes like omniscience and omnipotence, set them aside and not use them for a time, or still exercise them in His divine but not human nature? Were these divine abilities only hidden behind His humanity? What we can certainly say is that God the Son came as a human and lived and died poor and disrespected, under the Law and physically weakened.

every knee should bow (v. 10)

The sense here is that everyone will bow willingly or unwillingly. The verse should not be

taken to mean that all people will be saved eventually, a belief called universalism.

Discussion Question 1

What does this passage tell us about God, His people, the world, and how these all interact?

Discussion Question 2

How are we told to respond to Jesus and how is this different from simply trying to live humbly?

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.

work out your own salvation with fear and trembling (v. 12)

This can also be translated as "work at" implying an effort in imitation of and participation with Christ's work. It can also mean to continue on to a goal, similar to the way Paul talks in 3:12. Some have taken this verse to mean that we work for our salvation but the Greek language here does not support that. "Your" here

is plural and should be taken as an instruction to the church as a community, helping one another, rather than addressed to individuals only.

**among whom you shine as lights in the world
(v. 15)**

Jewish tradition spoke of righteous people as lights. The word used here is also used for stars and planets and therefore denotes the great darkness in which the believer shines.

drink offering (v. 17)

The drink offering in the Old Testament accompanied other sacrifices, specifically the daily lamb sacrifice. Paul says that he may be poured out upon the sacrificial offering of their faith, meaning that he is acknowledging their sacrifice (maybe even martyrdom) and sees his sacrifice as linked to theirs. He is also likely linking his sacrifice to Jesus', as Jesus referred to His blood being spilled for the New Covenant (Lk. 22:20).

Discussion Question 3

What does grumbling and disputing look like in your life?

Discussion Question 4

In what way are you, or can you be, a light in the dark world?

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.

I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon (v. 19)

Timothy was not from Philippi but evidently had a great love for the church there. Because we do not know the order of Paul's

letter's, we are not sure if this is before or after Timothy went to Ephesus to be the leader there. Either way, Paul is sending one of his best leaders to care for the Philippians. No one in Paul's inner circle was as selfless (v. 20). It is not clear if Timothy was going to Philippi to be the main regional leader or only to help them for a time.

I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus (v. 25)

Epaphroditus is only mentioned in Philippians and we do not know anything else about him. He may have been from Philippi but may have just built strong connections there. It is also unclear in what capacity he was going - if he was a leader or not. Epaphroditus had brought financial support from Philippi to Paul (4:18). It is most likely that he was the one to deliver the letter to the Philippians.

he nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life (v. 30)

We do not know what caused Epaphroditus' illness. It could have been a direct result of persecution, perhaps from being in prison. However, Paul could be saying that even unrelated illness in the course of Epaphroditus' ministry was counted as suffering for the Lord. Like speaking of a soldier laying down his life at the moment of risk rather than death, Paul honors a person who was willing to give up his life whether he died or not.

Discussion Question 5

Is there anything else you see here about God, yourself, or the world?

SESSION

4

PHILIPPIANS 3

1 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.

those who mutilate the flesh (v. 2)

Paul is speaking about a group of people who were preaching circumcision among the churches. These were not local Jews, and likely not even local Philippians, but Christians who believed in following the Old Testament law in order to follow Jesus. They traveled around causing a great stir in the early church. When Paul calls them "dogs" he is using an extremely strong term that denoted impurity as well as immorality.

Discussion Question 1

How much do you lean on or boast about things the world cares about?

8b 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. 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.

count them as rubbish (v. 8)

The actual meaning of the Greek word is dung.

that I may know him (v. 10)

The Greek word here for "know" means an experiential rather than merely factual understanding.

that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead (v. 11)

Paul is not saying here that he is in doubt about being resurrected, nor that it is dependent on his own success. Those would not fit with the context of Paul's writings. The word used here for resurrection is different from the normal New Testament term and seems to mean a kind of partial resurrection. Some authors have considered that Paul may be speaking of experiencing the rapture. The word for "attain" can mean to reach a goal so that Paul may be saying that he desires to come through his sufferings (v. 10) and arrive at resurrection. Jewish belief held that a period of suffering

would end in resurrection. This fits well with the context of v. 13.

I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. (v. 14)

Greco-Roman games ended with a herald calling the name of the winner and awarding him with a laurel, a wreathed crown. Paul is referring to this custom but with a much more noble herald and crown.

Discussion Question 2

What is the role of human effort in pursuing Christ?

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.

their god is their belly (v. 19)

This is a way of talking about gluttony and of the indulgence of bodily desires in general.

our citizenship is in heaven (v. 20)

As a Roman colony, the Philippians were Roman citizens. Their ancestors were retired Roman soldiers and their Roman identity would have been very important to them. Most of the Philippians would have never actually been to Rome, but held the legal status just the same.

who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body (v. 21)

Greek thought sought to emphasize the spiritual over the physical while the Bible shows them as intertwined. In I Cor. 15:43 Paul combines the two to say that in our resurrected state we will have "spiritual bodies." After Jesus was raised from the dead, He had a physical, glorified body and continues to have one in heaven. While we do not understand how this works, we are promised that we will have the same.

Discussion Question 3

What does this chapter tell you about the world?

Discussion Question 4

How does being a citizen of Heaven shape how you live on earth?

SESSION

5

PHILIPPIANS 4:1-9

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

true companion (v. 3)

This word in Greek, *syzigus*, means "yokefellow" and might be a person's name. Otherwise, it is unclear whom Paul is talking to

since he is writing to an entire group of churches.

Discussion Question 1

What does this section tell you about the Church?

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.

The Lord is at hand (v. 5)

This phrase is likely used not to mean that Jesus was returning immediately but as a cry for Him to do so - the Greek equivalent of the Aramaic maranatha meaning "Come, Lord!" Either way, Paul did not know when Christ would return and was exhorting them to live with the understanding that He could do so soon.

do not be anxious about anything (v. 6)

There are different Greek words which are translated into English as "anxious." One is a lighter term meaning "thrown off; agitated." The one here means an ongoing, obsessive concern over something one treasures.

Discussion Question 2

What does this section tell us about how the Church interacts with the world?

Discussion Question 3

What does this section tell us about how the Church interacts with God?

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.

think about these things (v. 8)

"Think about" here means to habitually contemplate.

Discussion Question 4

What does your mind tend to contemplate?

Discussion Question 5

What does 4:1-9 say about where our peace comes from?

Discussion Question 6

Who do you imitate and who imitates you? Are you worth imitating?

SESSION

6

PHILIPPIANS 4:10-23

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.

I know how to abound. (v. 12)

As a tentmaker, what Paul would have meant by "abounding" would still be very poor by today's standards of wealth.

I have learned the secret (v.12)

This is a phrase the pagan mystery religions used to describe their supposed private, esoteric knowledge which others could not share. Paul is repurposing it to talk about real spiritual secret knowledge.

I can do all things through him who strengthens me. (v. 13)

The Stoics promoted the idea of being self-sufficient (the Greek meaning of "content" in v. 11). They valued living with just enough to survive and not needing help from others. However, Paul is saying that he is self-sufficient/content because of God's help.

Discussion Question 1

What do you see here about joy?

Discussion Question 2

What does contentment look like in your life currently?

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 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.

my trouble (v. 14)

The Greek word translated "trouble" is a very strong word usually connected with the Great Tribulation. Paul may be saying that his persecution is a kind of foreshadowing of that time.

the fruit that increases to your credit (v. 17)

The word for "fruit" can also mean profit or accrued interest. In other words, the Philippians will receive more than they gave, although if Paul is speaking in terms of physical or spiritual returns is unclear.

God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory (v. 19)

The language here is of physical needs. The wording about God's glory could be translated/interpreted as "in a glorious way" or as speaking about God's future glory reserved for the believers (Rom. 8:18).

Discussion Question 3

What do you see here from the Philippians (vv. 14-16), from Paul (v. 17), and from God (v. 19) about generosity?

20 To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen. 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.

those of Caesar's household (v. 22)

This designation would include many people not in the emperor's family but in civil service as representatives of Caesar. They could be slaves or free and enjoyed Caesar's patronage. They were people of great political influence. These, along with the Imperial Guard mentioned before, are Christians in key places in the imperial bureaucracy.

Discussion Question 4

What Christians in influential positions can you pray for?

Discussion Question 5

At the end of this look at the book of Philippians, what is the most important thing you saw about God, His people, or the world?

Discussion Question 6

Looking back over the whole book, what is the most important thing you need to do in response to what you saw in Philippians?

[illegible]

[illegible]

NOTES

[illegible]

[illegible]

[illegible]



MURRIETA MEN

FALL 2024