

Philippians

Learning that St. Paul had been cast into prison in Rome, the church at Philippi sent Epaphroditus with a sum of money and with instructions to remain beside Paul as his companion and servant. But while Epaphroditus was with Paul in Rome he fell very ill and almost died. Once he recovered Paul thought it best that he go back to Philippi.

The letter expresses Paul's gratitude to the Philippians for sending Epaphroditus and the financial help.

At the same time Paul takes the opportunity to:

1. Warn the Philippians against the Jews who want to turn them away from Christ and back to Judaism and the Law of Moses
2. He exhorts them to pursue the virtue of friendship and become a true Christian community
3. The most essential quality being joy

The two main themes of this letter are

1. The virtue of Friendship
2. Joy

Philippians 1:1-2

See how there is already a hierarchy and structure in the Church of bishops and deacons

1:5 Thankful for your partnership (koinonia)

Koinonia meant a business partnership in which you had to work together and get along otherwise the business would fail. Paul is saying, "Look Philippians, you have been in the business of imparting the Gospel and its success depends on your working together in unity and love.

Growing in love and the likeness of Christ requires living in Community

- If you live alone, whose feat will you wash?
- Living with other people in a community requires many virtues:
- Humility, meekness, justice, charity, etc...

Philippians 1:12-29

Only let your manner of life be worthy of the Gospel of Christ (1:27)

- Has my life been worthy of the Gospel of Jesus Christ?
- Am I becoming like Him (His virtues)?

Chapter 2

Paul's letter to the Philippians is a special type of letter known as

- a "Letter of Friendship"

Human friendship is one of the goods that our human nature needs to be happy.

But true friendship is not something that just happens

- True friendship requires knowledge, effort and virtue

The Virtues are the skills to acquire true friendship

- I say true friendship b/c Aristotle identified three kinds of friendship
 1. Useful
 2. Pleasant
 3. Virtuous (I am committed to your good and you to mine)

Vice destroy friendship. We all know how pride, envy, anger, greed, lust, gluttony (drunkenness) and sloth (indifference) will kill the good of friendship. Where as humility, meekness, fidelity, honesty, good-will, good-humor, justice, courage, temperance, charity, etc. are the virtues that make for success in friendship. Paul exhorts the Philippians to take on virtues exemplified in Jesus Christ

He begins with the classic definition of Friendship, "By being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind." Aristotle asked, "What is a friend? A single soul dwelling in two bodies."

Friendship is to have the same mind with one another

- And how are we to do this?
- To take on the mind and virtues of Christ Jesus
- Philippians 2:5

Chapter 3

Paul makes a parallel with Jesus in Chapter 2 and his own life in Chapter 3 because Paul is trying to live in imitation of Christ. Just as Jesus emptied himself and gave up everything to become one of us. In 3:7, Paul says, "Whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ Jesus... The kenosis (emptying) of Jesus through obedience, suffering and servitude and finally His exaltation in glory at the right hand of the Father is the pattern of the Christian life We must empty ourselves and become obedient, even if it entails suffering, and become servants, one of another, if we want to reach the resurrection.

Philippians 3: 17-21, Brethren join in imitating me and mark those who so live as you have an example in us. Mark out examples of those who live in imitation of Christ. The key to Greek education was imitation so you had to imitate to learn.

4: 4-7 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice

Joy is the experience of resting in possession of some good.

Joy comes from the awareness of possessing some good thing

- Bodily pleasures quickly pass away
- Spiritual goods are indestructible and everlasting

Therefore, if we realize that we possess the Highest Good, God

- and everyone in the state of grace does,
- then we should be supremely joyful.

Though we may lose other goods such as health, wealth, achievements, loved ones, etc we may still rejoice since we retain the greatest Good - God

Nothing can take Him from us

- Romans 8: 31-39

He will make everything work in our favor

- Romans 8:28

How to make oneself joyful, even in the midst of hardship?

Joy, like love, is a choice

1. Thank God continuously and specifically
2. When you face some bad thing
 - a. Do what you can to change it
3. When you come to the point that you cannot change it
 - a. Remember that you possess God
 - b. He knows you are suffering
 - c. He could take it away
 - d. He allows it to bring about some greater good in you
 - e. And in others
4. Don't just accept it; choose it
 - a. If it has been forced upon you against your will
 - b. Then it is not your choice and it is not love b/c love is a choice
5. Trust Him
6. Give it all to Him
7. Thank God ahead of time for bringing about the greater good

Philippians 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord always
Practice joy – practice the awareness that you possess God and He will take care of you and somehow work this in your favor

Philippians 4:5 Let all men know your forbearance. The Lord is at hand.
Let people know why you are joyful

- I have the flu and can't get my work done
- But God is with me
- He must be going to use this to give me the grace to do what I have to do better and in half the time.

Philippians 4:6 Have no anxiety about anything, but by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.

- Therefore I may have no anxiety about anything
- I will spend time in prayer and meditation
- Seeking to know what God wants me to do today
- I will tell God of my duties and responsibilities
- Thanking him ahead of time for giving me what I need

Philippians 4:7 And the peace of God, which passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus

- Then I may go about my day in Peace
- Know that whatever comes my way
- I possess Him and He will get me through

Philippians 4:13 I can do all things in him who strengthens me

Our passions want to be directed by our Intelligence

- By directing the passions (behavior):
- Behave joyfully, remain cheerful and placid, even when you don't feel like it.

Commanding the passions:

- Habitually direct your thoughts to the overall goodness of God, other people, yourself and all of creation.
- If you bring these images to mind eventually your passions will catch up and you will remain in a default attitude of peace and gratitude.

Here we see the power of daily meditation

Next time we will cover Acts 17 and Thessalonians