

















15 studies on Philippians

On the back of 12 years of sharing in the work of gospel mission, Paul writes to thank the Philippians for their most recent practical support. Paul's circumstances appear grim: he writes from jail, execution is a real possibility, his gospel work is under attack from competitors, and he feels the burden of the precarious welfare of the churches he has planted. And yet, Paul's letter to his mission partners in Philippi is full of joy. Indeed, it is overflowing with joy! Such joy is one of the cardinal characteristics of the authentic Christian life. None of these qualities can be learned from a book. Something more like apprenticeship is required, being around someone who out of years of devoted discipline shows us, by his or her entire behaviour, what it is. Moments of verbal instruction are essential, but mostly an apprentice acquires skill by daily and intimate association with their master. When we read Paul's letter to the Philippians we find ourselves in the midst of such a relationship - and yet through this experience, we are invited and drawn into such a relationship with our Master Jesus himself.

From Christianity in Contested Times, Philippians 10 studies, Roseville Anglican, 2018

Study 1	Acts 16:11-40, welcome to Philippi	p 2	
	map	p 3	
Study 2	Phil 1:1-8, intro	p 6	
Study 3	Gospel	p 9	
Study 4	Phil 1:9-11, prayer	p 12	
Study 5	Phil 1:12-18, Paul's situation	p 14	
Study 6	Phil 1:18-26, life or death	p 16	
Study 7	Phil 1:27-30, worthy of the gospel	p 19	
Study 8	Phil 2:1-11, unity and humility	p 21	
Study 9	Phil 2:12-18, stars	p 24	
Study 10	Phil 2:19-30, character and growth	p 28	
Study 11	Phil 3:1-11, confidence	p 30	
Study 12	Phil 3:12-16, pressing on	p 35	
Study 13	Phil 3:17-4:1, citizens	p 39	
Study 14	Phil 4:2-9, stand firm	p 42	
Study 15	Phil 4:10-23, contentment	p 46	

In preparing these studies I've used the following sources: Bible studies called Christianity in Contested Times, Philippians 10 studies, Roseville Anglican, 2018, Philippians a series of 8 Bible Studies by Roger Green 1997, Partners for Life 8 Interactive Bible Studies from Matthias Media and the Bible Brief on Philippians from The Briefing magazine # 276 by Tim Thorburn, The Good Living Guide Matthew 5:1-12 (The Beatitudes) Interactive Bible Studies from Matthias Media by Phillip D. Jensen and Tony Payne, Christianity Exposed 8 studies on the Letter of Paul to the Philippians 2006, Paul's Letter to the Philippians Striving for the Prize 8 studies, 2019 and "The Word on . . . Suffering" Bible studies by Kerry Nagel, November 2016, Philippians 7 studies from the Australian Military Christian Fellowship, Philippians Gospel Attitudes 8 studies from Stromlo Christian Church, Canberra, Philippians Gospel Partnership pamphlet by Sydney Evangelical Union 1984, Promoting the Gospel and Humilitas by John Dickson, quotes from a sermon by John Dickson from the 2012 series on Isaiah at St Andrews, Roseville and a YouTube video called "The Best Kept Secret of Christian Mission – Introduction" by John Dickson, Philippians Tyndale Commentary by Ralph P. Martin, Paul for Everyone Romans Part 1: Chapters 1-8 and Paul for Everyone the Prison Letters by Tom Wright, The Sacred Diary of Adrian Class Aged 37 ¾ by Adrian Plass, One Forever the Transforming Power of being in Christ by Rory Shiner, The New Testament a translation by David Bentley Hart, notes from a sermon by Stephen Gibson at St Faiths, Narrabeen 8/6/1997, notes from 7 talks from 24/4 to 11/12/2015 by Tony Golsby-Smith on Hebrews from www.gospelconversations.com.au and notes from the eulogy by Tony Golsby-Smith at his mother's funeral, New Illustrated Bible Dictionary, songs by Bob Dylan and Bobby McFerrin and various websites.

Study 1, Acts 16:11-40, Welcome to Philippi

Getting started

1. Think of your favourite subject at school or the course you studied at TAFE or uni.
(a) How much work did you do?



- (b) How enthusiastic were you?



- Compare this with how much time and effort you spend on studying the Bible.
(c) How does it compare?

- (d) How enthusiastic are you?

- (e) If there is a problem here, how can we fix it?



Bible

2. Read Acts 16:11-40.

Context: Paul and Barnabas began their first missionary journey (chs 13-14). Wherever they went people became disciples but some Jews opposed and persecuted them. Some people said you couldn't be saved unless you were circumcised. This dispute was resolved by taking it to the Jerusalem Council (ch 15). About 50AD Paul began his second missionary journey. In a dream at night God directed him to change direction and cross over the Bosphorus (The Strait of Istanbul) into Europe from Asia. Paul continued his travels and went to Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea and Athens.

Philippi - a city in eastern Macedonia (modern Greece) situated on a plain surrounded by mountains, Philippi lay about 16 kilometers (10 miles) inland from the Aegean Sea. The Egnatian Way, the main overland route between Asia and the West, ran through the city. Philippi was named for Philip II of Macedonia, the father of Alexander the Great. In 356 B.C. Philip enlarged and renamed the city, which was formerly known as Krenides. Philip resettled people from the countryside in Philippi and built a wall around the city and an acropolis atop the surrounding mountain. Although they date from later periods, other points of interest in Philippi include a forum the size of a football field, an open-air theater, two large temples, public buildings, a library, and Roman baths.

In 42 B.C. Mark Antony and Octavian (later Augustus Caesar) combined forces to defeat the armies of Brutus and Cassius, assassins of Julius Caesar, at Philippi. In celebration of the victory, Philippi was made into a Roman colony; this entitled its inhabitants to the rights and privileges usually granted those who lived in cities in Italy. Eleven years later, Octavian defeated the forces of Antony and Cleopatra in a naval battle at Actium, on the west coast of Greece. Octavian punished the supporters of Antony by evicting them from Italy and resettling them in Philippi. The vacated sites in Italy were then granted to Octavian's own soldiers as a reward for their victory over Antony.

The apostle Paul visited Philippi on his second missionary journey in A.D. 49 (Acts 16:12; 20:6). Evidently the city did not have the necessary number of Jewish males (ten) to form a synagogue, because Paul met with a group of women for prayer outside the city gate (Acts 16:13).

French excavations at Philippi between 1914 and 1938 unearthed a Roman arch that lay about one mile west of the city. This arch may have served as a zoning marker to restrict undesirable religious sects from meeting in the city.

From New Illustrated Bible Dictionary p 984.

2. Paul has just set out on his second missionary journey.
(a) Who is accompanying him (see Acts 15:40, 16:1-3, 16:11)?



(b) What is the likely significance of the change from 'we' in chapter 16 to 'they' in 17:1 (hint Acts 20:5-6)?

3. What do you learn about the city of Philippi from this passage?

4. (a) What evidence is there in the passage that the gospel of Jesus Christ confronts the existing 'spiritual powers' of Philippi?

- (b) What is the outcome?

- (c) How do Paul and Silas demonstrate their devotion to Jesus Christ?

5. (a) Why does the jailor ask the question he does in verse 30?

- (b) What was Paul's answer to the jailer's question?

(c) How would you answer this question if someone asked you?

(d) What might the discussion in v32 have included?

6. Compare and contrast the conversion of Lydia with the conversion of the jailer. What does it tell us about the way God works?
7. (a) From all that we learn in this passage about the Philippian church and its earliest members, what would you say are its key characteristics?

The significant events are:

1. The conversion of Lydia (v11-15)
2. The exorcism of the slave girl (v16-18)
3. Paul and Silas imprisoned (v19-24)
4. Conversion of the gaoler (v25-34)
5. Release and departure (v35-40)

Note that by the time they leave there have been many conversions. At least two remarkable ones have been recorded and while we do not know how long Paul spent at Philippi (v12 refers to 'some days' and v18 to 'many days') Paul leaves a small but established infant church (v40 'the brethren'). The church at Philippi is born and when Paul writes to them years later they are well and truly established with their own leadership (Phil 1:1) and internal tensions (Phil 4:2).

From Philippians Gospel Partnership pamphlet by Sydney Evangelical Union 1984.

(b) What issues might the first Christians in that city have needed to address early on?

8. Paul writes his letter to the Philippians about 10 years after his first visit there. During this time it seems that the church has grown and matured, as well as continuing to support Paul in practical ways. From the following excerpts see how much of this story you can piece together:
- Philippians 1:3-6; 1:12-14; 2:25-30; 4:2-3; 4:14-19.

Timeline:

Jesus death A.D. 30
 Pauls Conversion A.D. 33
 Paul plants the Philippian church A.D. 51
 Paul writes to the Philippian church A.D. 61
 Paul martyred in Rome A.D. 64

To finish

9. Thinking back to when you became a Christian, what was it that “clinched the deal” for you?



10. Read the following.

Leonard arrived at seven, clutching a huge brass-clasped family bible under his arm. Said his mother wanted him to bring it because *her* grandfather had used it to preach in the street in 1906. Thynn was dressed in a peculiar, old-fashioned, black suit that looked as if it had once been used by an undertaker. Said it was his *best* suit.

Took up our position outside the fish-and-chip shop. Leonard looked like a severely deranged religious maniac out for the evening with his keeper. Felt really miserable and hopeless. Every time I *did* say something to one of the people going in and out of the shop, Leonard just echoed everything I said. . . .

Not the most dynamic religious exchanges of our time! In the end we both got hungry and went to buy some chips. Got talking without really trying, to a man called Ted who'd decided to eat his fish and chips in the warm before walking home. After we'd talked for a bit, Leonard, suddenly realising that this could be 'IT', started mouthing silently and intensely at me from behind Ted's shoulder, 'Go on, convert him!' Felt completely paralysed by this. Managed stumbly to ask Ted if he'd ever thought that Christian values should be emphasised more strongly in society. Had quite a good discussion after that, ending, believe it or not, with Ted saying he wouldn't mind coming along to our church on Sunday morning!!

From The Sacred Diary of Adrian Plass Aged 37 ¾ by Adrian Plass pp 30-31.

(a) What negative stereotypes about 'witnessing' does it kick off for you?

(b) What positive images and ideas does it trigger?

(c) How would you explain Christian salvation without using Christian jargon?

Study 2, Phil 1:1-8, intro

Getting started

1. Thinking about your friends rather than just acquaintances:
 - (a) Who are your closest friends?



- (b) Who are friends but not really what you would call close friends?

- (c) What makes the difference between “close friends” and “just friends”?

- (d) Does the depth of friendship differ if your friends are Christian or not?

- (e)
 - (i) What importance should we place on friendships with people who don't follow Jesus?

- (ii) What about friendships with those who do follow Jesus?

Bible

2. Read Phil 1:1-8.

Paul writes this letter from prison, most probably in Rome, under house arrest where he is awaiting trial. The letter was written sometime between 60 & 63 AD at least 10 years since his first visit to Philippi (Acts 16).

Paul made two other visits to Philippi recorded in Acts 20:1-2 and 20:2-6.

Now years later in Rome Epaphroditus is sent from the Philippians to Paul with financial aid and to bring news and comfort. (Philippians 4:18) Epaphroditus became seriously ill while with Paul and nearly died but recovered and now Paul was sending him back to the Philippians (2:25).

In Epaphroditus' return visit Paul sees an opportunity in writing and sending this letter to them.

From Philippians Gospel Partnership pamphlet by Sydney Evangelical Union 1984.

Paul's letter to the Philippians opens in the customary way, for letters of the time. Author and recipients are identified, and there is a greeting, followed by prayers for the people.

From Christianity Exposed 8 studies on the Letter of Paul to the Philippians by Kerry Nagel 2006.

- (a) Why does Paul refer to the Philippian church members as “saints”?



- (b) Do you feel comfortable being referred to as a saint?

The Greek word translated “saint” has the same root as the word for “holy” – i.e., a saint is someone who is made holy, which means being set apart from unrighteousness and sin, and to God and his character and purpose. This is actually a description of every christian person, so if we are “in Christ”, we are saints, according to the New Testament definition. The only reason we may feel uncomfortable is that we have become used to a different scale of meaning for the word, where it describes only the very best and most worthy - and we know we are not classed among those! But, in fact, God has made us worthy (no-one is worthy of themselves), so we are saints.

From Philippians a series of 8 Bible Studies by Roger Green 1997.

In all Paul’s letters (except Galatians) he addresses Christians as saints or with similarly positive terms but never as sinners. In Galatians Paul is annoyed at the churches because they are “so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel” (Gal 1:6). So he has no words of praise for them but still he doesn’t address them as sinners. With the exception of 2 references in James perhaps, the New Testament never addresses Christians as sinners but as saints or with similarly positive terms like God’s holy people, God’s people, God’s elect, brothers loved by God and God’s servants.

(c) In your church are Christians more often referred to as sinners or saints?

(i) Why is that?

(ii) *Should* you be addressed that way? Why/why not?

3. (a) From these first 8 verses what is the tone of the letter?



(b) What is Paul feeling for this church?

(c) What does this suggest about his leadership style?

Clearly, Paul’s feelings for the Philippians ran very deep - verses 3, 4, 7 & 8. He was deeply committed to this small group of christians, and felt strongly for them, seeking to inspire them to greater godliness (part of the overall purpose of this letter). Considering the relatively brief contact with this community, it would seem that his leadership style was one of standing with people and sharing their sorrows and joys in partnership. Following the example of Jesus, his desire was to serve, rather than to be served, and to enter into the experience of those whom he led. This same style is reflected in his “instructions” to the Philippians (e.g. 2:1-4).

From Philippians a series of 8 Bible Studies by Roger Green 1997.

4. (a) What does Paul mean by partnership?

“Partnership” (v 5) and “share” (v 7) translate the same word, often translated as “fellowship”. Phil 4:14-18 gives us some insight into the way in which the Philippians expressed their fellowship in the gospel with Paul.

From the Bible Brief on Philippians by Tim Thorburn from The Briefing magazine # 276.

(b) (i) Who are the people you enjoy this sort of fellowship/partnership with?

(ii) Does it cause joy and affection? Why/why not?

5. (a) What is “the work” referred to in verse 6 (see also 1:10-11; 2:15-16; 1 Cor 1:8-9; 2 Cor 1:12-14)?

(b) Whose “work” is it?

(c) Why is Paul confident?

(d) As we consider the future of our own lives of faith, why might this statement also give us confidence?

To finish

6. (a) What sort of partnership do you experience at your church?

(b) What specific things could you and your group be partners in because you are Christians?

(c) Why do you think our fellowship often seems so shallow (if it does)?

(d) From what we have seen of the fellowship between Paul and the Philippians what are some ways we can express and deepen our fellowship - with our friends?

- with people in our churches?

- with people we know serving Jesus in other parts of the world?

Study 3, Gospel

Getting started

1. (a) How do you think non-Christians would define the Christian religion?



- (b) Would Christians agree with that definition? Why/why not?

2. Before looking deeply into the word “gospel” what do you think the gospel is?

Bible

The word “gospel” is first used in Philippians in Phil 1:5. By talking to different groups you may find there is some confusion amongst Christians as to what the gospel is. The gospel is a vital key to understanding the New Testament so it is important to get it right. This is why we are having a break from studying Philippians and hopefully this study will clarify our ideas on what is the gospel.

The word “gospel” = good news/tidings has its origins in Isaiah when God’s people had been defeated, their cities destroyed and all but the poorest people were taken into exile into Babylon. To that situation Isaiah speaks the following good news:

Comfort, comfort my people, says your God. Speak tenderly to Jerusalem, and proclaim to her that her hard service has been completed, that her sin has been paid for, that she has received from the LORD’s hand double for all her sins.

Isaiah 40:1-2

You who bring good news to Zion, go up on a high mountain. You who bring good news to Jerusalem, lift up your voice with a shout, lift it up, do not be afraid; say to the towns of Judah, ‘Here is your God!’ See, the Sovereign LORD comes with power, and he rules with a mighty arm. See, his reward is with him, and his recompense accompanies him.

Isaiah 40:9-10

How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, ‘Your God reigns!’

Isaiah 52:7

3. (a) From the three passages above what is the good news?

For Israel, the good news is as much about God’s kingly rule over the world (Is 40:9-10) as it is about his forgiveness (Is 40:1-2). The gospel proclaims both a Saviour who pardons wrong and a King who puts things right. From the 2012 sermon series on Isaiah at St Andrews, Roseville by John Dickson.

God’s people returned from exile to live again in the land God had promised them. But it was tough going and things didn’t turn out as well as they had expected. “The Jews of Jesus’ day were sick of being losers. Nearly five

centuries had passed since the last of the Old Testament prophets, and during that period, with a few exceptions, Israel had suffered nothing but humiliation at the hands of the Gentiles (first the Greeks and then the Romans). . . . Into this mixed environment of messianic hope strode Jesus, proclaiming that the time had finally come - the kingdom of God was at hand."

From The Good Living Guide Matthew 5:1-12 (The Beatitudes) p 11 by Phillip D. Jensen and Tony Payne.

After John was put in prison, Jesus went into Galilee, proclaiming the good news of God. 'The time has come,' he said. 'The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!'

Mark 1:14-15.

He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, and the scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: 'The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour.' Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. He began by saying to them, 'Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.'

Luke 4:16-21

(b) From the two passages above what is the good news?

Now, brothers and sisters, I want to remind you of the gospel I preached to you, which you received and on which you have taken your stand. By this gospel you are saved, if you hold firmly to the word I preached to you. Otherwise, you have believed in vain. For what I received I passed on to you as of first importance: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Cephas and then to the Twelve.

1 Cor 15:1-4

(c) What is the gospel = good news in the passage above?

(d) How does it fit in with the previous passages on good news?

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile.

Rom 1:16

The idea of '**good news**', for which an older English word is '**gospel**', had two principal meanings for first-century Jews. First, with roots in Isaiah, it meant the news of YHWH's long-awaited victory over evil and rescue of his people. Second, it was used in the Roman world for the accession, or birthday, of the Emperor. Since for Jesus and Paul the announcement of God's inbreaking kingdom was both the fulfilment of prophecy and a challenge to the world's present rulers, 'gospel' became an important shorthand for both the message of Jesus himself and the apostolic message about him. Paul saw this message as itself the vehicle of God's saving power (Romans 1:16, 1 Thessalonians 2:13).

The four canonical 'gospels' tell the story of Jesus in such a way as to bring out both these aspects (unlike some other so-called 'gospels' circulated in the second and subsequent centuries, which tended both to cut off the scriptural and Jewish roots of Jesus' achievement and to inculcate a private spirituality rather than confrontation with the world's rulers). Since in Isaiah this creative, life-giving good news was seen as God's own powerful word (40:8, 55:11), the early Christians could use 'word' or 'message' as another shorthand for the basic Christian proclamation.

From Paul for Everyone the Prison Letters by Tom Wright pp 215-216.

4. When Paul writes about his "partnership in the gospel" (Phil 1:5) with the Philippians what does he mean?

5. (a) What is grace?



(b) How could you give grace to people?

Patricia was a mother of a well-off English family living in Fiji in the 1950s. They had servants which was customary in that context. Patricia discovered that one servant had been stealing. Her first reaction was to sack her but Patricia had recently become a Christian and she wanted to think through what believing in God's grace meant to her life. She prayed about it and reasoned that her servant had stolen because she was poor and needed the money to feed her family. Patricia decided that God would not want her to sack her servant but to give her a raise which was what she did. The servant was astounded and became a devoted household maid. Patricia's act of grace was an overflow of the grace she had received from God and it was life changing for her servant. Later Patricia led her to faith in Jesus Christ.

From a eulogy by Tony Golsby-Smith at his mother's funeral.

Grace is getting what we don't deserve. We deserve death and God's judgement but, because of Jesus' life, death and resurrection we get what we don't deserve - life, the Holy Spirit, fellowship with God, church, gifts . . . think of all the other things God gives us. But it doesn't stop there. Like Patricia, we can give grace as it overflows from the grace we have received from God. We can do grace/give grace, and it may be life changing for the people who receive it.

6. (a) How does Paul's greeting ("grace and peace" Phil 1:2) sum up the gospel?

(b) Is this more than "just a greeting"?

(c) Would "grace and peace" or "guilt and pressure" be a better description of your experience with church?

Why?

"Grace" is the free gift of God's love, extended to us, though totally undeserved on our part. It is God's grace which stands at the heart of the gospel (see Ephesians 2:8-9), and without it we would all remain condemned. "Peace" speaks of the reconciliation which we have with God in Christ - and the implication of that peace, found in the gospel, is that we then strive for peace (reconciliation) with others (see Col. 1:20, 2 Cor 5:18-21, Eph 2:14-18).

From Philippians a series of 8 Bible Studies by Roger Green 1997.

To finish

7. Wikipedia's definition of religion: Religion is a cultural system of behaviours and practices, mythologies, world views, sacred texts, holy places, ethics, and societal organisation that relate humanity to what an anthropologist has called "an order of existence".

Where would the gospel fit in with a definition of the Christian religion?

Study 4, Phil 1:9-11, prayer

Getting started

1. (a) How would you describe your prayer life?



(b) What encourages you to pray?

(c) Whom do you pray for often?

(d) What sort of things do you pray for them?

(e) Are there any aspects of prayer that you find difficult?

(f) If your church had a prayer night would you go

- if it was held “once in a blue moon”?
- if it was held yearly?
- if it was held 6 monthly?
- if it was held monthly?
- if it was held weekly?

Give reasons for your answers.

(g) How important is prayer to you?

(h) How important should it be?

Bible

2. Read Phil 1:9-11.

(a) Explain the flow of this prayer i.e. how does each part lead to the next part until we get to the final intended result?

(b) What is Paul’s ultimate desire for the Philippians?

(c) What is Paul’s ultimate desire in this prayer?

(d) Why do the Philippians need love *and* knowledge *and* insight/discernment?

(i) What is the result of having love but not knowledge?

(ii) What is the result of having knowledge but not love?

(iii) What if you have both?

(iv) Which do you think you need more – love or knowledge and discernment?

3. How do the things Paul prays for compare with the things you pray (see 1 (c) and (d))?

4. (a) Why do you think Paul tells the Philippians he is praying these things for them?

(b) What effect might it have on them?

(c) What effect might it have on their fellowship?

5. What helpful lessons can we take away about - who to pray for?

- what to pray for them?

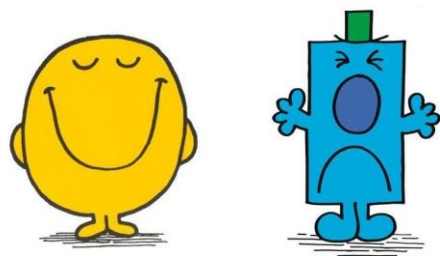
To finish

6. What difference would it make to your life if God gave you the things Paul prays for in v 9?

Study 5, Phil 1:12-18, Paul's situation

Getting started

1. Would you describe yourself as primarily an optimist or a pessimist? Why?

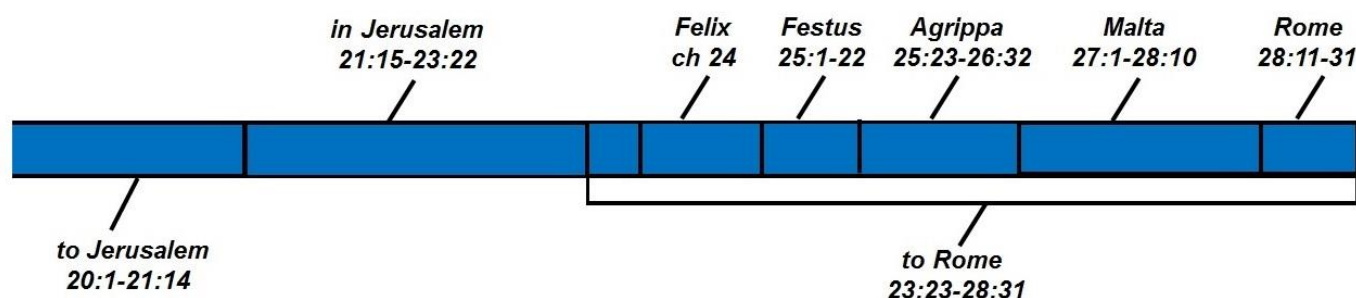


The story so far . . .

There are three main possibilities with regards to the location of Paul's imprisonment at the time of writing this letter: Rome, Caesarea or Ephesus. The traditional view and the one I have assumed for this study is that Paul is in Rome. . . .

If you want to follow the events leading up to Paul's arrival in Rome you might like to quickly read from Acts 21 to the end of Acts. This will give you the details of what happened in Jerusalem. You will see the accusations levelled against Paul from the Jews, the unrest that grew into a riot in the city, his arrest, transfer to Caesarea where he spent 2 years in prison, 3 trials and then off to Rome to face trial before the Caesar. Throw in a shipwreck along the way and you can see Paul was having a pretty torrid time of it. Acts 28:16-30 . . . tells of Paul's situation having arrived in Rome. He was under house arrest which meant that people were free to come and go to the house but he was constantly guarded by the palace guard. He was awaiting further trial which would determine his future so he was living with uncertainty.

From Philippians a series of 8 Bible Studies by Roger Green 1997.



In Philippians so far we have read how Paul greets the Philippians and thanks them for being partners with him. He is confident they will continue to grow in their faith and make it till the end.

Bible

2. Read Phil 1:12-18.
 - (a) From these verses what has happened to Paul?
 - (b) Would you describe Paul as primarily an optimist or a pessimist? Why?
 - (c) How did Paul's adversity allow the gospel to advance?
 - (d) Do you think that preaching out of evil motives can effectively spread the gospel? Why/why not?

If they are preaching Christ then the gospel can spread. It will not spread effectively because of the double messages. e.g. pride in the preacher/ humility of the gospel, rivalry of the preacher/ unity of the gospel. It will spread because of the grace of God and despite the sinfulness of the human mouthpiece. Preaching from false motives can also be incredibly damaging to the growth of the church and is obviously not God's desire. Paul focuses his delight in the fact that the gospel is being preached and people being saved. The criticism, divisiveness & selfish ambition would have pained him greatly but this is far surpassed by the fact that the gospel is going forward.

From Philippians a series of 8 Bible Studies by Roger Green 1997.

(e) Why do you think Paul wanted the Philippians (and us) to know about his situation and his responses?

(f) When you hear of Christians being persecuted for speaking about Christ, does it give you courage to speak out even more about Christ? Why/why not?

(g) What's remarkable about the end verse 18?

(h) Do you share the same clarity and conviction about the importance of speaking out about Christ?

Why/why not?

To finish

3. Play "The Best Kept Secret of Christian Mission – Introduction" by John Dickson, available at YouTube. Do you agree with any of John Dickson's "problems" with modern evangelistic courses (self-consciousness, talking too much, feeling the talk was all there was to evangelism)?

Why/why not?

Note: In his book Promoting the Gospel John Dickson explains the other ways, besides speaking, to evangelise, namely, prayer, living the godly life, financial contributions, works of the church and public praise.

Study 6, Phil 1:18-26, life or death

Getting started

1. (a) Do you set goals for yourself?
(b) If not, why not? If so, what are your goals?



2. An ambitious person will set higher goals every year.
What are the advantages and disadvantages of doing this?

3. If you were to scrap the idea of setting goals (a) what would you do instead?



- (b) what would be the advantages and disadvantages of doing things this way?

The story so far . . .

Paul greeted the Philippians and thanked them for being partners with him. He is confident they will continue to grow in their faith and make it till the end. Paul is in prison and either through good or bad motives the gospel is advancing. Paul now moves from discussing his present circumstances to what might happen in his immediate future.

Bible

4. Read Phil 1:18-26.
 - (a) Which two things might possibly happen to Paul?
 - (b) What are Paul's goals?
 - (b) Does Paul see this as a win-win or win-lose situation? Why?
 - (c) Can anyone stop Paul from achieving his goals?

- What if you throw him in prison?

- What if you kill him?

- What if you let him go?

5. What does it mean when Paul says:

(a) "For me to live is Christ" (v 21)?

(b) "... Christ will be exalted in my body whether by life or by death" (v 20)?



(c) "... I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far (v 23)?

(i) Isn't Paul already "with Christ" (see Eph 2:5, 6, 19-20)?

To be "in Christ" we

- are included in Jesus' death
 - are included in Jesus' resurrection
 - are involved in an unseen spiritual reality
 - are a new creation
 - have access to the Father
 - are joined together in a building where God lives in his Spirit.
- (See Eph chs 1 & 2, Rom 6:3-10, Col 1:27-28.)

What does it actually mean to be **in Christ**? Let me try an analogy. Imagine yourself at the airport, about to board a plane. The plane is on its way to, let's say, beautiful Perth. You're at the airport. There's you. There's the plane. It's going to Perth. And my question is: What relationship do you need to have with that plane? ... Of course, the key relationship you need with the plane is not to be under it, behind it or inspired by it. You need to be *in* it. ... At its heart, the New Testament idea of being in Christ is something like that. What the New Testament is saying is that through faith in Jesus Christ, we become united to him. And we are in him, so that whatever is true of Jesus is also true of us.

From One Forever the Transforming Power of being in Christ pp 34-35 by Rory Shiner.

(ii) What does it mean to be "with Christ" after you die?

Luke 23:39-43.

Context: Jesus is being crucified with a person on either side of him.

Luke 23:43 "I tell you the truth, today you will be with me in paradise."

"Paradise" is a Persian word for "garden". See also 2 Cor 12:4, Rev 2:7.

2 Cor 5:1-9.

Context: Paul is thinking about the possibility of death – his own and other Christians'.

2 Cor 5:8 "We ... would prefer to be away from the body and at home with the Lord."

1 Thes 4:13-18.

Context: Paul tells the church at Thessalonica what has been happening to him and Timothy. He tells them to live godly lives and, in these verses, what happens to dead Christians when Jesus comes back.

1 Thes 4:14 "God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him".

6. What drives Paul?

7. What drives you?

8. There are times when a Christian might feel 'all alone', abandoned, or aimless (locked in his jail cell, surely Paul had reason to feel something like this). What are the spiritual realities expressed in this passage that radically transform these thoughts?

To finish

8. Are you convinced that being with Christ by dying is "better by far" (v 23) than anything this life can offer?
Why/why not?

Study 7, Phil 1:27-30, worthy of the gospel

Getting started

1. (a) What is the difference between church and Christianity?



- (b) Do you think non-Christians make a distinction between church and Christianity?

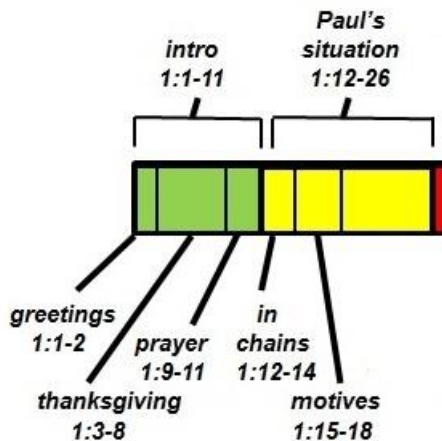
If not, why not, if so, what distinction do they make?

- (c) What do you think non-Christians like about church/Christianity?

- (d) What do you think non-Christians don't like about church/Christianity?

The story so far . . .

Paul greeted the Philippians and thanked them for being partners with him. He is confident they will continue to grow in their faith and make it till the end. Paul is in prison and either through good or bad motives the gospel is advancing. Paul writes about what might happen in his immediate future.



Bible

2. Read Phil 1:27-30.
(a) What do we learn about the circumstances of the Philippian Christians?

- (b) What is the similarity with Paul's circumstances?

(c) Why do think Paul wanted the Philippians (and us) to know about his circumstances and his responses?

(d) We looked at what the gospel was in Study 3 so what does it mean to

(i) “conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ” (v 27)?

(ii) contend “as one for the faith of the gospel” (v 27)?

(e) What is the sign that Paul mentions in v 28?

(i) Why is it a sign of salvation for the Philippians?

(ii) Who is the sign of destruction (NIV) or ruin (Bentley Hart) referring to?

What sort of destruction/ruin is meant here, do you think?

3. How do Phil 1:27-28 and John 13:34-35 go together?

(a) For what 2 things has God chosen us?

To finish

4. A Bible study called “The Word on . . . Suffering” by Kerry Nagel, November 2016, concludes with “The passages above [Matt 5:11-12, John 15:18-20, Rom 8:16-18, 2 Cor 4:16-18, 1 Pet 4:12-13, 19] suggest that suffering is normal for a Christian, especially suffering for the name of Christ.”

(a) Suffering for the name of Christ may have been normal for Christians in the first century but is suffering for the name of Christ normal for Christians in Australia in 2016?

(b) Considering your answer to Question 1 (d) above, what aspects of Christianity today in Australia may result in Christians being given a hard time either because of the church’s “brand” or because of things prominent Christians (e.g. Fred Nile, Cory Bernadi, Israel Folau) have said or done?

(c) Is this persecution deserved or is this suffering for the name of Christ? Give reasons for your answer.

(d) What can we do to alleviate this problem?

Study 8, Phil 2:1-11, unity and humility

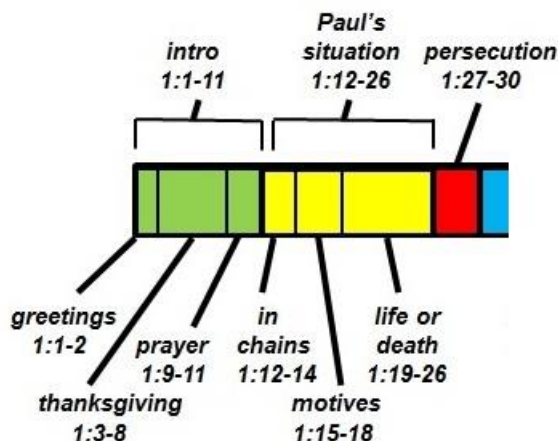
Getting started

1. What do you get out of being a Christian?
 - what are the benefits?
 - what do you get from knowing Jesus?
 - what's the downside?



The story so far . . .

Paul greeted the Philippians and thanked them for being partners with him. He is confident they will continue to grow in their faith and make it till the end. Paul is in prison and either through good or bad motives the gospel is advancing. Paul writes about what might happen in his immediate future. He encourages the Philippians to stand firm and expect suffering.



Bible

2. Read Phil 1:27-2:5.
 - (a) Write down all the places where words of unity are used. Words like "united", "one", "same", "like". Next to each word explain what aspect of unity Paul is talking about.
 - (b) In your experience how hard is it to achieve this unity?

(c) Why is it so difficult to achieve?

(d) What effect might opposition and suffering have on the unity of the Philippian church?

(e) How does Paul motivate them to be united?

(f) What mindset does Paul want for the Philippians?



Unity

[Paul] asks that [the Philippians] be working together in mind, in emotion and motivation, in actions, and in concerns, citing the example of Jesus. But Jesus' example is not an easy one to follow . . .

It is clear that the unity Paul desperately wants in the Philippian church is not simply a unity of *avoidance*, where they ignore any differences they have with each other and pretend that everything is fine. It's a unity built on a common mindset, a common love and a common purpose (2:2). . . .

Paul urges us to be united, by being of one mind. This means that we need to be in agreement in our convictions, at least in the things that matter. Without agreement we can't be united; we will either be in open dispute or avoid the issues and just be superficially nice from a distance. Clearly there are some less-than-important issues where we can agree to differ without being in fundamental dispute. In which case, God would have us not allow those issues to cause tension among us. But there are other issues where agreement is necessary for unity, and in these cases we oughtn't merely to agree to disagree.

But Paul is not interested in merely intellectual agreement, because having the same theology should also lead to having the same purpose - striving together for the faith of the gospel. When we share a passion for seeing the gospel of Jesus advancing, and that passion draws us into labouring and praying side-by-side, then it is possible to have real unity.

From Partners for Life 8 Interactive Bible Studies on Philippians by Tim Thorburn pp 27-30.

3. (a) What do we get out of being united with Christ (Phil 2:1)?

(b) How does this compare with your answer to Q 1? Explain the differences.

(c) What are we supposed to do with those benefits (vv 2-5)?

(d) Why is it difficult to do these things?

4. Read Phil 2:3-11.

(a) What Old Testament passages come to mind here?

(b) What is humility?

Humility is *the noble choice to forgo your status, deploy your resources or use your influence for the good of others before yourself*. More simply, you could say the humble person is marked by a *willingness to hold power in service of others*.

There are three key thoughts in this definition. First, humility presupposes your *dignity*. . . . True humility assumes the dignity or strength of the one possessing the virtue which is why it should not be confused with having low self-esteem or being a doormat for others. . . .

Second, humility is *willing*. It is a choice. Otherwise, it is humiliation.

Finally, humility is *social*. It is not a private act of self-deprecation – banishing proud thoughts, refusing to talk about your achievements and so on. I would call this simple “modesty”. But humility is about redirecting of your powers, whether physical, intellectual, financial or structural, *for the sake of others*.

From Humilitas by John Dickson pp 24-25.

(c) How was Jesus humble?

What stories from the gospels can you think of where Jesus showed humility?

(d) How does Jesus’ greatness and uniqueness (vv 6-11) emphasise his humility?

(e) How did the Father respond to Jesus’ humble obedience?

(f) How does knowing Jesus help us to be humble?

(g) How does knowing Jesus help us to have self-esteem?

(h) What is the difference between someone who is humble and someone who has low self-esteem?



(i) How are we to be humble?

5. (a) Reading between the lines, what do you think was one of the problems of the church at Philippi?

(b) Was this likely to have been an unusual problem then? Why/why not?

(c) What about now?

To finish

6. If you were to unite your Bible study or your church how would you try to do it?

Study 9, Phil 2:12-18, stars

Getting started

1. What's the first person you think of when I say the word "Star"?



2. This study looks at a passage that says the Philippians can "shine like stars in the universe" (v 15). It might be fun to listen to some sound bites and some music that identify "stars". These stars may be from the movies or sport or politics or explorers. Your job is to identify the star who is speaking or singing or being sung about.

(Answers: Mohammad Ali (1942-2016) pro boxing 1960-1981

"One small step" Neil Armstrong 1969

"Our Don Bradman" song by Art Leonard 1930. Don Bradman 1908-2001, test career 1928-1948.

"Ask not what your country can do for you . . ." JFK 1961, Inaugural Address

"It's Time" Gough Whitlam 1972 Labor election campaign song, lead singer Alison McCallum.

Theme to James Bond 007 movies (1st movie "Dr No" 1962).

"My Way" written by Paul Anka and sung by Frank Sinatra 1969.
Reminds me of John Gorton (PM 1968-1971).

"The Times they are A Changing" Bob Dylan 1964

"We will fight on the beaches . . ." Winston Churchill 1874-1965

"I have a dream" Martin Luther King (1929-1968) 1962 speech

"Up There Cazaly" 1979 by Mike Brady, Roy Cazaly 1893-1963

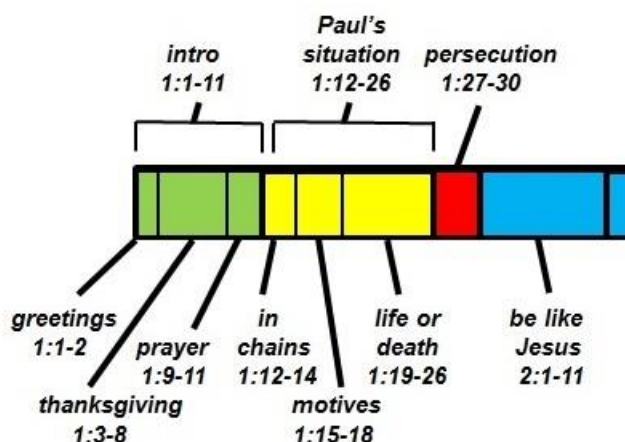
"Able to leap tall buildings . . ." Superman, original series 1952-1958

Gettysburg Address 1863 Abraham Lincoln (1809-1865), Civil War 1861-1865

"Candle in the Wind" song by Elton John and Bernie Taupin (1973 – Marilyn Monroe who died 1962, 1997 – Princess Diana).

"Surely he was the Son of God" John Wayne (1907-79) his only line from "The Greatest Story Ever Told" 1965.)

The story so far . . .



Paul greeted the Philippians and thanked them for being partners with him. He is confident they will continue to

grow in their faith and make it till the end. Paul is in prison and either through good or bad motives the gospel is advancing. Paul writes about what might happen in his immediate future. He encourages the Philippians to stand firm, expect suffering, be united and be humble.

Bible

3. Read Phil 2:12-18.

(a) What does the “therefore” (v 12) link back to?

(b) How does this link relate to vv 12-18?

(c) What does obedience mean in this context (v 12)?

(i) Is it about rules we have to obey or commands we have to follow? Why/why not?

Listen to Mike Paget, rector at St Barnabas, Broadway when preaching on John ch 17.
ObedienceBeingChristianJohn17MPaget.mps and ObedienceJohn17MPaget.mp3

(d) What is the connection between our salvation and obedience (see Phil 1:6 and 2:12-13)?

(e) What does it mean to “work out your salvation” (v 12) if you are saved by grace not works?

(f) Christians sometimes use the expression “let go and let God”.

Does this expression equal “for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfil his good purpose” (v 13)?

(i) Why/why not?

(ii) If you “let go and let God” what do you have to do to “work out your salvation” (v 12)?

(iii) “Your will is *your* will – God won’t touch that. He doesn’t make you do anything.”
Do you agree with this statement? Why/why not?

(iv) If God works at the level of my will/heart, will I “feel” God working? How will I know he is at work?

He is telling the Philippians that they must grow into maturity and take responsibility for themselves. He may be absent, but this simply means that they will have to think through with an independent though still obedient mind what the gospel means for them where they are.

Verse 12 is often misunderstood. People frequently suppose it means that Christians are responsible for doing things which will earn them their salvation, on the principle of 'the Lord helps those who help themselves' (which is not, of course, a text from the Bible!). But that's quite out of line with what Paul says anywhere else. Salvation — as he goes on to stress in the next verse — is God's work from start to finish. No: he wants the Philippians to work out for themselves what this business of being saved will mean in practice. The phrase 'your own salvation' isn't meant to contrast this work of theirs with any work of God in salvation. It is contrasting their own responsibility for their spiritual welfare with the responsibility that Paul would take if he was with them. He isn't there, and for all either of them know he may never be again. They therefore need to be obedient — to him, but much more to God — in Paul's absence even more than in his presence.

From Paul for Everyone the Prison Letters by Tom Wright pp 106-107.

These short verses [Phil 2:12-13] warn us away from false trails about Christian growth. They show us some critical aspects of how Christian growth is achieved, and so expose wrong ways of thinking.

One of the most enticing false trails is the "instant sanctification" offer. It comes in a variety of packages. I first heard it under the guise of "full surrender" thinking: if you will only surrender every area of your life to the Lordship of Jesus, then you will be victorious over sin. A similar idea is found in the teaching of the "baptism/fullness of the Spirit" (for instant power to conquer all barriers both internal and external), the "let go and let God" philosophy, and the "second blessing". All of these approaches to Christian living and experience have one thing in common—the promise of instantaneous transformation. Part of their attractiveness is that they offer something akin to many people's conversion experience—an instant solution to our guilt before God. The moment we trust Jesus our sins are forgiven, so when someone comes along and offers us an instant solution to our ongoing struggle with sin, it is both attractive (which Christian wouldn't want to be sinless?), and it seems to fit our experience of God's grace in forgiving sin.

But Philippians 2:12-13 has shown us that this is not the case. When Christ returns I will be made sinless, but in the meantime there is no instant sinlessness—I need to continue to work out my salvation.

From Partners for Life 8 Interactive Bible Studies from Matthias Media on Philippians by Tim Thorburn pp 38-39.

(g) The idea behind reconciliation is that God was our enemy because of our sin but through Jesus' death and resurrection and thus taking our sin on himself, we are now friends with God.

Why then the "fear and trembling" (v 12) as you "continue to work out your salvation"?

(h) Does v 14 say that we are not to think critically and voice suggestions or criticisms? Why/why not?

They need to do it all, finally, without grumbling or disputing. This is a reference to Israel in the wilderness, questioning God and Moses all the time. As often, Paul sees the church as the people of the new Exodus: brought out of the Egypt of sin and death through the Passover action of God in Jesus, and now on the way home to the real promised land. And this time they are going to get it right. That remains the challenge before the church today just as in the first century.

From Paul for Everyone the Prison Letters by Tom Wright p 107.

(i) Why should Christians "shine like stars" (Phil 2:1-15 and Dan 12:1-3)?



(j) Look back to Question 1. (i) How did those people shine like stars?

(ii) How is Paul's meaning different?

(iii) How can we shine like stars?

Listen to part of a talk by Tony Golsby-Smith 1/5/2013
SituationalTalk152013BrandOfXns.mp3

(k) Is "holding forth [Bentley Hart] the word of life" (v 16) about evangelism or is it connected with shining like stars (v 15)? Give reasons for your answer.

You are, he [Paul] says, to shine like lights in the world, in the middle of a twisted and depraved generation. You are to be the beacon of hope that they need, the sign of God's beauty in a world that had all but defaced it. In fact, when he speaks of them shining like lights he is quoting a passage from the book of Daniel (12.3), which speaks of 'the wise' — by which they meant Israelites skilled in knowing and applying God's law, not least in a time of persecution — shining in that way to the world around. And, what's more, the passage is very closely connected with Daniel's promise that God would raise the dead, another theme that will become very important in the next chapter of Philippians. In a sense, then, what Paul is saying is not just that the Philippians are to be a sign of light and beauty in a world of darkness and ugliness. They are to be a sign of God's new life in a world that only knows the way to death.

From Paul for Everyone the Prison Letters by Tom Wright p 106.

(l) What does Paul mean in v 17 by being "poured out like a drink offering" (see Num 15:1-10, 28:7)?



(m) What is there to rejoice about (v 18)?

For Paul's part, he will be able to look on, even if from a distance, and know that his work has borne fruit. Like the architect of the one beautiful building, he will know that he has fulfilled his God-given vocation. He hasn't run the race on the wrong track, or spent all his energy on a building that was going to fall down the minute his back was turned. Even if he dies before all this comes about (verses 17-18), he will know that he can celebrate a job well done, and he wants them to celebrate with him.

From Paul for Everyone the Prison Letters by Tom Wright p 106.

To finish

4. What have we learnt about the *process* of change i.e. how we become more like Jesus?

5. How does this process work out in practice - what is the human involvement?

- what is God's involvement?

Study 10, Phil 2:19-30, character and growth

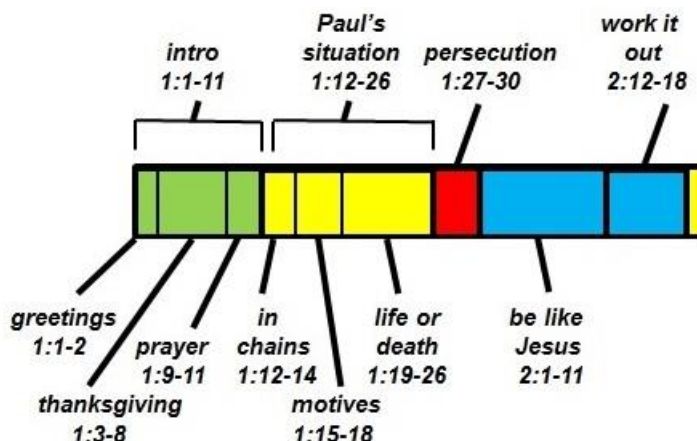
Getting started

1. Which particular virtues do you think mark the character of a godly Christian person?
2. In our contemporary society, how important is a Christian's character?



The story so far . . .

Paul greeted the Philippians and thanked them for being partners with him. He is confident they will continue to grow in their faith and make it till the end. Paul is in prison and either through good or bad motives the gospel is advancing. Paul writes about what might happen in his immediate future. He encourages the Philippians to stand firm, expect suffering, be united and humble, work out their faith and shine like stars.



Bible

3. Read Phil 2:19-30.
Paul commends both Timothy and Epaphroditus to the Philippians, as was common in letters in the Greco-Roman world. What is it about their character that Paul finds so praiseworthy?

Timothy

Epaphroditus

4. In the New Testament the growth of Christian character and virtue is understood to be the outworking of the Holy Spirit. Paul emphasises this in his letter to the Galatians, especially in 5:22-23. How might you identify in a person each of the 9 virtues listed in Galatians 5:22-23?

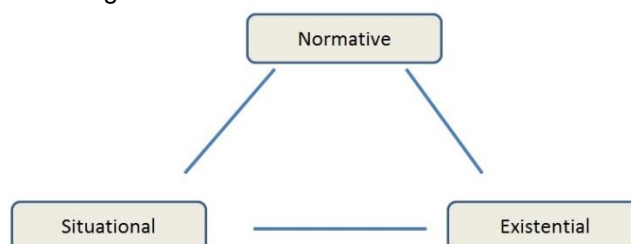
5. (a) If Paul, Timothy and Epaphroditus came to our church, what might they be able to do to help us?

(b) Since they won't be coming, what are some practical ways we can follow their example?

(c) What are the factors that block changes in church?

To finish

6. Look at this model for Christian growth:



The normative perspective means we look to an ideal standard or norm. This is what we use to determine right and wrong. The norm is transcendentally true and doesn't change. In this perspective we try to understand God's will and the Bible. Paul describes it as "growing in the knowledge of God" Col 1:10.

The situational perspective means we look at our circumstances or situation. We respond to the changing contexts that we find ourselves in. If you respond to different situations in different times then it involves change. The normative perspective never changes.

The existential perspective means we look at our own existence; our emotional, personal and individual feelings; our "gut instinct"; what is authentic to our inner selves.

Recognising that the Spirit enables our growth in character, how might we personally cultivate this in each perspective?

Normative

Situational

Existential

Study 11, Phil 3:1-11, confidence

Getting started

1. (a) What are you good at?

(b) How could you let people know your talents without bragging about them?



(c) Without going to the extreme of bragging, do you think Christians should be self-confident? Why/why not?

2. Make a quick list of things you would include in your resumé for a job application.
 Make a quick list of things you would include in your resumé for joining a church that required it for church membership. (We will look at Paul's resumé later.)
 In both lists, which things were you given and which were your own achievements? Which of these help you feel more confident before God.

My job resumé

My church resumé

Paul's resumé

The story so far . . .

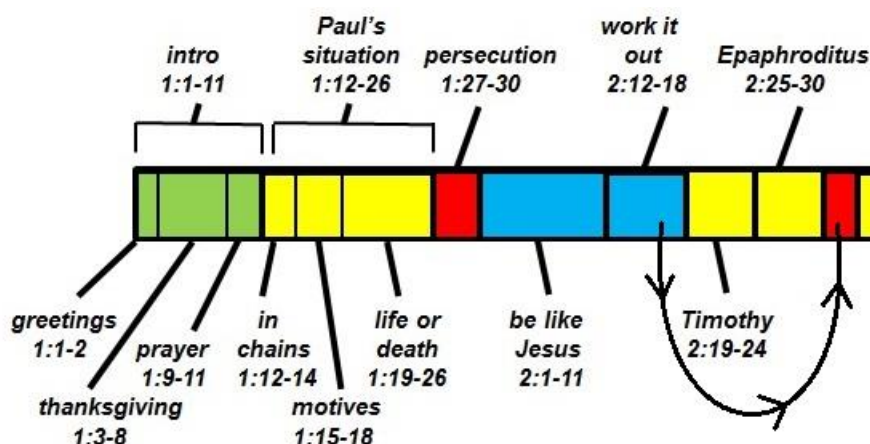
Paul greeted the Philippians and thanked them for being partners with him. He is confident they will continue to grow in their faith and make it till the end. Paul is in prison and either through good or bad motives the gospel is advancing. Paul writes about what might happen in his immediate future. He encourages the Philippians to stand firm, expect suffering, be united and humble, work out their faith and shine like stars. Paul writes about Timothy and Epaphroditus – friends who have helped him greatly.

Bible

3. Read Phil 3:1-11.
 Verses 1-3 are a stern warning to the Philippians to beware of those who are advocating circumcision for Christians. What is the significance of circumcision (see Gen 17:9-14)?

4. (a) From verses 5-6 what credentials could Paul put in his resumé (use the table in Question 2)?
- (b) Which credentials were given and which were his own achievements?
- (c) How impressive is his resumé?

Verse 1. Paul himself recognises the repetitious nature of this call to rejoice - yet it is the continuing theme of this letter. The word “finally” probably means more “to proceed, then ...”, as he returns to his theme from where he seemed to divert at 2:19. So this verse links back to 2:18 then provides the connection with what follows, as he describes the basis of his own rejoicing, which has nothing whatsoever to do with his physical circumstances.



Verse 2. The “dogs” are the “circumcision party”, teaching that it is OK to become a christian, but you must still be consistent with the law i.e. you need to be circumcised (and, presumably, be consistent at all other levels too. They “do evil” i.e. their evil is bound up in their “doing” - they insist that salvation depends on “doing” (works) and that is the basis of their evil! Their “gospel” is Christ plus . . . ! Paul vigorously opposes them, because it is a denial of grace, and leads to lack of assurance, doubt and uncertainty - and lack of rejoicing!

From Philippians a series of 8 Bible Studies by Roger Green 1997.

5. In verse 3 what do you think Paul means by . . .
- (a) “we are the circumcision”?

(b) “worship by the Spirit of God”?

(c) “glory in Christ Jesus”?

(d) “confidence in the flesh “ (vv 3-4)?

“Put no confidence in the flesh”. The other side of the “Christ-centred” coin is the refusal to gain confidence from our own works - all our righteousness is “filthy rags” (Isaiah 64:6), no cause for confidence there! The combined effect of all this is to totally reject the claims of the Judaising party - the “dogs”.

From Philippians a series of 8 Bible Studies by Roger Green 1997.

6. (a) A Christian is not to have “confidence in the flesh” but is it ok to have self-confidence?

(b) Compare your answer with your answer to Question 1 (c) above.

7. Previously, (a) what could Paul brag about?

(b) what did he think about his credentials?

(c) what place did they have in his life?

(d) What does Paul think of his credentials now?

(e) Can you find any clues as to what caused this radical re-assessment?

8. (a) What two things does Paul compare in verse 8? Explain each in your own words.

(b) Which is better? Why?

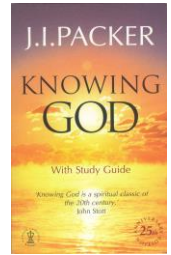
(c) Are they mutually exclusive? Why?

9. Consider the following scenario: A middle aged couple have been coming to your church regularly over the past couple of months. They seek you out for a chat every Sunday but one day they don't show up. They don't come on the next 2 Sundays either. The minister is beginning to get worried and before he asks you if you know what has happened he asks you if you know them.

In this context (a) what does it mean to know someone?

(b) What is the difference between knowing someone and knowing someone well?

(c) In what sense do you know Jesus (Phil 3:8, see also Heb 8:11 = Jer 31:31-34)?



(d) What does it mean that the Lord knows us (Matt 7:21-23 and John 10:14)?

The new covenant achieves intimacy between God and humanity

1. Inward not outward i.e. not robotically followed practices and procedures, but deep inward intimacy with the spirit of God that makes us privy to his desires and hopes and plans
2. Knowledge of God is the primary outcome i.e. very much described in educational and learning terms not moral terms. "No-one will have to teach his neighbour, saying 'Know the Lord' but all will know me from the least to the greatest" [Heb 8:11]
3. Universal and widespread and non-hierarchical knowledge of God among the new humanity i.e. no intermediaries necessary
4. Thus God achieves what he aimed for in the sanctuary – communion and intimacy between God and mankind.
5. This overshadows the 'forgiveness' attribute which is the means to the end. We are forgiven and cleansed in order that we may know God. Hence the forgiveness and cleansing aspect of the new covenant is added as postscript at the end, and gets less emphasis than the intimacy benefit.

From "Hebrews part 4: Jesus and the reverse incarnation" 7/8/2015 by Tony Golsby-Smith.

10. (a) What two things does Paul compare in verse 9? Explain each in your own words.

(b) Which is better? Why?

(c) Are they mutually exclusive? Why?

The apostle Paul shares some of the story of his own conversion from a self-confident Jewish Pharisee to a Christian, and in doing so he clearly shows us what a Christian is and what a Christian isn't.

1. It is a relationship, not a religion. Paul had been a religious fanatic, earnestly building a religious resumé that he thought would impress God and keep him happy. But when he met the living Lord Jesus Christ, everything was turned right side up. Jesus was a person who could be known. Jesus initiated a relationship, a friendship with Paul. It isn't the chummy mateship of equals—Paul knows Jesus is his Lord—but it is a real, personal relationship. Relationships don't work by rituals or impressive performance. And relationships are what life is all about, especially relationship with our Creator.

2. It is about forgiveness, not moral performance. Paul used to consider himself righteous before God because he hadn't blatantly transgressed any of God's law. But meeting Jesus Christ shattered the confidence he had in his own performance, for Jesus had died under the curse of God, shouldering the curse of humanity's sin. And that included Paul's sin. Whether he cared to admit it or not, the fact of Christ's death exposed Paul as a sinner—why would Christ die if Paul's (or our) performance was adequate? And Christ's death offered forgiveness and acceptance with God, which Paul has now embraced. Paul no longer wants to stand on his own before God, relying on his moral goodness, but to be found in Christ, given a righteousness by God. His confidence is now in Christ and his death.

From Partners for Life 8 Interactive Bible Studies from Matthias Media on Philipians by Tim Thorburn p 44.

11. (a) *Why* does Paul recount his “testimony”?

(b) What does Paul hope the Philippians will gain from it?

12. What is the power of Christ’s resurrection in the life of the believer (vv 10-11)?



“The power of his resurrection” is the power, “dunamis”, of Christ liberated by His victory over death, and at work in the life of the believer, raising him from the death of sin into the newness of life in Christ (see Rom 6:4ff, Eph 1:19ff, 2:5).

From Philippians Tyndale Commentary by Ralph P. Martin p 149.

Is there something missing in your life?

You don’t want to miss out on something. False teachers tap into this fear. They say “I’ve got the missing ingredient, come to me”. They lure us into thinking we can get more. But can we add to Jesus? We could end up putting all our confidence in the missing ingredient rather than in Jesus.

Christ + Anything = Nothing (vv 1-3)

Anything – Christ = Nothing (vv 4-7)

From Stephen Gibson preaching on Phil 3:1-11 at St Faiths, Narrabeen 8/6/1997.

To finish

12. One of the “dogs” might argue, “Circumcision is commanded by God in the Bible, so you ought to be circumcised. It is a matter of obedience. You might well be right with God without being circumcised, but you are being disobedient. So get circumcised and be sure of your salvation.”

How would you respond?

13. Look back to Question 2. How would you write your resumé for God?

14. Can you see you are special just because of Jesus?
Or are you trying to become someone you are not?

Study 12, Phil 3:12-16, pressing on

Getting started

1. Looking back - what was exciting when you first became a Christian?



- over the years, why did that excitement diminish?



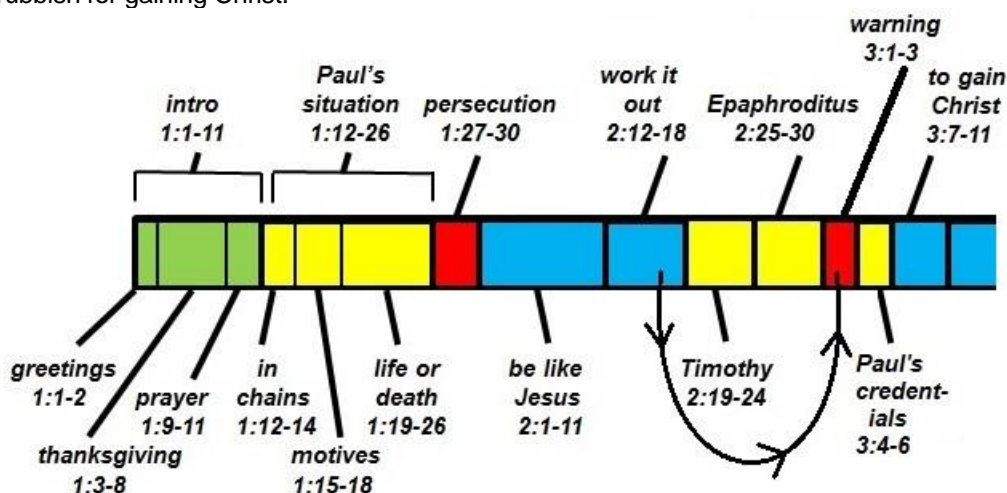
- now that you've heard it all before

- is there any room for growth? If so, how so, if not, why not?

- is there any prospect for excitement? If so, how so, if not, why not?

The story so far . . .

Paul greeted the Philippians and thanked them for being partners with him. He is confident they will continue to grow in their faith and make it till the end. Paul is in prison and either through good or bad motives the gospel is advancing. Paul writes about what might happen in his immediate future. He encourages the Philippians to stand firm, expect suffering, be united and humble, work out their faith and shine like stars. Paul writes about Timothy and Epaphroditus – friends who have helped him greatly. He warns the Philippians about the circumcision group and says that any credentials like that are rubbish for gaining Christ.



Bible

2. Read Phil 3:7-4:1.
Paul pictures the Christian life as being like a race.

(a) Where did the race begin (vv 7-9)?

(b) How did Paul become a runner?

(c) Where is the finish line?

(d) How far has Paul got?

(e) How does he run – which direction, what focus and what level of effort?

(f) What is his attitude to other runners?

(g) What is the prize? Who gets the prize?

3. If your salvation is assured why bother pressing on (v 12)?



4. Bob Dylan made 3 records expressing his Christian faith – “Slow Train Coming” (1979), “Saved” (1980) and “Shot of Love” (1981). The track “Pressing on” comes from his “Saved” album.

Play “Pressing on”.

Chorus: Well I'm pressing on
Yes, I'm pressing on
Well I'm pressing on
To the higher calling of my lord.

Many try to stop me, shake me up in my mind
Say, "Prove to me that He is Lord, show me a sign"
What kind of sign they need when it all come from within
When what's lost has been found, what's to come has already been?

Chorus

Shake the dust off of your feet, don't look back
Nothing can hold you down, nothing that you lack
Temptation's not an easy thing, Adam given the devil reign
Because he sinned I got no choice, it run in my vein.

Chorus

(a) What's the higher calling of our Lord?

(b) What's been lost (v 1)?

(c) What's been found (v 1)?

(d) What's to come that has already been (v 1)?

(e) Why shouldn't we look back (v 2)?

(f) What have we got such that there is nothing we lack (v 2)?

A song from Dylan's "Slow Train Coming" album shows that it wasn't easy for him when he became a Christian but he needed to press on.

"I Believe In You"

1. They ask me how I feel
And if my love is real
And how I know I'll make it through
And they, they look at me and frown
They'd like to drive me from this town
They don't want me around
'Cause I believe in you.

2. They show me to the door
They say don't come back no more
'Cause I don't be like they'd like me to
And I, I walk out on my own
A thousand miles from home
But I don't feel alone
'Cause I believe in you.

3. I believe in you even through the tears and the
laughter
I believe in you even though we be apart
I believe in you even on the morning after
Oh, when the dawn is nearing
Oh, when the night is disappearing
Oh, this feeling is still here in my heart.

4. Don't let me drift too far
Keep me where you are
Where I will always be renewed
And that which you've given me today
Is worth more than I could pay
And no matter what they say
I believe in you.

5. I believe in you when winter turn to summer
I believe in you when white turn to black
I believe in you even though I be outnumbered
Oh, though the earth may shake me
Oh, though my friends forsake me
Oh, even that couldn't make me go back.

6. Don't let me change my heart
Keep me set apart
From all the plans they do pursue
And I, I don't mind the pain
Don't mind the driving rain
I know I will sustain
'Cause I believe in you.

5. What is exciting or challenging about pressing on?

6. (a) What is Paul's attitude towards what is yet to come (vv 13-14)?

(b) In striving forward - what does Paul focus on?

- what does he forget (v 13)?

7. Sometimes “pressing on” can make you overly busy i.e. there are so many things to do and so little time to do it. Sometimes “pressing on” seems unnecessary because you’ve already “made it”. What is the right course to take between these two extremes?
8. How are the mature to think (v 15)?
9. What have we attained (v 16)?
10. What have we attained from these studies in Philippians?

To finish

11. (a) Are verses 12-14 the goal and prayer for your life?
- (b) *Should* verses 12-14 be the goal and prayer for your life? Why/why not?
- (c) What things block or inhibit your goals?
- (d) How can you unblock these?
- (e) What is the way ahead?

Paul is eagerly looking forward to the day Jesus returns, for then he will know him face to face. His hunger for Christ will be satisfied. That is the goal and the prize of Christian faith – to know Jesus. And there is another aspect to the prize – we will be transformed to be like Jesus.

From Partners for Life 8 Interactive Bible Studies from Matthias Media on Philippians by Tim Thorburn p 49.

Study 13, Phil 3:17-4:1, citizens

Getting started

1. Besides Jesus, who do you admire most? Give reasons.
2. (a) Who do you watch to see how they handle different situations, how they react to different things, what motivates them, and what aspects of their character do you admire?

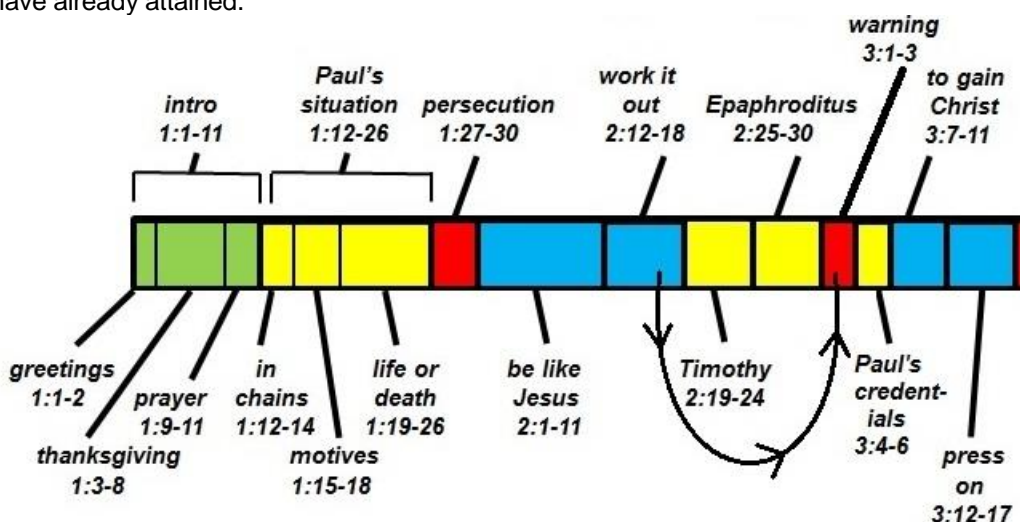


(b) Who watches you, do you think?

(c) What do they see?

The story so far . . .

Paul greeted the Philippians and thanked them for being partners with him. He is confident they will continue to grow in their faith and make it till the end. Paul is in prison and either through good or bad motives the gospel is advancing. Paul writes about what might happen in his immediate future. He encourages the Philippians to stand firm, expect suffering, be united and humble, work out their faith and shine like stars. Paul writes about Timothy and Epaphroditus – friends who have helped him greatly. He warns the Philippians about the circumcision group and says that any credentials like that are rubbish for gaining Christ. Paul says he is pressing on to complete his work and encourages others to live up to what they have already attained.



Bible

3. Read Phil 3:17-4:1.

Verse 18. The “enemies of the cross” are probably the same people Paul warned them about in verses 2-4. They are religious people whose focus is on religious activities.

From the Bible Brief on Philippians from The Briefing magazine # 276 by Tim Thorburn Reading 13.

- (a) What characterises the “enemies of the cross of Christ” (vv 18-19)?

Play CityCharacteristicsMark7MPaget.mp3

What characterises ancient Jerusalem?
 Rome?
 Athens?
 Ephesus?
 New York?
 Singapore?
 Paris?
 Sydney?

- (b) What characterises the citizens of heaven (v 20)?

4. (a) Paul offers himself and his team to the Philippian Christians as examples of citizens of heaven. What reason does Paul give for following their example?

(b) Thinking back over the whole of the letter, what are the particular ‘citizen’ qualities Paul would like to see replicated among the Philippian Christians?

- (c) Are any of these qualities relevant to you today?

Which ones and why are they relevant?

5. Paul, in all his letters, never talks about hell. What do you think he might mean by whatever will happen to the “enemies of the cross” (vv 18-19)?

6. What will our resurrected bodies be like (v 21, see also 1 Cor 15:35-58)?

In most biblical thought, human bodies matter and are not merely disposable prisons for the soul. [The idea that the soul separates from the body at death comes from Homer who lived in Greece at about 850 BC. His ideas, expressed in the Iliad, were that you went to the underworld at death. Pythagoras (570-495BC), Socrates (470-399BC) and Plato (428-348BC) modified these ideas and thought of the soul as being liberated from the body at death and going up through the universe to the planets and stars to live with the gods.] When ancient Israelites wrestled with the goodness and justice of YHWH, the creator, they ultimately came to insist that he must raise the dead (Isaiah 26:19, Daniel 12:2-3) – a suggestion firmly resisted by classical pagan thought. The longing for return from exile was also spoken of in terms of YHWH raising dry bones to new life (Ezekiel 37:1-14). These ideas were developed in the second-Temple period, not least at times of martyrdom (e.g. 2 Maccabees 7). **Resurrection** was not just 'life after death', but a newly embodied life *after* 'life after death'; those at present dead were either 'asleep', or seen as 'souls', 'angels' or 'spirits', awaiting new embodiment.

The early Christian belief that Jesus had been raised from the dead was not that he had 'gone to heaven', or that he had been 'exalted', or was 'divine'; they believed all those as well, but each could have been expressed without mention of resurrection. Only the bodily resurrection of Jesus explains the rise of the early church, particularly its belief in Jesus' messiahship (which his crucifixion would have called into question). The early Christians believed that they themselves would be raised to a new, transformed bodily life at the time of the Lord's return or parousia (e.g. Philippians 3:20f.).

From Paul for Everyone Romans Part 1: Chapters 1-8 by Tom Wright pp 174-175.

7. (a) What does it mean to "stand firm in the Lord" (4:1)?

(b) Why does Paul begin 4:1 with "therefore"?

(c) What ideas are brought together to lead to the conclusion of 4:1?

(d) Look back at your answers to Question 4. Why will living like this mean we can stand firm in the Lord?

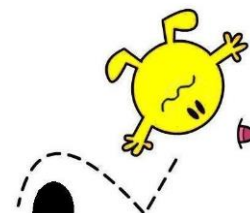
To finish

8. A newspaper columnist argues that Christians need to conform to societal norms when it comes to education, moral values and inclusivity. At 'the office water-cooler' a colleague refers to the newspaper column, asking your opinion as to why Christian organisations are so discriminatory. What might you helpfully say?

Study 14, Phil 4:2-9, stand firm

Getting started

1. What things in your Christian journey have unsettled or threatened your commitment to Christ?

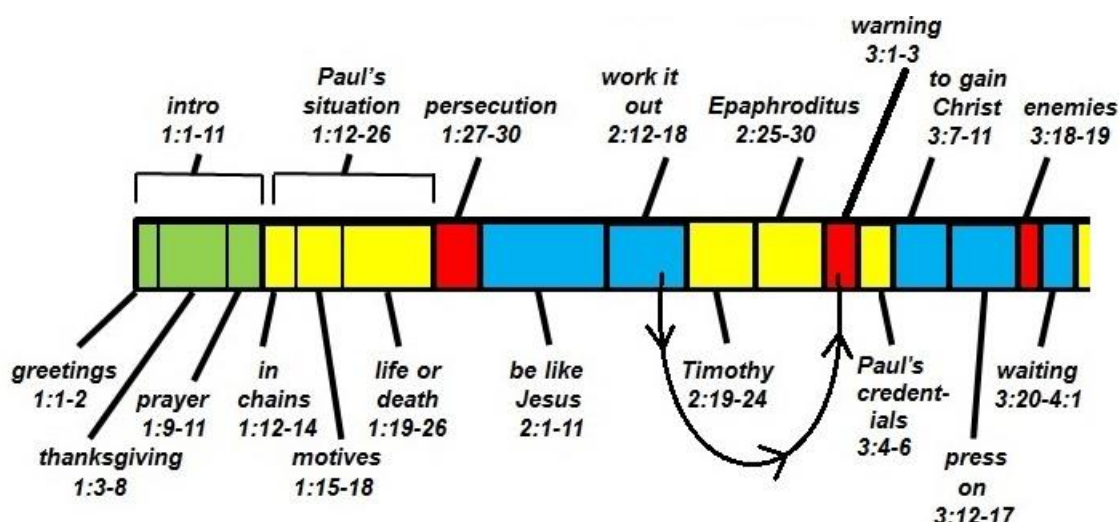


2. What things in your Christian journey have helped you stand firm in Christ?



The story so far . . .

Paul greeted the Philippians and thanked them for being partners with him. He is confident they will continue to grow in their faith and make it till the end. Paul is in prison and either through good or bad motives the gospel is advancing. Paul writes about what might happen in his immediate future. He encourages the Philippians to stand firm, expect suffering, be united and humble, work out their faith and shine like stars. Paul writes about Timothy and Epaphroditus – friends who have helped him greatly. He warns the Philippians about the circumcision group and says that any credentials like that are rubbish for gaining Christ. Paul says he is pressing on to complete his work and encourages others to live up to what they have already attained even if they are opposed by enemies of the cross. Paul and the Philippians have citizenship in heaven and eagerly await the resurrection and Jesus' return.



Bible

3. Read Phil 4:2-9.
(a) In verse 2 Paul pleads with Euodia and Syntyche "to be of the same mind in the Lord" (Bentley Hart). What do you think Paul means?

(b) Looking back over Philippians 1:27 and 2:1-5, why do you think he is so concerned about their relationship?

(c) When Christians fall out with each other what effect does it have (i) on them?



(ii) on their church?

(d) What does Paul do about the problem?

(e) Imagine you are Paul's "true companion" or "loyal yoke-fellow" (v3). Why is it *good* to get involved with these two women in the midst of their conflict?

(f) What might you do to help them resolve their conflict and "be of the same mind"?

(g) What do you think is the mature response when Christians have conflict?

4. What is the "book of life" (v 3)?

[T]heir names find a place in God's record, **the book of life**, wherein the names of the faithful, as the elect people of God in both covenant ages, are written (cf. Ex 32:32, Ps 69:28, 139:16, Luke 10:20 . . .). Christian service may pass unnoticed on earth; the important thing is that God takes note, and will praise the last (1 Cor 4:5).

From Philippians Tyndale Commentary by Ralph P. Martin p 167.

5. Is it unrealistic to say "Rejoice in the Lord always" (v4)? Why/why not?



6. Reflect on verses 4-6.

(a) How would you describe someone who had all these qualities?

(b) What makes it difficult for us to be consistently like this?

7. (a) What is gentleness (v 5)?

(b) Why is it important?

(c) How can you be more gentle?

8. (a) For those susceptible to anxiety verse 6 has the potential to increase anxiety levels rather than lower them. How is this verse to be interpreted, remembering that this command is a “permissive imperative” i.e. “do not be anxious” (NIV) = “allow yourself to not be anxious”?



(b) In verses 4-5 and 8-9 how does Paul encourage his readers to “get some perspective” and how does this assist in allaying anxiety?

(c) What benefits does prayer bring to both the person and the situation?

9. (a) What do you think it means to experience ‘the peace of God’ (v 7)?

(b) What are the dimensions of this peace?

(c) “Peace” seems to be important to Paul in this passage (vv 2-9, esp. vv 7 and 9). How do the qualities of verse 8 promote peace?

(d) What do you think Paul is thinking of in verse 8?

(e) How does all this relate back to Euodia and Syntyche (v 2)?

10. (a) It seems there is a condition on us experiencing God’s peace (v 9). What and why is this?

(b) How important is it to have a “Christian mind (v 8)?

To finish

11. How does all this relate back to standing firm (Phil 4:1)?



12. If we are wise we value important relationships. How can we protect these relationships?

Study 15, Phil 4:10-23, contentment

Getting started

1. (a) Make a quick list of things that your mind has focused on through conversations, TV, newspapers, internet etc. over the past day or so.



- (b) Do these things make you feel discontent? Why/why not?

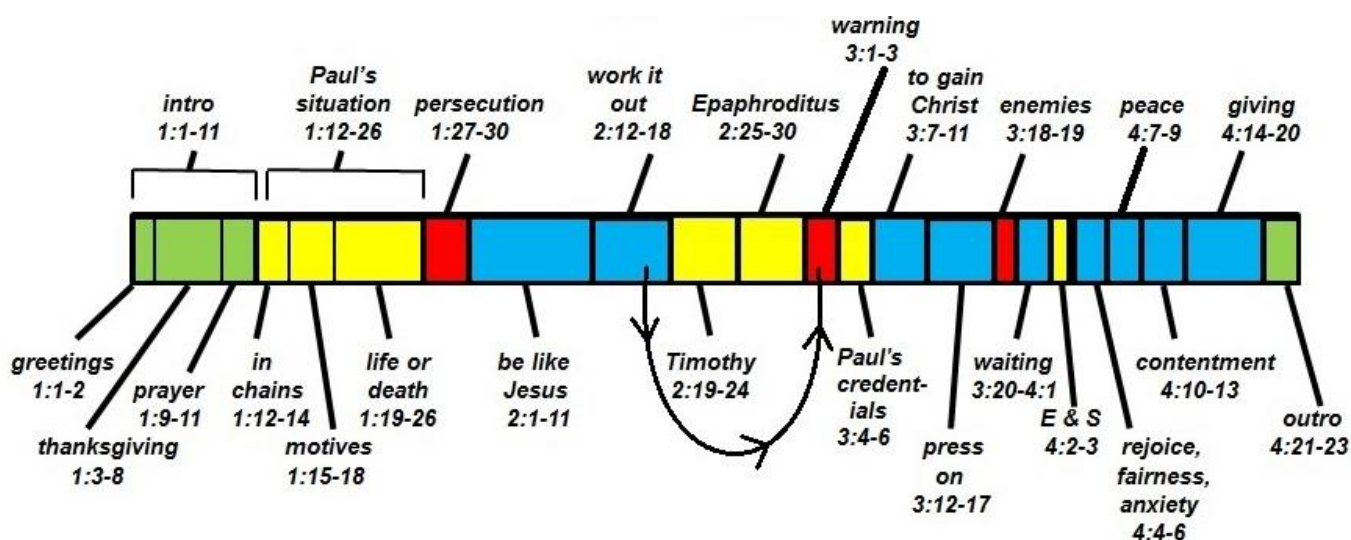


- (c) What aspects of our culture make us feel discontent?

- (d) How can we fight against these things?

The story so far . . .

Paul greeted the Philippians and thanked them for being partners with him. He is confident they will continue to grow in their faith and make it till the end. Paul is in prison and either through good or bad motives the gospel is advancing. Paul writes about what might happen in his immediate future. He encourages the Philippians to stand firm, expect suffering, be united and humble, work out their faith and shine like stars. Paul writes about Timothy and Epaphroditus – friends who have helped him greatly. He warns the Philippians about the circumcision group and says that any credentials like that are rubbish for gaining Christ. Paul says he is pressing on to complete his work and encourages others to live up to what they have already attained even if they are opposed by enemies of the cross. Paul and the Philippians have citizenship in heaven and eagerly await the resurrection and Jesus' return. Paul ends his letter with some words of advice and thanks.



Bible

3. Read Phil 4:8-9.
 - (a) What does Paul encourage us to focus our minds on?

(b) How does this compare with the list you made in Question 1 (a)?

(c) How can we be personally content with these things on our minds?

4. Read Phil 4:10-14.

- (a) Does being content mean
- being apathetic?
 - not wanting your circumstances to be different?
 - never striving for anything?
 - have you any other thoughts on what being content means?

(b) Why would Paul need to learn to be content when "living in plenty" (v 12)?

(c) (i) What are Paul's circumstances at this time (Phil 1:13-14)?

(ii) What do you think is his "secret" (v 12) for being content in every situation?



Paul tells us that there is a **secret to contentment**. The trouble with secrets is that if you don't know the secret, you are left in the dark. And Paul seems to leave us in the dark! But there are some clues to this secret:

1. Paul says he has learned it (v. 11) in his own experience of life. Contentment isn't something that just "comes"; instead, in each circumstance of life (whether poor or rich, hungry or well fed) Paul has learnt to be content *then*. It is learnt circumstance by circumstance. If I can't be content in my present circumstances, I won't be content when my circumstances change either. It is a lie to think that if only _____ would change, I'd be content. We need to learn to be content *now*; then we will be in a position to be content when our circumstances change.

2. Paul can be content now because God strengthens him to be content (v. 13). Paul knows contentment is a very difficult thing to achieve - he can only do it as God strengthens him to do it. And he finds that as he depends on God, God does strengthen him to be content. This sheds light on what we can pray for when we are feeling anxious about the circumstances of life (v. 6). It seems Paul prayed for strength to be content, not simply that God would change the circumstances so everything was easy.

3. Paul also fed his mind well (vv. 8-9). If we continually feed our minds with what we don't have, is it any wonder we feel discontent? If the latest lifestyle television shows, glamorous magazines and computer advertisements fill our thoughts, is it any wonder that contentment eludes us? But Paul is not negative: he calls us to a positive 'censorship'. He doesn't say "Don't think about a mansion by the sea" (what are you now thinking about?), rather "Think about good and virtuous things", like the ways you can love and encourage others in the Lord, or the good gifts of God in creation and redemption.

4. God promises to provide our needs and he has the capacity to keep his promise (v. 19). He has already provided

our most desperate need at enormous personal cost, and so we can trust him to provide whatever we need. The power and the love of God are the key to our contentment.

From Partners for Life 8 Interactive Bible Studies from Matthias Media on Philippians by Tim Thorburn p 56.

(d) How could verse 13 be misused?

(e) What does verse 13 mean in its context?

5. Play 2 verses of “Don’t Worry Be Happy” by Bobby McFerrin.

Here's a little song I wrote
You might want to sing it note for note
Don't worry, be happy
In every life we have some trouble
When you worry you make it double
Don't worry, be happy

Ain't got no cash, ain't got no style
Ain't got no gal to make you smile
But don't worry, be happy
When you worry your face will frown
And that will bring everybody down
So don't worry, be happy
Don't worry, be happy now

How does Christian contentment compare with this “Don’t worry, be happy” philosophy?

6. Do you find it difficult to bring your anxieties and discontentments before God?

If so, why do you think this is so? If not, why not?

7. Read Phil 4:14-19.

The Philippians were Paul’s *partners* in ministry. The *koinonia* ‘partnership’ word is used here in v14, as well as throughout the letter (Phil 1:5, 7; 2:1; 3:10 etc.).

(a) What seems to have been the implications of this partnership for the Philippians?

(b) What do you think might have been happening ‘behind the scenes’ in the church there in support of Paul?

8. (a) Paul’s not looking for another gift from them. What is he looking for?

(b) Why is he pleased that they supported him?

(c) Discuss the relationship between giving and receiving which Paul reflects on in verses 14-19.

(d) How is their gift an acceptable sacrifice (v 18)?

(e) Is it better to give than to receive? Why/why not?

(f) This section has a lot to say about money and the use of it.

(i) Would you say that you are content in relation to money? If not, why not?



(ii) Is there anything in what Paul says here, that could help you learn to be content?

(iii) What does my use of my money show about my priorities?

(iv) How does this compare with the Philippians' example?

(v) Should the gospel affect our finances? Why/why not?

(vi) What is a gospel way of giving?

9. Read Phil 4:19-23.

(a) Why does Paul include verse 19? How can he be sure?

(b) What's the desired result for Paul and the Philippians being in partnership together for the gospel (v 20)?

(c) How important is a greeting?



(d) Could there be any significance in the fact that there were saints in Caesar's household? Who may have witnessed to them or been responsible for their conversion (see 1:12-18)?

(e) Why is verse 23 a fitting conclusion to Philippians?

To finish

10. One of the big ideas in Philippians is "joy" but we have only occasionally noted it during these studies. So we will go back and look at some of the prominent passages.

(a) Read Phil 1:3-5

Phil 1:18-19

Phil 1:25-26

Phil 4:1

Phil 4:10



What sorts of things cause joy?

Does the joy depend on pleasant circumstances? Why/why not?

(b) Read Phil 2:17-18

Phil 2:28-30

Phil 1:25-26

Phil 3:1

Phil 4:4

What sorts of things ought to cause joy?

Should joy be a constant or fluctuating experience for Christians?

(c) How full of joy is your life? Is it just a matter of "be happy"? Or is there more to it?