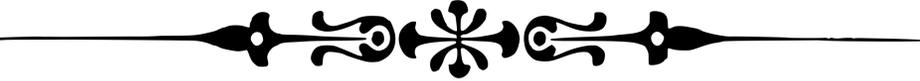


Monday, December Eleventh

Read through the Bible



Philippians



Welcome to our one-week journey through Philippians! This booklet is laid out to help you walk through a portion of Paul's letter every day this week. Whether you start off your day with this, find some time during your lunch break, or sit down with it before you go to bed, the hope would be for you to engage with the Bible on a consistent basis as God engages you and calls you into His story. May your journey be filled with both peace and joy as you reflect upon the wonderful truths of Jesus contained in this short letter. – Vicar Chris

Read: Philippians 1:1-11

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

Located in northeastern Greece, the city of Philippi was one of Paul's stops along his second missionary journey (see Acts 16:1-40). This visit allowed Paul to share the Gospel with a largely secular city, and his witness eventually led to one of the first churches in Europe. But now, years later, Paul writes this letter to the Philippian church from a prison cell. So what exactly is on his mind?

- Why does Paul always pray for the Philippians with joy? Why does he feel so strongly about them? (see verses 4-8)

The members of the Philippian church were clearly very dear to Paul, and vice-versa. As friends, they were likely concerned about his current conditions. But in a very beautiful way, Paul reminds them that the relational bonds they share with him in Christ are stronger than the physical bonds tying him down in prison.

- Why is Paul's prayer that the Philippian church would abound more and more in love? (see verses 9-11)

Respond: Apply what you've learned in prayer and action

It's a blessing to know that we don't have to journey through life alone. Take some time in prayer to thank God *with joy* for your fellow brothers and sisters in Christ who journey alongside you.

Tuesday, December Twelfth

Suppose you're driving down 49th Street when an officer pulls you over for speeding. After gathering your license, registration, and insurance information, he hands you a \$250 ticket, information about a class you can take to keep points off your license, and reminds you this will stay on your permanent record. As you sit there reading over the information, you begin to wonder, "Is there anything good that can come out of this situation?" In today's passage, Paul describes the good that has come out of his situation.

Read: Philippians 1:12-30

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- What does Paul say are the benefits of his imprisonment? (see verses 12-14)

Think back to the opening scenario. You may not have enjoyed getting pulled over for speeding, but what would be the benefits of such a situation? For one, you're probably going to follow the speed limits and pay more attention to your surroundings in the weeks ahead! While Paul didn't enjoy being imprisoned, he was able to look past the difficulties and see the good that was coming out of his predicament.

- Why is Paul unconcerned with whether others preach Christ with selfish intentions? (see verses 15-18)
- In verses 20-24, Paul considers the benefits of living (beyond prison) and dying (in prison). What does he conclude? (see verses 25-26)

Whether he lives or he dies, Paul sees the good in both outcomes – "to live is Christ and to die is gain" (v. 21). His identity does not rest in his circumstance, but in Christ alone!

Respond: Apply what you've learned in prayer and action

Think about a difficult or frustrating situation you are currently experiencing. In what ways might God be using it for your good?

Wednesday, December Thirteenth

If you had a sibling or a close friend growing up, chances are the two of you got into some heated exchanges and arguments. "Hey! Give me that! That's *my* toy!" "No cutting! I was in line first!" "Mom said I was in charge of the remote! We're going to watch what I want to watch!" Now chances are that, at some point, an adult stepped in to break up the argument. In doing so, she or he encouraged the two of you to play nicely together and to share the things you all were playing with. In today's passage, Paul urges the members of the Philippian church to settle their disputes with one another in an effort to bring unity to their community.

Read: Philippians 2:1-30

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- What issue is Paul addressing in verses 1-4?
- What attitude are we to have in everything we do? What will the effect be? (see verses 14-16)

Notice that Paul doesn't say, "Do *most* things without complaining or arguing." He also doesn't say, "Do *reasonable* things without complaining or arguing." What does he say? *Everything*. We are to do everything without complaining or arguing. Now if these instructions came from a king in a palace who could do whatever he wanted all day, you might find yourself thinking, "Well that's easy for you to say!" But instead, the instructions are coming from Paul – an emaciated, dying man in prison who had been greatly persecuted for the sake of the Gospel. Even in his weakest earthly state, Paul was not complaining or arguing. As a sinner saved by Jesus, he instead had everything to give thanks for.

- Why is Paul sending Epaphroditus back to the Philippian church? (see verses 25-30)

Respond: Apply what you've learned in prayer and action

What are some things you often find yourself arguing or complaining about? Ask God to soften your heart to those things.

Thursday, December Fourteenth

In the movie *Toy Story 2*, the cowgirl doll named Jesse faces a dilemma – should she be shipped to a museum overseas where she will be lauded by people for her rarity and history, or should she escape with some other toys to go and be loved by a boy named Andy? Ultimately, Jesse decides that whatever her own merits and achievements, it is much more valuable to go and be loved by a young boy who loves his toys. In today's passage, Paul describes why he puts his own merits aside to be loved by his Savior.

Read: Philippians 3:1-11

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- Who are the Philippians to watch out for, and how are these people described? (see verses 2-4)

Paul cautions his listeners against the Jewish elites claiming that they – Gentiles living in Philippi – cannot be saved without first being circumcised and following the Law of Moses. Instead, he reminds them that they are the circumcision: Christ has saved them not by what they do but by what He has done for them!

- What reasons does Paul have to be confident in himself? (see verses 4-6) How does Paul view his own 'greatness' in comparison to Christ's greatness? (see verses 7-9)

In *Toy Story 2*, Jesse threw away all of her fame and renown for the opportunity of knowing a child who would love her unconditionally. In our passage today, Paul makes it clear that he is willing to throw away all of his fame and fortune for the opportunity of knowing someone who loves him unconditionally – Jesus. In this sense, he is willing to “consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord” (v. 8).

Respond: Apply what you've learned in prayer and action

Take some time in prayer to thank God for giving you the opportunity to know your Savior who loves you unconditionally.

Friday, December Fifteenth

Good coaches know that when their athlete is struggling or slowing down in a race, they must remind and motivate that athlete of what lies ahead. For example, if a swimmer is slowing down on the last lap and sees the other swimmers are catching up to her, she may divert her focus away from the finish line and towards them. The coach, however, will be shouting at her to keep looking ahead at the finish line until her hand touches the pool wall. In today's passage, Paul coaches the Philippian church as to why they must continue to look forward amidst their present circumstances.

Read: Philippians 3:12-21

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- In light of his past and present circumstances, what does Paul decide to do? (see verses 13-14)

As Christians, are we defined by our past or our future? Paul would argue that we are defined by our future (in Christ) because our past (in sin) no longer rules over us. Because Jesus has freed us from the weight of our past, we don't have to look behind us. Instead, we can “press on toward the goal” to which He has called us (v. 14).

- How are we to live in Christian community? (see verse 17)
- What is the destiny for “the enemies of the cross of Christ?” (see verse 18-19) What is the believer's destiny? (see verses 20-21)

In John 15:19, Jesus said, “If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.” In our passage today, Paul reminds us of this principle – that we are strangers in this world because our citizenship is in heaven.

Respond: Apply what you've learned in prayer and action

What things from your past might be holding you back from “pressing on toward the goal” to which God has called you?

Saturday, December Sixteenth

As we approach Christmas in just a little over a week's time, we look forward to a time of peace and joy as we celebrate the birth of Christ. But in the meantime, the holiday season has likely been anything but peaceful for many of us. There are programs to attend, gifts to be purchased, decorations to be hung, food to be prepared, and the list goes on and on. Sometimes, especially during this Advent season, it can be difficult for us to experience peace. But in today's passage, Paul makes the case for why peace is not only possible, but necessary for the life of a Christian.

Read: Philippians 4:1-9

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- How does Paul suggest that Euodia and Syntyche resolve their differences? (see verses 2-3)
- According to Paul, when are we to rejoice? (see verse 4)

Wait, what exactly did Paul just say? "Rejoice in the Lord *always*." Not rejoice in the Lord *sometimes*. Not rejoice in the Lord *when I feel like it*. But rejoice in the Lord *always*. You know why Paul likely said, "I will say it again: Rejoice!"? Because he wasn't sure his listeners would truly believe what he just said!

- Instead of being anxious, what does Paul instruct the Philippians to do? What is the outcome? (see verses 6-7)

Notice whose peace Paul is taking about. He's not talking about some personal inner peace. He's talking about the peace of God. Which means that the peace we should be searching for and longing for is the peace that is completely and totally God's. This means that when life gets tough, it is the peace of God that will guard our hearts and minds in Christ Jesus, not our own.

Respond: Apply what you've learned in prayer and action

Take some time today to do what Paul lays out in verse 6. Then, take a moment to experience what he describes in verse 7.

Sunday, December Seventeenth

A large rock can withstand the waves of an ocean because deep below the water's surface, that rock is firmly anchored into the ocean floor. In our final passage, Paul reminds us where our faith is firmly anchored into when the waves of life crash all around us.

Read: Philippians 4:10-23

Reflect: Use the passage to work through these questions

- How has Paul come to be content with his circumstances, whatever they may be? (see verses 11-13)

Notice that peace and contentment did not come naturally to Paul. Instead, over time, with experience after experience, he *learned* to be content with whatever situation he found himself in. Because his peace was anchored in Christ, Paul learned to be content whatever his circumstances – the good, the bad, and the ugly.

- How does Paul describe the generosity that the Philippian church had shown to him over the years? (see verses 14-18)

Paul closes his letter with a "thank you" to all of those who had met his needs over the years. Even as he finishes writing this letter in prison, he does not forget to recognize their generosity.

Respond: Apply what you've learned in prayer and action

Now that you've read through Philippians, take a moment to evaluate how, like Paul, you can learn to be content whatever your circumstances. How does the Gospel anchor your contentment?

Well, that's the end of Philippians! I pray your time in God's Word has filled you with both peace and joy as you reflected upon the wonderful truths of Jesus contained in Paul's letter. It has truly been a pleasure reading along with you. Merry Christmas, and I'll be back in February for Lent with our next book...Luke. – Vicar Chris

Questions? Comments? Contact Vicar Chris at chris.futch@oursaviorfl.org or (727) 531-2761.