

Sermon Series Notes

Paul's letter to the Philippians

When the Apostle Paul first came to Philippi, he was thrown in jail. In the deep of the night, bound and beaten, he sang a hymn to God (Acts 16:25). During his second missionary journey, in A. D. 49, Paul sensed the Lord calling him to visit Macedonia (Acts 16:6-10). At Philippi he founded the first Christian congregation on European soil (Acts 16:11-40).

A lifelong supportive relationship developed between the Philippians and Paul (Phil. 1:5; 4:15). He visited the church again during his third missionary journey (Acts 20:1,6).

At the time he wrote Philippians, Paul was in prison awaiting trial (Phil. 1:7). Despite this, he was still celebrating the Christian's joy in the midst of suffering, "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!" (Phil. 4:4). The Philippian Christians came to Paul's aid by sending a gift, perhaps of money and food, through Epaphroditus (4:18). During his stay with Paul, Epaphroditus fell desperately ill. But he recovered, and Paul sent him back to Philippi. He sent this letter with him to relieve the anxiety of the Philippians over their beloved fellow-worker (2:25-30). In Chapter 3 Paul discusses the difference between true and false righteousness. The focus of Paul's thoughts in this epistle is the Christ-centered life, the hallmarks of which are love and joy. Paul has surrendered everything to Christ and can say, "For to me, to live is Christ" (1:1), "to be a prisoner for Christ" (1:13), "to live and die in Christ" (1:20), "and to give up all to win Christ" (3:7-8)." Christ has laid hold of Paul (3:12), and Paul's sole passion is to glorify Christ (3:8-9).

Paul longs for his experience of Christ to be repeated in the lives of the Philippians. He prays that they will abound in the love of Christ (1:9), will lay hold of the mind of Christ (2:5-11), and like himself, will know the experience of Christ-His sufferings, death, and resurrection (3:10-11). Because Paul's only motive is to "know Him" (3:10), he shares in the power of Christ and "can do all things through Christ," who is his joy and strength (4:13). Several times in the epistle Paul exhorts the Philippians to translate their relationship with Christ into daily life by being "like-minded" with Christ or "setting their minds on Christ." In the face of opposition, Paul tells them to "stand fast... with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel" (1:27). Differences between Christians can be overcome when the parties have "the same mind in the Lord" (4:2). Paul exhorts the believers to set their mind on the high calling of God in Jesus Christ (3:14-15) and to meditate on whatever is true, noble, just, pure, lovely, and of good report (4:8). To have the mind of Christ is to see life from Christ's perspective and to act toward other people with the intentions of Christ. Paul appeals to us also to be of "one mind" (2:2) in pursuing humility, and cites the example of the incarnation of God in Jesus Christ. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus" (2:5), urges Paul. To be identified with Christ in humility and obedience is the noblest achievement to which anyone can aspire.

Quiz Questions

Philippians Chapter 1



1. How often do words like joy, joyful, rejoice, enjoy, glad appear in Philippians chaps 1 & 2?
2. Who are named as bondservants of Christ?
3. What special servants were among the Christians at Philippi?
4. What terms are used in chapter one to describe church members?
5. Paul often remembered and gave thanks for the Philippians. Why?
6. What did Paul expect God to do with the good work begun in Philippi?
7. Name some things in which the Philippians shared with Paul
8. What kind of love did Paul have in his heart for the Philippians?
9. List the qualities Paul prayed the Philippians might have to the glory of God
10. How did God turn Paul's imprisonment and sufferings to advantage?
11. What would the prayers of the Philippians accomplish?
12. What win-win situation was Paul in, because he was a Christian?
13. For what benefits did Paul want to be with the Philippians?
14. What kind of conduct was expected of the Philippians?
15. When good Christians encounter opposition and face it with courage, what is the opposition a sign of, and the courage a sign of?

