



Glory Quest

PHILIPPIANS



Glory Quest

Since the fall in the Garden of Eden, God has been working His plan to restore creation and redeem humankind from the consequences of sin. Humans as well as creation are marred by the taint of sin, and this is destined to be repaired upon the second coming of Jesus – the return of the King. We can't help but remark "glorious" upon seeing a breathtaking sunrise. We also exclaim "glorious" when we see Jesus act like the saving King in the Gospels. To see God in His full glory and for us to fully comprehend this glory is the *quest* of the Christian life. Today, we see in the mirror dimly (1 Corinthians 13:12) but the day of Christ is coming. Then we shall see clearly, and it will complete us and our quest: we will behold the full glory of God.

Paul is in a Roman prison when he writes his Letter to the Philippians. We see in this 'thank you note' to the church at Philippi hints of his deep understanding of God's master plan. That master plan provides for the restoration of creation, the redemption of humankind and the recovery of the full glory of God not seen since the failure of Adam and Eve which caused the closure of the Garden of Eden to all humankind. The return of this idyllic place is what lies ahead when the King returns to establish the new heaven and Earth, also bringing about the resurrection of His followers into eternal life in new bodies so that we may once again be fully reflective of the image of God. This is the day of glory Paul can almost "see" and it causes immense joy to well up within him as he writes.

How about you? Do you "see" what's coming? How does this future affect how you go about following Him each day? Paul spoke of "seeing" in a mirror dimly but even this fuzzy view of the full glory of God being just ahead raised hope and joy, which overflowed into words of encouragement to all around him, including his prison guards! What is flowing out from you to others because of the good news you have accepted in the Gospel message?

Note: In Philippians 4:8 Paul exhorts the Philippians to discipline their minds to dwell on positive things, and he provides a list of examples. He exhorts them to "think about these things" instead of things that raise anxiety. In each study, a text box (like this one) is included with a topic to "think about." This is for group members to focus on and consider during the week. The last question in each study is for members to share their experience and insights gained through this exercise of refocusing our minds, letting the Spirit speak and guide us, and seeing the world around us with the "mind of Christ" (Philippians 2:5). Allow the glory of God to dwell in you and then shine with His light.

Here is the outline for this new sermon series and the corresponding studies included in this study guide:

1. April 7, 2024: Philippians 1:1-11	6. May 19, 2024: Philippians 2:19-30
2. April 14, 2024: Philippians 1:12-26	7. May 26, 2024: Philippians 3:1-16
3. April 21, 2024: Philippians 1:27 – 2:4	8. June 2, 2024: Philippians 3:17-21
4. April 28 & May 5, 2024: Philippians 2:5-11*	9. June 9, 2024: Philippians 4:1-9
5. May 12, 2024: Philippians 2:12-18	10. June 16, 2024: Philippians 4:10-23

* This passage will be covered in 2 sermons on two successive dates; one study covers this passage.

Study #1: Philippians 1:1-11

Philippians 1:6 "...He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ." How do we stay engaged with God in His good work in us? In what ways do I see Him at work in me?

1. In reading this passage, we clearly understand that Paul is in prison, but that doesn't seem to be getting him down. In fact, he sounds pretty upbeat. (a.) What causes Paul to exude joy instead of despair? (b.) Outside your immediate family members, who causes you to well up with joy? (c.) Considering your current life circumstances, are you readily exuding joy? If not, what is blocking your joy and causing you to be less joyful?
2. In v.5, Paul tells the Philippians that he is very grateful for the "partnership" they have with him in the Gospel. Other translations may use the term "fellowship" or "participation." (a.) What do these alternate translations suggest Paul means when he talks about having a "partnership" with the church at Philippi? (b.) What is it that you do in your life that demonstrates you are in "partnership" with other believers in the Gospel?
3. V.6 is a powerful statement of encouragement, to the Philippians and to us. (a.) What is the "good work" that Paul says was started in each of the Philippians (and us)? (b.) How do you explain to someone what will come to pass on the "day of Jesus Christ"?
4. Paul's prayer in v.9 is that their "love may abound more and more with knowledge and discernment". (a.) Is Paul simply exaggerating here about his wish for the Philippians' experience with God's love – what is he expecting of them? (b.) How are knowledge and

discernment (depth of insight) associated with how we are to love others in an ever-increasing manner? (c.) When we act in this manner, how does this reflect the glory of God?

5. The phrase in v.10, “approve what is excellent” can be translated “agree on what really matters.” (a.) Using the latter translation, how does this enhance your understanding of what it is that Paul is asking of them (and us)? (b.) Why is this an important day-by-day objective for believers looking to the “day of Christ”? (c.) How do you view the “day of Christ” in terms of how it affects your daily outlook and decision-making?

6. Paul concludes the opening of his letter (vs.10-11) by stating his hope that these believers are becoming more “pure and blameless,” and becoming “filled with the fruit of righteousness”. (a.) Do you see growth in your own life with regard to these measures of Christ-likeness? Explain. (b.) Paul says that such growth in a believer’s life is cause to ascribe “glory and praise” to God. Why is this so? What do you understand “glory” to mean in this context?

7. Your experience this week related to the “think about these things” topic:

Background and Other Information:

- Paul likely wrote his letter to the church at Philippi around 55-62 AD while in prison in Rome, the first of his so-called prison letters. Like other prisoners detained for long periods, Paul was dependent on the charity of others for his basic needs. The Philippians, one of the churches Paul had founded during his second missionary journey, collected a cash gift to give Paul, which was delivered by a member of that church, Epaphroditus. Clearly, one objective in Paul's letter was to acknowledge the gift and express his thanks to that church; another was to report back to provide status of their courier, Epaphroditus, who became very ill (to the edge of death) but who had recovered. Of course, Paul takes this opportunity to also be a teacher and a mentor to the members of this church: encouraging, advising and exhorting this church to continue in the faith, being a true partner with Paul in the advance of the Gospel. We see springing out of his gratitude for this church an eruption of joy in spreading the Gospel message, praise for His Lord, Christ (King) Jesus, and the recognition of the glory of God being fully realized/restored as His plan for redeeming this broken world moves inevitably closer to fulfillment – being fully achieved on the day of Christ's return.
- Paul refers to the "imperial" (or "Praetorian") guard in Philippians 1:13. This particular guard was a notoriously rough bunch. Members of this unit were typically veterans and served as bodyguards to Caesar. They were elite fighters, strictly loyal to Caesar, and the only people allowed to bear arms inside Rome's city center where leaders gathered, met and ruled. The loyalty these guards had to their king (Caesar) meant Paul had a real challenge as he shared about his King with those to which he was chained.
- Philippi was a Roman colony that no longer exists. Historical artifacts have been located that define its location which is near the coastal town of Kavala in Greece on the northern edge of the Aegean Sea. As a Roman colony, it was structured as a "miniature Rome" with military leaders assigned directly by Caesar, under full Roman municipal law. In his letter, Paul refers to Philippi having similar challenges as Paul experienced, for which he was imprisoned, as he boldly proclaimed the Gospel. The Gospel message spoke plainly about the fact that Jesus had ascended to His throne as the reigning King over creation. This, of course, was not well-received by the current Caesar, who was supposed to be "the" king and eternal leader (until dispatched by the next Caesar). At the time Paul wrote this letter, Christian persecution was beginning to significantly increase due to the growth in the church as well as the start of the reign by Nero as Caesar, who was particularly hostile toward this new "religious sect". Paul is encouraging the Philippians to live in a manner befitting citizens of a heavenly colony and endure the hardships that openly professing their faith and living out the Gospel may bring while living in a Roman colony. As we see in Paul's writing, he does not shrink from boldly proclaiming the truth as he openly speaks of Christ (King) Jesus and the coming of His Kingdom.
- The letter will continue to stress how important it is to continue to live by and for the Gospel. We will see in Paul's descriptions and by specific mention that the Gospel will be fully achieved in the "day of Christ Jesus". It is at this point that the full glory of God will be revealed as creation is restored, we will be restored with new bodies to fully reflect the true image of God, and the King will be seen as completely victorious – and every knee will bow in the presence of the glory of God. As our study continues, look for Paul's references to our need to advance the Gospel and how that will continue to bring glory and honor to God.

Background and Other Considerations:

- Being imprisoned was a mark of shame under Roman rule. Paul didn't seem to care about his reputation being impacted but he was concerned for the advancement of the Gospel. Yet, as one of the most outspoken and active advocates for the Gospel message, he was not in despair over his imprisonment. Instead, he simply "pivoted" to considering his new environment the place where he now needed to boldly speak the truth about the new King and His Kingdom. Paul takes solace, even pride, in hearing that news of his imprisonment has spread "throughout the whole imperial guard"; in particular, his imprisonment "is for Christ" (Philippians 1:13).
- In vs.15-18, Paul refers to those who "preach Christ from of envy or rivalry." Who these people were is not clear to scholars and commentary writers. They could be Judaizers, those who proclaimed that for Gentiles to be true Christians, they must adopt Jewish/Old Testament traditions and "requirements" such as circumcision and dietary laws. Paul preached a Gospel that called for circumcision of the heart and conduct among believers that was guided by God's love, not Jewish cultural traditions. Some have postulated that there were preachers who took up Gospel preaching as a 'for-profit' business and preacher for pay, relying on the quality of their speaking to garner income as collections were made following their presentation. Paul is not supportive of any of these types of preachers but he is supportive of the Gospel that is preached, trusting that those who hear the kernel of the message and seek more clarity will be guarded and guided by the Spirit of God and true believers to find the truth.
- Does Paul's tolerance for those who seek to advance the Gospel out of false or misguided ideas surprise you? Recall Paul (back when he was named Saul) sought persecution of the young Christian church, causing harm and even death to early church members. When he met Jesus on the road to Damascus and experienced a life-changing conversion, he then had to deal with the memory and consequences of his previous vocation as a Christian-hater. But even Paul found forgiven and a change of heart. Maybe his own experience has softened his view of others who were not as clear/true in their understanding of the Gospel. Of course, the time he spent in prayer, guided by the Spirit, had a lot to do with his general outlook.

Study #3: Philippians 1:27 – 2:4

Phil. 2:3 "...in humility, *count* others more significant than yourselves." When you *count* others in a group around you, do you start by numbering yourself as "#1" and then *count* the others present? Paul would have us begin with *counting* the others first. This week, when you find yourself in a group, start your *counting* with the others. Seek information about them: their name, where they're from, how they came to be present. Be a 'there you are' person; not a 'here I am' person.

1. Paul encourages the church at Philippi to "let your manner of life be worthy of the Gospel of Christ" (Phil. 1:27). Why do you suppose Paul uses the word "worthy" here? How are we to behave/act such that we are "worthy" of the Gospel message we have accepted and carry?
2. Paul warns in v.28 of how "opponents" can interfere with the goal of acting in a manner "worthy of the Gospel". (a.) What do you think Paul is referring to here – what could "opponents" say/do that would have frightened the church at Philippi? (b.) Do we face similar threats from what would be considered "opponents" in our day and location? Explain. (c.) If we were to "stand firm" (v.27), what do you think could be the result?
3. Paul emphasizes a theme of *humility and unity* in this passage. (a.) How can a lack of *humility* cause a break down in *unity* within a body of believers? (b.) How are *humility and unity* key elements in the Gospel and for the Christian community?

Background and Other Considerations:

- The ESV Study Bible points out that the phrase “only let your manner of life be worthy of the Gospel” may also be translated “only behave as citizens worthy of the Gospel”. They link this to Paul’s comments in Philippians 3:20 where he speaks of our citizenship being of heaven. How does this help you understand Paul’s point in Philippians 1:27? Recall from previous studies, Philippi is a Roman colony and “citizens” of Rome carry distinction and pride.
- It is believed that there is a difference between the “opponents” Paul refers to in Philippians 1:28 and those he has called out for preaching the Gospel out of envy/rivalry in Philippians 1:15. The latter are thought to be Christians but do what they do out of selfish motives. The former group (opponents) are likely those who are Roman or are aligned with Roman rule, and disapprove of Christians and their allegiance to a different king (Jesus).
- Paul raises the point that our salvation is on the line when we face tests and trials – we are called to stand firm and demonstrate our allegiance to the King we pledged to follow. This is consistent with Jesus’ own teaching – see Matthew 5:10-12.
- Paul calls for Jesus followers to fully grasp/practice humility and unity. This is not intended to stifle Christ-centered discussion around interpreting God’s word and applying it to today’s issues faced as individuals and/or the church. We can speak passionately about our convictions, differences of opinions, ways to best serve and use resources to advance our personal and church mission priorities. But, at issue is how to do while practicing a humble spirit and seeking to maintain the unity of the body so that the world may see how God’s love works in action. This remains a challenge since the days of Paul. To overcome the challenge, Paul says in Philippians 1:19 that prayer and the Holy Spirit must guide and inform our actions and conversations, even our feelings and motives, to avoid falling into behaving just as the world around us behaves. Failing to be guided by the Word, the Spirit and prayer leads to *conflict* in the church – the world may see this and turn away from Him (while Satan rejoices).
- Raising another to a place of significance and concern equal to or above ourselves is something that we are called to do. It is what God’s love is all about; He treated us this way and He expects us to treat each other in this same way. But how? We have an example to follow and a Helper to enable us. Paul aims to clarify this question in strong and compelling language...but that is what next week’s passage is all about!

Study #4 – Philippians 2:5-11

Phil. 2:5 "...have this mind among yourselves..." We've been challenged to memorize vs.5-11. Write it out on a card or in a note on your phone. Look at it frequently and work it into your memory. But think about what it is saying: about Jesus and about what He wants you to be and do. Also think about the glory of God, evidenced in the Jesus you have come to know.

1. Paul asks the Philippians to adopt the "mindset" of Christ in v.5. How does this help believers in the church with Paul's request that they be: (a.) humble, and (b.) unified?
2. In vs. 6-7, Paul says Jesus, as a human among us, was in the form of God but did not consider equality with God a thing to be grasped. Is this surprising? As one who is fully human (v.7), Jesus presents the image of God just as any other human does – then and now. How does this idea strike you? Is it comforting, hard to understand, does it increase your awareness of how much Jesus was like us, emphasizes how different He was from us? Explain.
3. In vs.6-8, Paul walks us through a progression Jesus took in making His appearance with us here: with God in heaven, became human on Earth, acted as an obedient servant, and submitted in this role to willingly die on a cross for our sakes. How can we adjust our "mindset" to be like Jesus – is this even reasonable?

4. Starting in v.9, Paul takes us through another progression, this time it is Jesus' ascent to glory. Describe this ascending progression.
5. When you think of Jesus, do you "see" Him in His role as the earthly teacher and gentle shepherd, serving and saving the lost; or, as the ascended King on His throne ruling over the universe at His Father's right hand? Which "picture" inspires you the most? Why are both pictures of the same Jesus very important to hold in our mind's eye and contemplate?
6. Imagining meeting Jesus on the day of His return, what images of "glory" come to mind – what you hope to see and what you understand we will see? Does this fill you with excitement, awe, fear, relief, something else? Explain.
7. Your experience this week related to the "think about these things" topic:

Background and Other Considerations:

- Some scholars refer to this passage as the “Hymn of Christ,” postulating that it was indeed a “song” written by Paul or someone else that he included in his letter. There is little evidence that this is true despite the structure of the writing having resemblance to poetic form. However, there is tremendous agreement around how brilliant this passage is in summarizing the life of Jesus, His “mindset” and the result of His mission as Messiah. Jesus’ ascension to the throne furthers God’s plan for redemption of humankind and restoration of the full glory of God by the purging the ill-effects of sin from our fallen state on all creation when He comes again.
- What is the “glory” of God? Moses asked God this question in Exodus 33:18. It involved Moses wanting to see God’s face but God could not allow it. Instead, God instructs Moses to stand in a cleft within a rock wall. God then covered his eyes with His hand as He passed by, and once He had passed by, He removed His hand so that Moses was able to see God’s back. We have recorded glimpses of God’s glory in Old Testament visions. Look at Isaiah 6 and Ezekiel 1. In Matthew 17, Mark 9 and Luke 9 are recorded accounts of the transfiguration in which Jesus, Moses and Elijah appear “in glory.” There is also John’s Revelation which provides fantastic descriptions of scenes in heaven that are difficult to imagine. This reaches a crescendo in depicting glory as one reads the final 4 chapters. In Revelation 21:22-23: “And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb. And the city has no need for sun or moon to shine on it for the glory of God gives it light.”
- Theologically speaking, this passage is considered important in that Paul is making the case regarding the pre-existence of Jesus. Prior to Bethlehem, Jesus was in the *form of God* – a member of the Godhead/trinity, present from before creation and part of the creation event described in Genesis. At Bethlehem, Jesus took on the form of man while still being God, yet having made the conscious decision to not act like God, but like man. Fully God, fully man. Scholars, theologian and skeptics love to argue about this; but we read in vs.10-11 that on His return, all will see Him as He truly is and bow to Him and confess the truth.

Study # 5: Philippians 2:12-18

Phil. 2:15 "...shine as lights in the world..." This reflects Hillside's Vision statement. It is also Paul's expectation of the conduct of the Philippian church as they "do all things". He exhorts them to avoid grumbling or questioning and, instead, to be blameless and innocent. How do we shine with pure and brilliant light in our community, at Hillside and at home?

1. Paul appears to be asking the Philippians in v.12 to press on in their faith and grow even though he (Paul) may not be physically present to help them. How is this good mentoring for this young church?
2. Paul continues in v. 12 with encouragement to the Philippians to "work out their own salvation with fear and trembling." What does Paul mean by this? Is he telling them that he (Paul) can't take on responsibility for them? Is he saying that the work done by God (including Jesus' ministry on Earth) was insufficient and now they needed to "secure the deal" with some action on their part? Explain.
3. What does Paul say the Philippians (and we) must do to shine as lights in this crooked and twisted world? Recall from our study in Exodus how ancient Israel struggled with their attitude toward obeying God and Moses as they were led, first to Mt. Sinai and then on to the promised land – a journey that took 40 years due to God punishing those who did not learn their lesson. Is this a risk to us, being stuck going in circles because we refuse to obey? Explain.

Background and Other Considerations:

- The “work” of the Philippians’ salvation has a parallel with the work of Israel in building the Tabernacle. Recall from our study in Exodus that God did His work of salvation by unleashing His power and wisdom against Egypt such that Pharaoh eventually yielded and let God’s people go. At Mt. Sinai, God gave Moses the designs for the Tabernacle, a tent that God would inhabit so that He could dwell among His people. While God was giving the 10 Commandments to Moses, the people got weary of waiting and ordered up a Golden Calf so they could worship ‘the gods’ who freed them from slavery. God and Moses were most upset with this sin but Moses intervened and called for God to honor His promise to His people and hold back His anger. The people then, in turn, devoted themselves with complete obedience to the building of the Tabernacle – exactly to the plan of God. This act of repentance resulted in God inhabiting the Tabernacle upon its completion. God’s work of salvation (freeing/redeeming them from slavery in Egypt) of His people was already done; the work of God’s people was just beginning as they received the law and then began to understand what it meant to obey and follow and know their God – actions that they owned as their part of the covenant relationship.
- Paul’s phrasing in v.12 (“work out your own salvation with fear and trembling”) has raised many questions among scholars and commentary writers. It appears clear that Paul is referring to the work of growing in your faith as a result of having accepted the Gospel (the ‘word of life’ in v.16) and moving forward to live it out in your life (“working out your own salvation”) – and this is a matter of highest importance (“fear and trembling”) and it is what matters most in your life. This statement comes on the heels of his exhortation to obey Jesus’ teaching (some reiterated by Paul) especially in Paul’s absence – the Philippians must take responsibility for growing in maturity. Paul reminds them that it is God at work in them (v.13).
- The establishment of the drink offering stems from Numbers 28:1-8. Here, the daily sacrificial offerings are prescribed, which involve lambs (one in the morning and one in the evening), along with a grain offering and a drink offering. Again, this is a daily observance. The drink offering (a “strong” drink – likely wine). The practice of this daily sacrifice taught Israel obedience, to be sure, but it also provided them assurance that their God, who provided the replenishment of their livestock and crops to make such a lavish and expensive offering possible, was going to honor His promise of making them prosperous when they arrived at the promised land. There is the daily pain in making the sacrifice (e.g., cost, effort, time) but there is also the daily reminder of His promises, His provision, and His care over them – now and in the future.

Study #6 - Philippians 2:19-30

Phil. 2:19-20 "I hope to send Timothy to you soon...for I have no one like him..." Paul is in prison and is cared for by Timothy and Epaphroditus. Paul talks about sending these two to Philippi to minister to that church. Clearly, these two men mean much to Paul; yet, in his great need, Paul is willing to let them go for the sake of the Gospel in nurturing another church. What are sacrifices do you make in serving Jesus and advancing the Gospel?

1. Read Philippians 2:19-30. We know about Paul. He was a driven man, a theologian, a debater, a bold evangelist, a risk taker and devoted servant (slave) to His Lord Jesus. This passage reveals the heart of this man as he talks about his fellow workers. What do you learn about Paul here?
2. As Paul writes about sending Timothy to the Philippians (since he is not free to go himself), what is his purpose in doing this? How will this benefit the Philippians, Timothy and Paul?
3. What does Paul establish as Timothy's "qualifications" as he proposes this plan to send Timothy to Philippi? If you were writing this endorsement, would you have included different information (e.g., traits, skills, experience) to present Timothy as a good substitute? Explain.

4. Next, Paul states his intention to return Epaphroditus to the Philippians as well. What does he say is the purpose of this plan? How will this benefit the Philippians, Timothy, Epaphroditus, and Paul?

5. As you consider both these “plans” involving the sending of Timothy and Epaphroditus to Philippi, what becomes evident to you regarding what Paul is giving up? How do you suppose this will affect him as he continues his stay in prison? What do you suppose will be the reaction of those guarding (not “caring” for) Paul?

6. Paul makes himself vulnerable in this passage as he describes providing resources to the church at Philippi after they provided resources to Paul. What have you learned about the heart of Paul, and what do you take away from this as something to consider in your life as you serve Jesus in our church and interact with the world around you?

7. Your experience this week related to the “think about these things” topic:

Background and Other Considerations:

- In the 1st chapter of Philippians, Paul thanked the church at Philippi for their “partnership” in advancing the Gospel of Jesus Christ. In Philippians 2:19-30, we read about Paul’s deep affection for his co-workers Timothy and Epaphroditus. As you read about Paul’s view of each of these men, look for the ways these two were clearly “partners” with Paul in doing the work of the Gospel.
- Timothy first met Paul when he joined Paul and Silas as they were on the second missionary trip (Acts 16). This trip, like Paul’s first, took the team out into areas that were predominantly Gentile, although most towns had a Jewish synagogue, which is where Paul usually started his “work” as he entered a new town. Timothy, according to Acts 16, was the son of a Jewish mother (and a Christian) and a Greek man. This mixed marriage meant Timothy was always in a spot when asked about being Jewish (or not). Paul saw this as a challenge for their work together and, with Timothy’s acceptance, circumcised Timothy himself. While Paul was adamant that believers did not need to adopt Jewish customs, Timothy and Paul knew that the issue would continue to surface, especially as they visited new towns on their mission trip and started in the local synagogue. When starting his work with the local Jewish group, being able to state with confidence that both he and Timothy were practicing Jews – but with a difference. The difference was about the Messiah, not about circumcision. Timothy became a supportive and effective partner with Paul in their work. It is noteworthy that, while Paul describes Timothy as being like a son to him (Philippians 2:22), he appears to treat Timothy with great respect and a “partner” of equal status. This letter begins with the greeting “Paul and Timothy, servants of Jesus Christ” conveying a tone of partnership. Even as Paul describes Timothy as being like a son to him, he then notes that Timothy has served *with* him, not *under* him. After Paul’s death, scholars believe Timothy continued to serve the churches in the Ephesus region, and tradition states that he was made the first Bishop of the Church of Ephesus. Tradition also records that Timothy died a martyr’s death late in life in attempting to stop a pagan ceremony in a town where he served the Christian church.
- Epaphroditus made the long journey from Philippi to where Paul was imprisoned (involving hundreds of miles) and carried a large sum of money – at great personal risk. Then, he got very sick and, as referenced by Paul in Philippians 2:27, was near death before making a full recovery. Lacking email, and even snail mail, the church at Philippi must have wondered after a period of time if the gift they sent, and the messenger they entrusted with the gift, ever arrived. Paul’s letter seeks to resolve any questions about both concerns, providing an emphatic ‘thank you’ for the gift and also assurances about the messenger. If there were any suspicions about Epaphroditus’ safety and/or honesty, Paul clears that up by the praise he gives for the service Epaphroditus has provided Paul. Paul then adds the note about the illness that caused the delay in Epaphroditus’ return, leading to Paul’s request that the church honor such a man for the sacrifice made (Philippians 2:29-30).

Study #7 - Philippians 3:1-16

Phil. 3:16 "...hold true to what we have attained." In v.14, Paul speaks of the goal for the prize – the upward call of God. And then in v.16, he exhorts us to hold true to what we have attained. The goal: being there when Jesus comes again. The prize: resurrection (v.11) and glory realized. Until then, we experience growth in faith, knowledge and wisdom. Like climbing a mountain, you don't want to lose elevation gain. Consider what you have attained.

1. In this passage, Paul begins with the word "finally" indicating a transition to a new topic in his letter. He reminds the church at Philippi to be happy, joyful, even celebratory about their standing in the Lord. How do you do this as you go about your daily activities? Is it natural or do you need to be intentional? Explain.
2. Paul then shifts in v.2 to the new topic and his tone changes dramatically. (a.) What appears to be the issue he is raising? Why is this a concern for Paul, and why should it be a concern to the Philippians? (b.) Is the concern Paul raises a concern for us? How so?
3. As Paul addresses the concern he has raised, this leads him to describe in vs. 4-11 a personal battle that he has waged in his maturing Christian walk. Before becoming "Paul", he was "Saul" – a very accomplished Jew. From what you know of Paul, what is the personal issue he dealt with and how has his decision to follow Jesus altered him? (For background, consider these verses: Acts 7 – particularly v.58, Acts 8:1-3, Acts 9:1-8, Acts 9:19-22)
4. In vs. 10-11, Paul begins to talk in terms of "goals." As a devoted Jew, Paul always sought to be righteous – a law follower. But, in Christ, he learned that was not an accomplishment he

could achieve on his own. Accordingly, his goals shifted. What do these verses say he has set his sights on? Are these what you set your sights on? Explain.

5. Speaking of goals, Paul continues his thought into vs. 12-14. (a.) What does he add to his previous statement on that which he seeks to achieve? (b.) What does he share about his transformation that has made this path toward his new goals possible? (c.) What wisdom does Paul provide here that you want to include in your thinking?

6. Paul refers to being “mature” in v.15. The Greek word used here is *teleios*, a word we have seen before. It is also translated to mean “perfect”. Paul admits in v.12 that he is not “perfect”. What point is Paul making to the Philippians, and us?

7. Your experience this week related to the “think about these things” topic:

Background and Other Considerations:

- Paul slips into some rough talk in this passage. First, he refers to the Judaizers as “dogs” in v.2. At the time of Paul, dogs were not cute little pets – they were scavengers that frequented the refuse pits outside the city boundaries and wandered the streets looking for scraps. Dogs were considered equivalent to vermin, a scourge to city life and certainly unclean from a Jewish perspective. Some scholars have argued about the term “dogs” being a derogatory term used by Jews when referring to Gentiles. Could Paul be turning a phrase here to have this negative term applied to Jews who seek to pollute Christianity with unnecessary Jewish customs? It could be that Paul is using the label “dogs” to simply place the Judaizers into the category of evil-doers, seeking to undermine the Gospel message by making Jewish customs a prerequisite to Christian living as opposed to placing such traditional “requirements” from the law as ‘no longer needed’ – we are freed from such things. If this usage is a better fit, then Paul matches what the Psalmist (David) prophesied in Psalm 22 where he wrote a startling picture of the crucifixion of Jesus. At v.16 of that Psalm, David wrote: “For dogs encompass me; a company of evildoers encircles me.” David’s prophecy could readily count the Jewish leaders among the evildoers encircling Jesus as they schemed Jesus’ false sentencing and eventual execution by Roman soldiers.
- Another bit of rough talk by Paul is in v.8 as Paul compares his past accomplishments and status with what he now has in Christ. He mentions his proper circumcision, his lineage, his Pharisaical training, and his persecution of the early church as a heretic sect contrary to the Jewish faith. All these things he now counts as loss and emphasizes this by calling them “rubbish”. The Greek word here is *skubalon* which is also the term used for dung or refuse such as the excrement from animals. His point is clear. Maybe his choice of words was inspired as he dogs in mind from v.2.
- Recall that the Jewish Sanhedrin, the ruling Council for Jewish matters of law and social edicts at the time of Jesus, was mostly made up of members of two ruling “parties”: the Sadducees and the Pharisees. We read much in the Gospels of Jesus’ interactions with the Pharisees as they were the majority “party”. Paul was a Pharisee and, true to the party’s beliefs, they believed in the resurrection of the dead. Paul must have been greatly pleased to learn that Jesus clearly was the means by which resurrection was to be a reality for those who followed Him. We see how important this was to Paul in his emphatic statement in v.11.
- Paul ties some threads together in v.16. He has talked about not yet being “perfect” in v.12 (based again on the Greek word *teleios*) in reference to growing to know and be like Christ; and then being “mature” (also the Greek word *teleios*) in v.15, referring to the ongoing growth we are to experience as the Holy Spirit continues His work in us to transform us to be Christ-like. In v.16 he strongly encourages us to “hold on to what we have attained”. What we have is the Gospel, and our increasing understanding of what it is and how it is the pathway for our salvation and the accomplishment of God’s restoration plan for creation and redemption plan for humankind. The fulfillment of these things is what brings us into the experience of the full glory of God. This pending reality clearly gets Paul worked up.

Study #8 – Philippians 3:17-21

Phil. 3:21 (Jesus) "...will transform our lowly body to be like His glorious body." Are you ready for an upgrade? It is our hope and promise, one that raised great excitement in Paul's mind (see Philippians 3:11). This is a hope/promise to raise excitement in our minds.

1. Jesus became the best example for us to follow since He lived a full life as the perfect image of God in our midst. In v.17, Paul advises us to also look to those around you, those who "walk" in the way that you should – as we imitate Jesus, also imitate those who present positive role models and examples of Godly living. How has the positive influence of others you have watched/listened to (role models, mentors, teachers, family and friends) made a difference in your life, and why has this been a good strategy for you to follow?
2. Paul infers that he (and other leaders in the other church) are expected to serve as examples for others to follow. (a.) What does this mean about the outward behavior called for in such examples? (b.) Are you an example to others? How mindful are you about the way you act throughout your day considering you may be watched/listened to as a model?
3. Paul laments in v.19 about those who are misguided/misled about the truth in the Gospel and do not serve as models for any believer. This suggests that we too must be watchful and wary to pick good vs. bad examples to follow. Is such judging appropriate? What help do we have in this activity?

4. One clue to discerning who falls into the camp of those worth watching/listening to involves the evidence of “citizenship” a person has (v.20). (a.) What does Paul mean by “citizenship”? (b.) How does one’s claim of citizenship help you to know who to hold in regard as an example for you to learn from?

5. Paul, who was a Jew and a Roman citizen, has used both associations to get him access to present the Gospel and/or provide him protection from those who oppose his efforts to advance the Gospel. Why is heavenly citizenship a far more important association to Paul (go back to vs.10-11 for more on Paul’s thinking in this regard)?

6. Philippi was a Roman colony dating back to around 40-30 BC. As a “colony” it was seeded with Roman soldiers as a place to live and establish a Roman presence and elevate Roman culture. Paul certainly understood this. But Paul may be suggesting to the believers in Philippi that they are now colonizers as citizens of heaven – seeded in that town to establish a Christian presence, promote the Gospel of Christ, and elevate God’s ways. Is this a valid way to look at how we are to view our lives here in the Walnut Creek area? Explain.

7. Your experience this week related to the “think about these things” topic:

Background and Other Considerations:

- It is not clear who Paul is referring to as the “enemies of the cross” in v.18. Again, he could be pointing to the Judaizers, as they would continue to raise road blocks to new believers who seek to live free of the law and Jewish customs. These included dietary restrictions, the strict requirement of circumcision, following patterns of Jewish life that are not called for by Jesus’ teachings – all these fit within the complaint Paul makes of these enemies whose “god is their belly”, they “glory in their shame” (instead of the grace to live under Jesus as our righteousness), and their “minds are set on earthly things” (holding practices such as circumcision as more important than loving God and neighbor). Paul’s “tears” could be because many of these people are Jews like Paul but they remain blind to the Messiah who was in their midst yet they chose not to recognize Him.
- Paul says “we” (meaning all believers from then until now) wait for the “Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ” (v.20). Our “wait” is for His return. Jesus is our Savior now, but Paul is talking here about the completion of the Gospel mission: the establishment of Jesus’ Kingdom and the welcoming of His citizens now fully completed with resurrection bodies. Seeing the King, seeing the new Heavens and Earth, and seeing each other in our new resurrected state will be the most glorious thing we’ve ever witnessed. Paul simply refers to this event in his writing as “the day of Jesus Christ”.
- Julius Caesar was assassinated in 44 BC. His heirs (Mark Antony and Octavian) organized a Roman squad to go after, confront and defeat the assailants (Marcus Junius Brutus and Gaius Cassius Longinus) in the Battle of Philippi in 42 BC. Not long afterwards, some of the veteran soldiers of that squad were released to lead the colony at Philippi. As the colony was formed, parcels of land were assigned to the veteran soldiers who stayed and chose to lead the colony – a “reward” to those loyal to the new Caesar. Being located on the main trade route and having resources to trade with due to production from local mines, put Philippi “on the map” and helped it to thrive.

Study #9 - Philippians 4:1-9

Phil. 4:4 "Rejoice in the Lord always; again, I say rejoice!" Do you think believers around you are not as happy as they should be? How about you, do you exude joy, as you go about your day? What needs to be in your mind to bring your level of happiness up?

1. Paul opens Chapter 4 with a "therefore", suggesting another conclusionary statement. In the ESV, Paul says "stand firm thus," alluding to comments just made in Chapter 3. Looking back at Philippians 3, what do you see as Paul's main points?
2. In 1:27, Paul also mentioned "standing firm" and he goes on (into Chapter 2) to talk about the need for humility and unity. Here in Philippians 4:2, he mentions a conflict between two women in the Philippian church, the substance of which is not revealed. What is your view on Paul's approach to resolve this conflict through an appeal in this letter?
3. In v.4, Paul returns to a main theme evident in this letter: we need to celebrate continuously regarding our status in the Lord. He states this twice to add more emphasis. Do you "rejoice" enough? If not, what gets in your way? If you do rejoice often, how did you develop this "good habit"?
4. V. 5 is the next imperative that Paul gives the Philippians: Let your gentleness (or reasonableness) be evident to all. What do you understand this to mean, and why do you

Background and Other Considerations:

- The letter to the Philippians opened with an unusual greeting. Paul included in the address “overseers and deacons”. Some scholars have speculated that the two women he mentions at the beginning of Chapter 4 (Euodia and Syntyche) may be church leaders, making their public conflict all the more a concern for Paul. In the letter, he has stressed how important unity and humility are, in addition to treating others as being more significant than yourself. His encouragement in Philippians 3:17 to follow his example (or another positive role model) places emphasis on how important it was for church leaders to recognize how their conduct impacted those within the church. It is a gentle plea for reconciliation, but Paul must have placed importance on it to have called out these women by name. Ultimately, Paul’s greater concern is for the health of the body of believers at Philippi and this was an issue that needed to be fixed.
- In this section of the letter, Paul also refers to “Clement” – who is he? Well, not much is known of him, and why Paul would mention him by name followed by, “and the rest of my fellow workers” is a puzzle. Could it be Paul is calling out a leader who is presenting himself as a positive role model? Could he be gently “entreating” Clement to get involved and help resolve the conflict between the two women? We don’t know. It is a nice reminder that Paul ends this section with the note that these co-workers in advancing the Gospel have their names in the Book of Life. When we have the opportunity, we can look them up in that book.
- The statement Paul makes in v.5, “The Lord is at hand” is another puzzle scholars and commentary writers have discussed for quite a while. Is that phrase tied to Paul’s exhortation to “let your gentleness be evident to all”; or, is it tied to v.6 regarding not being anxious? Some pick the first, some pick the second, and some of the wise writers suggest it helps to apply it both ways – it works!
- Related to v.6, Paul is not saying that having an experience of anxiety is wrong/sinful behavior – unless you hold onto that anxiety and let it dictate how you do life. Paul admits to having some anxiety himself in Philippians 2:28 over the situation with Epaphroditus, where Epaphroditus became ill and was delayed in returning to Philippi. Paul’s concern was valid and a caring reaction; plus, he was powerless to change the situation – other than to pray, which is a likely ‘first step’ for one such as Paul. It is also likely that in his prayer he was quick to point out how thankful he was for these two men and all that they have done to serve him. That thanksgiving ends up being part of this letter (see Philippians 2:19-30).

Study #10 -Philippians 4:10-23

Phil. 4:11 "...for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content." Paul appears to be stating that he has choices, no matter where he finds himself. One choice he always has is to be content. Can you say that? Even right now? Why not?

1. Looking back through this letter, we have heard Paul rise to great heights of joy and excitement, and we have heard Paul express concerns, even anxiousness, over situations affecting him. In v.11, he claims that he can choose "to be content" at any time. (a.) What do you suppose is his basis for this claim? (b.) What does "being content" mean to you? Can you claim what Paul claims, that he can decide to be content in any situation? Explain.
2. In v.12 Paul shares that he has learned "the secret" to dealing with and facing any difficult situation. This statement when read to the Philippian church must have caused many to lean forward in hopes of this "secret" being revealed. What is this "secret" and is it available to us? If so, how do we lean into using this secret in our lives with the same confidence Paul is expressing here?
3. The gift that Epaphroditus delivered from the Philippian church was much needed and greatly appreciated, and Paul expresses his thanks starting in vs.14. (a.) How does Paul model humility and trust in God as he expresses his appreciation to the believers at Philippi? (b.) What strikes you about the way he says "thank you!"?

Background and Other Considerations:

- In v.11, Paul says he has learned “to be content.” The Greek word used here for “content” is *autarkes*, and this word can be translated to mean sufficient or self-sufficient. In the context, the understanding is that Paul is saying he has all he needs to be at peace with his situation. Considering he is in prison, and that he has decided that Timothy and Epaphroditus, his helpers and support, are to be sent to Philippi, leaving Paul alone, this is a striking statement. But in this letter, Paul has also taught that God provides what we need – both material needs and spiritual needs. Paul is content because God is with him. God is using Paul, even though in prison, to advance the Gospel. God has impressed upon Paul’s heart with increasing clarity a picture of the glory that is not far ahead. Because of this, Paul fully believes he can do all things through Him who strengthens him (v.13).
- In v.17, Paul makes a remarkable statement: he says that he didn’t seek the gift as much as he sought the “fruit that increases to your credit.” What does this mean? Paul is saying that the Philippians have pleased God and honor Him, and that will return a reward from God as well as pleasing Paul as he sees the church he founded mature. Paul is recognizing that God “loves a cheerful giver.” Look at 2 Corinthians 9:6-15. The language Paul used in his letter to the church at Corinth is very similar to this letter to the church at Philippi.