Philippians

Chapter 1

Vocabulary:

partnered: worked together

demonstrated: showed

remain: stay close to /continue with

sustenance: all that we need to stay alive

bear fruit: show that we belong to God, serve others, share the gospel

witnessed: saw firsthand – personally

mattered: was important

A. Greetings

Paul wrote this letter while he was under house arrest in Rome. Paul first visited Philippi eleven years before he wrote this letter. Paul sent this letter to all the believers including those who were leaders in the church.

Read Acts 28: 30-31, Acts 16:11-12, Philippians 1:1-2

B. Paul prays and give thanks

Paul thanked God every time he thought about the believers in Philippi. Paul rejoiced because the Philippians had partnered with him in sharing the good news of Jesus. In Paul’s letter to the Corinthian church, he told them about the church in Philippi (Macedonia). Although the believers in Philippi suffered much, they were full of joy. Even though they were poor, they gave freely both of their time and money. Paul knew that God was at work in hearts of the believers in Philippi and that God would continue to complete their growth until He returns.

Even though the Philippian church demonstrated love well, Paul still prayed that their love would grow more. In particular, their love should be based on knowledge and understanding. Then the believers would know the best way to respond in love to those around them. Paul said that their lives would be full of good fruit. For believers to bear fruit, we must remain in Jesus. In the gospel of John, we read that Jesus is the vine and we are the branches. We survive, get our sustenance, and bear fruit only if we are joined to Jesus. Without Him, we can do nothing.

Read 2 Cor. 8:1-5, Philippians 1: 3-11, John 15:5

C. Paul spreads the Good News while in prison.

The Philippians witnessed God’s power in saving Paul when he was in prison in Philippi. Paul and Silas were attacked by a crowd, beaten, and thrown into prison. God created an earthquake to rescue them. Would God do the same in Rome? This time Paul’s imprisonment was different. Romans 8 tells us that God works in all things and circumstances for the good of those He loves. Paul understood this very well. His time in prison was a good thing. Paul was being held because he was a witness for Christ. He was a witness to the prison guards as well as his fellow believers. Many believers began to preach the good news boldly.

Read Acts16: 22-26, Romans 8:28, Philippians 1: 12-14

Some people preached the gospel because they loved God and wanted to help Paul. However, others preached because they were jealous. They spread the gospel to make more trouble for Paul. As long as the true gospel was being heard, it was okay with Paul. Why? Because faith comes from hearing the message about Christ.

Paul knew that through the prayers of the Philippians and God’s Holy Spirit, Paul would be delivered by either leaving prison or by his death. The most important thing to Paul was that Christ would receive glory, either by his life or by his death. As Paul wrote in Galatians, he has been crucified with Christ. To Paul, only Christ mattered. If Paul survived, then he could continue his work for Christ. But Paul’s true desire was to be with Christ. However, it was necessary for Paul to remain so that he could help the Philippians grow in their faith.

Read Romans 10:17, Galatians 2:20, Philippians 1: 15-26

D. Living to honor the Good News

Paul encouraged the Philippians to honor God by living for Him. He also reminded them to be one in the Holy Spirit. Paul also mentioned the importance of being one in the Spirit to the churches in Ephesus. He said instead of being proud, be gentle, patient, and forgiving of one another. The Holy Spirit makes us one so we should strive for peace. As the Philippians live for Christ, people will oppose them. Paul encouraged the Philippians to continue and not be afraid. Those who oppose them will learn who God is. The believers will have struggles and suffering just as Paul has experienced.

Read Ephesians 4: 2-3, Philippians 1:27-30

Questions

1. Where was Paul when he wrote this letter?

2. What were the believers in Philippi like?

3. How did Paul want the Philippian believers’ love to change?

4. What do we need to bear fruit?

5. Why was Paul’s time in prison a good thing?

6. What was the most important thing to Paul?

7. As believers, who makes us one?

Philippians

Chapter 2

Vocabulary:

unity: to agree and be in harmony

ambitions: a strong desire to do or achieve something

consumed: obsessed about something

accomplishments: things you have done

equality: equal

restored: returned

A. Be humble like Christ

Does belonging to Christ help us? Do we receive comfort from His love? Of course, we do. In fact, God gives us comfort that lasts forever through His grace. Does Jesus love us? Of course. Jesus said that no one has greater love than the one who gives their life for their friends. That is exactly what Jesus did for us.

Because of this, we should love one another and have unity. Jesus told us to love one another just as Jesus loved us. Jesus also desires that we will be one as the Father and Jesus are one.

Read 2 Thess. 2:16, John 15:13, John 13:34, John 17:21, Philippians 2: 1-2

Don’t be so concerned about your own selfish ambitions. Don’t be consumed with pride over your accomplishments. Instead, we should be humble and value other people more than ourselves. As Paul writes in Romans, we shouldn’t think too highly of ourselves. It is God who has given us our faith. Jesus should be our model as we interact with others. Jesus shows us what it’s like to be humble. He chose to give up his equality with God. Instead, Jesus made himself a servant. In human form, Jesus obeyed God in all things – even to the point of death. In fact, Jesus became a curse for us by dying on the cross.

Because of Christ’s obedience, God has restored His Honor and Glory. At the very name of Jesus, everyone in the world will kneel down and worship Him. Everyone will say that Jesus is the Lord.

Read Romans 12:3, Gal. 3:13, Philippians 2:3-11

B. Live without complaining

The believers in Philippi had been very faithful in obeying God. Paul encouraged them to continue being faithful. As Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, they were living to please God. Paul desired for them to keep doing it and to increase their faithfulness. God was working in their lives for His purpose and His pleasure. Paul reminded them to continue working but without complaining or arguing. When we do things without complaining, we can be an example to the world. Paul didn’t mind being a sacrifice for the Philippians. In fact, Paul told the believers in Rome to offer themselves as living sacrifices to God. This is the best way to honor God.

Read 1 Thessalonians 4:1,10, Romans 12: 1-2, Philippians 2: 12-18

C. Timothy and Epaphroditus

As mentioned before, Paul was in prison when he wrote to the Philippians. Therefore, he wasn’t able to see the Philippians in person. Paul wanted to send Timothy to visit them. Timothy was a very faithful believer who had served with Paul. Paul thought of him as his son in the faith.

Paul also wanted to send Epaphroditus back to the Philippians. Epaphroditus came to Paul to help take care of his needs. While he was away, Epaphroditus became very ill. In fact, he almost died. Paul knew that the believers in Philippi were concerned about Epaphroditus. Paul encouraged the Philippians to welcome Epaphroditus with great joy.

Read 1 Timothy 1: 2, Philippians 2: 19-30

Questions

1. Does Jesus love us? How do we know?

2. How should we view ourselves and other people?

3. How did Jesus demonstrate humility?

4. The Philippians were faithful. What did Paul desire for them?

5. What can happen if you do things without complaining?

6. Which 2 people did Paul want to send to the Philippians?

Philippians

Chapter 3

Vocabulary:

journey: the path of their life

cut away: removed

accomplished: something we have completed or done

Benjamin: one of Jacob’s sons

Pharisee: teacher of the law

imitate: be like someone

in the blink of an eye: very quickly

A. Do not put your faith in yourself – Put your faith in God

One important reason to be joyful is simply that we belong to God through Jesus’ sacrifice. Paul wanted to write to the Philippians to help and encourage them as they continued their journey as God’s children. Paul told the Philippians to watch out for people whom he referred to as dogs or evildoers. These people were most likely Jews coming from Jerusalem. Many times, they would follow where Paul had preached to the Gentiles. When they arrived, the Jews would demand that the people should be circumcised. An example of this can be seen in Paul’s letter to the Galatians. Jews were trying to make the believers follow Jewish laws and to be circumcised. Paul told them if they chose to be circumcised, then Christ would not be important. Instead of being saved through Christ, they were trying to obey the law on their own.

Paul explained in his letter to the Romans what true circumcision was. True circumcision occurs in a person’s heart through the Holy Spirit. Our old life is cut away. When the Holy Spirit circumcises our hearts, we can boast about what Christ has done. We shouldn’t put our hope and trust in what we have accomplished or who we are. If anyone has a good reason for trusting in themselves, it would be Paul. Paul was a pure Jew from the family of Benjamin. He was an important Pharisee. Paul kept the law perfectly and attacked the believers. Now, Paul considered his past as nothing compared to knowing Christ as his Savior. Paul’s greatest desire was to know Christ better and to become like Him. This was Paul’s goal, and like a runner, Paul continued to push to win the prize of Christ Jesus himself.

Read Galatians 5:2-4, Romans 2:29, Acts 22: 2-5, Philippians 3: 1-14

B. Follow Paul’s example

We must continue to grow in our faith. Even if we think differently sometime, God will make it clear to us. We should follow the example of Paul and the other believers written in the scriptures. John says that we should imitate those that do good. Unfortunately, many believers live like they are enemies of Christ. John also describes these enemies of Christ. He says that they didn’t really belong to Christ. If they did, they would have remained. Paul said that these people only cared about earthly things. They brag about things that they should be ashamed of.

Jesus tells us that as God’s children, we should hunger and thirst after righteousness. We are citizens of heaven, and we await the coming of the King, Jesus Christ our Lord. And when He comes, we will be changed. Like a blink of an eye, our bodies will be changed into eternal ones.

Read 3 John 1:11, 1 John 2: 19, Matt 5:6, 1 Cor 15: 51-53, Phil. 3: 15-21

Questions

1. Why should we be joyful?

2. Who were the dogs or evildoers and what did they want?

3. What is true circumcision?

4. Why was Paul’s past a reason for trusting in himself?

5. What was Paul’s greatest desire?

6. Who should we imitate?

Philippians

Chapter 4

Vocabulary:

persevering: continue regardless of the circumstances

conflict: disagreement

overcome: to resolve or find a solution

content: happy, comfortable with

A. Remain strong in the Lord

Paul began this last chapter with the words “in this way”, or therefore. This statement always refers back to a previous topic. In this case, Paul was talking about waiting for Christ to return and how our bodies would be changed. So, as we look ahead, what should we do? Paul tells us to remain strong in the Lord. Keep persevering.

Paul addressed an important issue which was happening in the church. Two women who were believers were having conflict. Paul encouraged the church to help these women overcome their differences. They as well as the other believers have their names written in the book of life. The book of Revelations refers to this as the Lamb’s book of life. This book contains the names of everyone who has been saved through the blood of the Lamb, Jesus Christ.

Read Phil 4:1-3, Rev. 21:27

B. Final commands

Paul encouraged the Philippians to be joyful. Why? Because they belong to the Lord. We should show the world our gentleness. In Ephesians, Paul says to be kind and tender towards one another. We should always forgive others since God forgave us because of what Christ did.

We should not worry about anything. Instead, we should tell God about our concerns. Jesus even told us not worry. He said that we shouldn’t worry about our lives, what to eat, or what to wear. God will take care of all our needs. When we put God’s Kingdom first, He will give us everything that we need. When we give our worries to God, His peace will guard us.

Read Ephesians 4:32, Luke 12: 22 and 31, Philippians 4: 4-7

We should fill our minds with what is good, honest, and true. We should think about things that are worthy of praise. One good way to fill our minds with what is true and honest, is to read God’s word. We can think or meditate on what God says.

Read Joshua 1:8, Philippians 4: 8-9

C. Paul gives thanks for the Philippians’ gifts

Paul was grateful that the Philippians were concerned for him because it showed that they cared. However, Paul learned to be content in whatever his circumstance. Ultimately, whatever the situation, God gives us strength to endure.

After Paul left Macedonia, only the believers in Philippi sent money to help Paul in his journey to preach the gospel to other countries. However, Paul didn’t really care about the gift itself. The Philippian believers were being obedient to God and were showing great generosity. As it says in 2 Corinthians, God loves a cheerful giver. These gifts were a sweet sacrifice to God. Because of their willing sacrifice, God will meet all of their needs and give them blessing upon blessing.

Read 2 Cor 9:7, Philippians 4:10-20

D. Final greetings

Paul ended his letter by sending greetings to all the believers. He included greetings from fellow believers who were there in Rome with Paul. He also included greetings from believers within Caesar’s palace. So even though Paul was in prison in Rome, he was still able to spread the gospel even to guards and other people working at the palace.

Read Philippians 4: 21-23

Questions

1.As we look ahead and wait for the Lord, what should we do?

2. What is the Lamb’s book of life?

3. Why should the Philippians be joyful?

4. Why should we forgive others?

5. What should we do with our concerns or worries?

6. What should we fill our minds with?

7. What was important to Paul about the Philippians gift?