



LIVING AS CITIZENS OF THE LAND CALLED **GOSPEL**

DARRELL W. JOHNSON
FIRST BAPTIST CHURCH – VANCOUVER, BC

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“Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

- Philippians 2:5-11

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Living As Citizens of the Land Called Gospel **Studies in the Letter to the Philippians**

No other letter written by the apostle Paul conveys both tender warmth and zealous passion as does the letter he wrote in the early 60s of the first century, a letter from a Roman prison to the disciples of Jesus living in Philippi. As we can “feel” as we read the letter, Paul enjoyed a particularly close relationship with that congregation, as reflected, not least, in their on-going financial support of his ministry.

This is why many scholars refer to Philippians as “a friendship letter.” The first line of the letter (after the greeting) sets the tone for all that follows:

“I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, in view of your participation [koinonia] in the gospel from the first day until now” (1:3-5).

Expressions of deep friendship continue: “I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus” (1:8); “brothers and sisters” (1:12; 3:1; 3:13;3:17); “my beloved” (2:12); culminating in “my brothers and sisters, whom I love and for whom I long” (4:1). The more we read this “friendship letter,” the more we will learn what it means to be “friends in Christ,” and the more we will grow into that friendship.

Why did Paul write this letter? To express his love and longing. And to call his friends to “stand firm” (1:27; 4:1) in the face of both internal and external problems.

Internal. As we discover when we read the letter, there were in the congregation some who were not understanding the true nature of the Christian life; that is, they were not understanding that the Lord who “seized” them (3:12) is the Servant-Lord (2:5-11); and that to belong to and follow Him is to live the life of a servant (2:1-4), putting others’ needs before our own. Paul writes to call the congregation to this radically alternative orientation to life.

External. As we discover when we read the letter, the congregation was experiencing in Philippi the same pressures, the same “conflict,” that Paul was experiencing in Rome (1:30). Philippi was a Roman colony, and proudly so (an understatement). Unlike other cities brought into the Empire, those in Philippi were given Roman citizenship, an immense privilege (another understatement). The city was fiercely loyal to Rome, so much so that many referred to it as “Rome in miniature.” The primary way citizens expressed their loyalty was to declare, “Caesar is Lord.” Being a faithful citizen of Rome meant participating in the so-called “Emperor Cult,” affirming that in some sense, the Emperor was “divine,” a “son of god,” whose reign is “good news” (gospel) for the world. In Rome, Paul was facing the pressure to participate in this idolatrous worship, and so were the disciples in Philippi.

Paul writes to help his friends be able to “stand firm.” He calls them to “conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ” (1:27). Literally, it is “live out your citizenship in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.” Paul reminds the Philippians that although they are living in a colony of Rome, in relationship with Christ, they are living in “a colony of heaven in the midst of Rome,” for, he reminds them (and us) that “our citizenship is in heaven” (3:20). In relationship with Jesus Christ, when we become His friends, we begin to live in a world centered in Caesar as Lord, the life of a world centered in Jesus as Lord.

What does that mean? In a word, servant-hood, living our lives as servants of the Lord who is servant. “Have this mind in you which was in Christ Jesus,” Paul will say (2:5). “Who because” He was, and is, God, chooses the way of servant-hood.

So, welcome to a study in a letter that introduces us to our “true citizenship” and that calls us to “live lives worthy” of the gospel that brings us into our “true homeland.”

Before working through the letter one section at a time, it would be good to read the whole letter in one setting. Indeed, it would be good to read the whole letter each week before focusing on the particular section to be discussed with your friends in your group. [It takes about 15 minutes—time very well spent!]

^{16:1} Some men came down from Judea and began teaching the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." ²And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, the brethren determined that Paul and Barnabas and some others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue. ³Therefore, being sent on their way by the church, they were passing through both Phoenicia and Samaria, describing in detail the conversion of the Gentiles, and were bringing great joy to all the brethren. ⁴When they arrived at Jerusalem, they were received by the church and the apostles and the elders, and they reported all that God had done with them. ⁵But some of the sect of the Pharisees who had believed stood up, saying, "It is necessary to circumcise them and to direct them to observe the Law of Moses."

⁶The apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter. ⁷After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe. ⁸And God, who knows the heart, testified to them giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us; ⁹and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. ¹⁰Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? ¹¹But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in the same way as they also are."

¹²All the people kept silent, and they were listening to Barnabas and Paul as they were relating what signs and wonders God had done through them among the Gentiles.

¹³After they had stopped speaking, James answered, saying, "Brethren, listen to me. ¹⁴Simeon has related how God first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name. ¹⁵ With this the words of the Prophets agree, just as it is written,

¹⁶'After these things I will return,
And I will rebuild the tabernacle of David which has fallen,
And I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it,
¹⁷So that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord,
And all the Gentiles who are called by My name,'

¹⁸Says the Lord, who makes these things known from long ago.

¹⁹Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles, ²⁰but that we write to them that they abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood. ²¹For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath."

²²Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them to send to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas—Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brethren, ²³and they sent this letter by them,

“The apostles and the brethren who are elders, to the brethren in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia who are from the Gentiles, greetings.

²⁴“Since we have heard that some of our number to whom we gave no instruction have disturbed you with their words, unsettling your souls, ²⁵it seemed good to us, having become of one mind, to select men to send to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, ²⁶men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. ²⁷“Therefore we have sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will also report the same things by word of mouth. ²⁸“For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials: ²⁹that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols and from blood and from things strangled and from fornication; if you keep yourselves free from such things, you will do well. Farewell.”

³⁰So when they were sent away, they went down to Antioch; and having gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter. ³¹When they had read it, they rejoiced because of its encouragement. ³²Judas and Silas, also being prophets themselves, encouraged and strengthened the brethren with a lengthy message. ³³After they had spent time there, they were sent away from the brethren in peace to those who had sent them out. ³⁴[But it seemed good to Silas to remain there.] ³⁵But Paul and Barnabas stayed in Antioch, teaching and preaching with many others also, the word of the Lord.

³⁶After some days Paul said to Barnabas, “Let us return and visit the brethren in every city in which we proclaimed the word of the Lord, and see how they are.” ³⁷Barnabas wanted to take John, called Mark, along with them also.

³⁸But Paul kept insisting that they should not take him along who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not gone with them to the work. ³⁹And there occurred such a sharp disagreement that they separated from one another, and Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus. ⁴⁰But Paul chose Silas and left, being committed by the brethren to the grace of the Lord. ⁴¹And he was traveling through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

Study 1 - The Church at Philippi

Acts 16

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Acts 16

Before we begin to make our way through Paul's letter to the disciples in Philippi, let us take time to get acquainted with the church the Spirit of God brought into being in that Roman city.

Luke, a medical doctor and traveling companion of the apostle Paul, tells the story of how the church was formed in Acts 16.

Read the whole chapter. Perhaps have a number of different people read a section at time: 1-5, 6-10, 11-15, 16-18, 19-27, 28-34,35-40.

1. Take time to name all the persons in the story.

2. Now, go back and describe them: gender, station in life, religious background. What does this suggest about the make-up of this congregation?

3. Focus on 16:6-10. What does this say about the founding of the church?

4. Focus on 16:11-15. What does this say about the founding of the church?

5. Focus on 16:16-34. God works a number of “miracles of freedom” here. What does this say about the founding of the church?

6. Thesis: the way a church is founded sets a trajectory for its future life and ministry. What trajectory is the Philippian church on? Do you know how our church was founded? What trajectory is our church on?

Take time to pray for our church. Ask the Spirit to make sure we are on a trajectory fully in-sync with the gospel of Jesus Christ! Before meeting together again, read the whole of Paul's letter to that amazingly diverse congregation.

^{1:1}Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus,

To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons: ²Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

³I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, ⁴always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, ⁵in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now. ⁶For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus. ⁷For it is only right for me to feel this way about you all, because I have you in my heart, since both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers of grace with me. ⁸For God is my witness, how I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. ⁹And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, ¹⁰so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; ¹¹having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

Study 2- Praying the Gospel: What Friends Do

Philippians 1:1-11

Study 2 - Praying the Gospel: What Friends Do

Philippians 1:1-11

Have someone read 1:1-11 out-loud while the rest read along silently. Then have someone else read the text again, this time with everyone simply listening.

1. When you heard it read, what especially grabbed you?

2. In his greeting, Paul sets the stage for what is to come.
 - a. How does he identify himself? Why this term?

 - b. How does he describe the Philippians? How do you feel about this?

 - c. What does he want for his readers? Why these two gifts?

 - d. How does he speak of God? Notice the "and" in 1:2. What does this say about Paul's understanding of how the words "God" and "Jesus" go together?

3. Paul's prayer can be broken into three sections.

a. 1:3-5. What is he grateful for? About whom in your life could you express the same sentiments?

b. 1:6-8. What is Paul confident of? What gives him this confidence? How does his confidence speak to you right now?

c. 1:9-11. What is Paul wanting God to do for his friends? How does this relate to his confidence in 1:6? How does Paul's prayer make you want to pray today?

4. How does this opening section of the letter help us live as citizens of the land called "Gospel"?

Before the next gathering, it would be good to read the whole letter again.

^{1:12}Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel, ¹³so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else, ¹⁴and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear. ¹⁵Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ even from envy and strife, but some also from good will; ¹⁶the latter do it out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel; ¹⁷the former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition rather than from pure motives, thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment. ¹⁸What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice.

Yes, and I will rejoice, ¹⁹for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, ²⁰according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I will not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.

²¹For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. ²²But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. ²³But I am hard-pressed from both directions, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for that is very much better; ²⁴yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake. ²⁵Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith, ²⁶so that your proud confidence in me may abound in Christ Jesus through my coming to you again.

Study 3 - Crummy Circumstances Being Redeemed

Philippians 1:12-26

Study 3 - Crummy Circumstances Being Redeemed

Philippians 1:12-26

Have someone read 1:12-26 out-loud while the rest read along silently. Then have someone else read the text again, this time everyone simply listening.

1. When you heard it read, what especially grabbed you?

2. Try to reconstruct Paul's life circumstance. How would you feel if you were in such a situation?

3. Paul wants the Philippians to know that he not only is not discouraged about his situation, but actually rejoices. And he will call them to do so also—"rejoice, again I say rejoice" (3:1; 4:1). The question is, why?
 - a. Focus on 1:12-14. What is the ground of rejoicing here? Do you see such dynamics in your life?

 - b. Focus on 1:15-18. What brings joy to Paul here? Can you relate this to your life in any way?

c. Focus on 1:19-21. What is Paul expecting to happen as he awaits trial before Nero? Why? What if things do not go as expected? Can you say the same thing? What does "to live is Christ" mean to you right now? How does "to die is gain" speak to you?

d. Focus on 1:22-26. What is Paul's struggle? Can you relate to it? How does he resolve it? Can you embrace his outlook?

4. How does this section help us live as citizens of the land called "Gospel"?

Reminder: once again, before our next meeting, read the whole letter again. Are you beginning to see how it all goes together?

^{1:27}Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel; ²⁸in no way alarmed by your opponents—which is a sign of destruction for them, but of salvation for you, and that too, from God. ²⁹For to you it has been granted for Christ’s sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, ³⁰experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me.

^{2:1}Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, ²make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. ³Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; ⁴do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others. ⁵Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. ⁸Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Study 4 - Worthy of the Gospel

Philippians 1:27-2:11

Study 4 - Worthy of the Gospel

Philippians 1:27-2:11

Let's repeat the pattern we have followed in our previous studies: someone read 1:27-2:11 out-loud while the others read along silently; then someone else read it while the rest simply listen.

This is the heart of the letter. Especially 2:5-11, which might actually be a poem or hymn that Paul composed while in prison in Rome. If he spoke it or sung it out-loud in prison it might have made things even worse for him!

"Every knee ... every tongue"—including Nero's!

1. Focus on 1:27-30. What does "standing firm" look like? How are we doing in our church at this time? Why is "standing firm" an "omen" to opponents of the Gospel? What have we been "granted for Christ's sake"? How does this make you feel?

2. Focus on 2:1-4. What is the major exhortation here? On what basis does Paul make it? That is, what is the driving force of "united," "one," "same"?

3. Focus on 2:5-11. What a text! Darrell calls it, "that-in-light-of-which-everything-else-must-be-seen."

a. Who is Jesus according to this poem/hymn? Before His incarnation, while on earth, in His ascension?

b. What does Jesus think/know about God, about His Father?

c. Why does Jesus do what He does?

d. Why does the Father give Jesus "the name above every name"?

e. What does this poem/hymn say to us as we look out at all that is taking place in the world right now?

4. How does this text help us live as citizens of the land called "Gospel"?

Let us pray that we be given the grace and courage to live this text! Don't forget – read the whole letter again before we come together again as friends in Christ the Servant Lord.

^{2:12}So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

¹⁴Do all things without grumbling or disputing; ¹⁵so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, ¹⁶holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain. ¹⁷But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all. ¹⁸You too, I urge you, rejoice in the same way and share your joy with me.

Study 5 - Who Is Doing the Work? Philippians 2:12-18

Study 5 - Who Is Doing the Work?

Philippians 2:12-18

It would be good about now for someone to read the whole letter before the group, the rest simply listening. The letter was intended to be read out-loud at a gathering of the Philippian congregation. It will take about 15 minutes to do this. Just let the words wash over you.

Now focus on 2:12-18.

1. How many exhortations does Paul speak in this text? List them without comment.

2. What does "work out your salvation" mean to you? If all you had was Philippians, what is "salvation"?

3. Why does Paul say it is possible for us to do this? That is, who is at work in the working out of our salvation?

4. Why is “without grumbling or disputing” a mark of salvation-being-worked-out?

5. What do you think Paul had in mind for the cities of Rome and Philippi is speaking of “appearing as lights” in the midst of “a crooked and perverse generation”? How are we to live this out in our city?

6. What does “holding fast the Word of life” mean to you?

7. What do you think Paul has in mind in using the word "sacrifice" of his ministry? What does this mean to you?

8. Why does Paul rejoice in all of this? Why does he expect us to join him in such rejoicing?

So, how does this text help us live as citizens of the land called "Gospel"?

You should be ready to hear this by now – please read the whole letter again before the next time we gather as "children of God."

^{2:19}But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, so that I also may be encouraged when I learn of your condition. ²⁰For I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare. ²¹For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus. ²²But you know of his proven worth, that he served with me in the furtherance of the gospel like a child serving his father. ²³Therefore I hope to send him immediately, as soon as I see how things go with me; ²⁴and I trust in the Lord that I myself also will be coming shortly. ²⁵But I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger and minister to my need; ²⁶because he was longing for you all and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. ²⁷For indeed he was sick to the point of death, but God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, so that I would not have sorrow upon sorrow. ²⁸Therefore I have sent him all the more eagerly so that when you see him again you may rejoice and I may be less concerned about you. ²⁹Receive him then in the Lord with all joy, and hold men like him in high regard; ³⁰because he came close to death for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was deficient in your service to me.

Study 6 - Ah, To Have Such Friends!

Philippians 2:19-30

Study 6 - Ah, To Have Such Friends!

Philippians 2:19-30

Simply have someone read 2:19-30 out-loud while the rest simply listen.

1. What is your first response to the text on this reading?

2. Timothy. How does Paul speak of this disciple? (Two basic affirmations). Of whom in your life could you say such things?

3. Epaphroditus. How does Paul speak of this disciple? (Five affirmations). Of whom in your life could you use such words?

4. Who do you know to be “risking” their lives for the work of Christ? Why are they willing to do it?

5. Are you being called in some way to “risk” your life for Christ? Are you afraid in any way? How can we encourage you?

6. Share how you are experiencing “but God had mercy on him” in your present situation. Who in your life needs this mercy?

So, how does this section of the letter empower you to live as a citizen of the land called “Gospel”?

Try to read the whole letter this week in a different translation. If you have not yet read “The Message” paraphrase you might appreciate it at this point in our studies.

^{3:1}Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things again is no trouble to me, and it is a safeguard for you.

²Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision; ³for we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh, ⁴although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: ⁵circumcised the eighth day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; ⁶as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless.

⁷But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, ⁹and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, ¹⁰that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; ¹¹in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

Study 7 - To Know, Gain, Be Found In Christ

Philippians 3:1-11

Study 7 - To Know, Gain, Be Found in Christ

Philippians 3:1-11

We come now to the very heart of Paul's life; here he expands on "for me to live in Christ" (1:21).

Have someone read 3:1-11 out-loud.

1. Why does Paul say that his call to "rejoice in the Lord" is "a safeguard for you"? Against what does "rejoice" guard us? For what five things can you rejoice right now?

2. "Beware." Who are these "dogs"? What is their message and agenda for the church? Can you identify any contemporary expressions of these troublemakers? What is their fundamental orientation? How does Paul counter their influence?

3. What do you "count as loss" for the sake of knowing Christ? What do you now consider "rubbish" (dung) that you may gain Christ?

4. What does “be found in Him” look like to you?

5. What does knowing “the power of His resurrection” look like to you?

6. What does knowing “the fellowship of His sufferings” look like to you?

7. Note the order: not know sufferings, know power of the resurrection; but, knowing the power of the resurrection, know sufferings. Why this order?

8. "Conformed to His death." What does this mean for us in our time? What does a congregation look like that is living this reality?

So, how does this text speak to our desire to be living out our citizenship in the land called "Gospel"?

^{3:12}Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus.

¹³Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

¹⁵Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, have this attitude; and if in anything you have a different attitude, God will reveal that also to you; ¹⁶however, let us keep living by that same standard to which we have attained.

Study 8 - Apprehending the Reason He Apprehended Me Philippians 3:12-16

Study 8 - Apprehending the Reason He Apprehended Me

Philippains 3:12-16

Let us now focus on 3:12-16. Have five people read, each one taking one sentence.

1. How would you describe Paul's feelings in this text?

2. Paul wants to "lay hold of" that for which "I was laid hold of." The word he uses means to 'apprehend,' 'overcome,' 'capture.' What do you think Paul is referring to? For what do you think Christ "apprehended" you?

3. In order to "lay hold of" Paul does three things. What are they? (vs. 13-14).

4. What do you need to “forget” in order to move on?

5. What does “press on” look like in Paul’s life? What does it mean for you right now?

6. This text encourages us to pray that God reveal to us anything we are not “laying hold of.” So let us pray for one another along these lines.

So, in what way does this text further our living as citizens of the land called “Gospel”?

By the next time, if it is possible, read the whole letter out-loud at home. Note what you hear that you had not heard before.

^{3:17}Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us. ¹⁸For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ, ¹⁹whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things. ²⁰For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ; ²¹who will transform the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has even to subject all things to Himself.

Study 9 - Our True Citizenship

Philippians 3:17-21

Study 9- Our True Citizenship

Philippains 3:17-21

Have someone read aloud 3:17-21.

What a rich text! What jumps out at you on this reading?

1. To what is Paul referring when he speaks of “following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us [Paul, Timothy, et.al.]”? Can you suggest four or five aspects of this “pattern”? Who in your life would you be willing to “pattern” yourself after? Why?

2. Paul speaks of “enemies of the cross.” How does he describe them? Notice especially “set minds on ...” Do you see such “enemies” in our day? Do you see any of this “enemy” in you?

3. Notice the terms ‘Saviour’ and ‘Lord.’ In Greek they are *soter* and *kurios*. These are terms Nero (and Caesars before and after him) used of himself. See why Paul is in trouble?

4. What does “our citizenship is in heaven” mean to you? After spending the past weeks in Philippians, how would you summarize what this looks like in practical terms?

5. According to Paul, for what are we waiting? To what degree is your soul alive in this waiting? Why?

6. What do you think it will mean to have our bodies “conform to the body of His glory”? What implications does this have for the way we live right now?

7. Where do you long to see “all things subject” to Christ? Let us pray for one another along these lines.

So, again, how does this text help us progress in living in Vancouver as citizens of the land called “Gospel”?
Once more – read the whole of the letter before we gather as friends of the cross.

^{4:1}Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long to see, my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord, my beloved.

²I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord.
³Indeed, true companion, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel, together with Clement also and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

⁴Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! ⁵Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is near. ⁶Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And the peace of God, which surpasses all [d]comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

⁸Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. ⁹The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

Study 10 - The Joy of Peace

Philippians 4:1-9

Study 10 - The Joy of Peace

Philippians 4:1-9

We come to a section of the letter most often quoted. Have someone read 4:1-9.

1. Note the words "stand firm," "in harmony," "peace of God," "God of peace," and the exhortation, "rejoice." Can you suggest how they all go together?

2. Notice how Paul speaks of his friends in Philippi in 4:1. Of whom in your life can you so speak? (Note the twice "beloved").

3. Why do you think Paul addresses the two women by name? In light of the concerns in the rest of the letter, what do you think is the issue between these disciples? How were they to move toward "harmony in the Lord"? (Hint: a preposition.)

4. Who would you list as “true companion” and “fellow worker”?

5. Why does Paul single out “gentleness” as the virtue to be known to others?

6. Anxiety. Ah, anxiety! Right before and after “be anxious for nothing” (4:6), Paul gives us two ways to live so we are not anxious. What are they? How do they help you right now?

7. “Dwell on these things” (4:8). What we dwell on determines the state of our being. On what does Paul call us to “dwell”? How can we do it?

Conclude the time together praying together with thanksgiving, naming very concretely anything that is giving us any anxiety. Pray to the God of peace for the peace of God that will cause gentleness to grow and that will enable us to “rejoice always.” One more time – please read the whole letter before we gather together with “the Lord who is near.”

^{4:1}Therefore, my beloved brethren whom I long to see, my joy and crown, in this way stand firm in the Lord, my beloved.

²I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to live in harmony in the Lord.

³Indeed, true companion, I ask you also to help these women who have shared my struggle in the cause of the gospel, together with Clement also and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

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⁸Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, dwell on these things. ⁹The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

Study 11 - Gratitude for Friendships in Christ

Philippians 4:10-23

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Philippians 4:10-23

Read 4:10-23 by going around the room, different persons reading each of the verses one at a time.

1. Why do you think Paul waits until the end to express his gratitude to the Philippians for their assistance in his ministry? Why not at the beginning of the letter?

2. We need to ask, however, does Paul actually thank them for their gift? Or does he give thanks for something else, something more fundamental?

3. Those of you who have lived in an Asian or Middle-Eastern context will see what Paul is doing here. He is protecting his friendship with the Philippians. Do you see why and how? (Hint: the complications that come with gift-giving).

4. Focus on 4:12. What is the secret?

5. Focus on 4:13. In light of the whole letter, what are the “all things” for which Christ strengthens us? Where do you need His strength right now?

6. Focus on 4:19. How do you suppose this was fulfilled in Paul’s case? How is it being fulfilled in your case, or, where are you waiting for it to be fulfilled in your case?

7. Note the triumphal ending of the letter – “especially those of Caesar’s household” (4:22)! What is the “especially” in your life?

So, how does this conclusion to the letter further enable us in 2014 to joyfully live as citizens of the land called “Gospel”? Go around the room, and as a group speak the benediction over each person:

“The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.”

“But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ.

More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.”

- Philippians 3:7-11

