

LESSON SIX

PAUL'S LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS

Scriptural Reference: Philippians Chapters 1 & 2.

A. **PHILIPPI:**

Philippi was a city of Macedonia founded by Augustus. It was situated upon a very fertile plain about nine miles from the sea. At the time of Paul, Philippi was a Roman Military Center. It was a Gentile city with very few Jews in its population.

B. **THE EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS:**

Paul founded the church at Philippi after receiving his Macedonian call at Troas. This was his first church in Europe. Two prominent people were among the early converts - Lydia and the jailer.

Luke had joined Paul's party at Troas and some had thought that Philippi was Luke's home. He had a part in the development of the Philippian church, one of the most commendable of the churches that Paul had founded.

This epistle was written about 64 AD during Paul's first imprisonment at Rome. Epaphroditus had come from Philippi with a gift for the Apostle Paul and fell sick upon his arrival at Rome. After his recovery, he returned to Philippi and Paul wrote this letter of thanks and exhortation.

C. **THE "JOY" EPISTLE:**

The word "rejoice" and its synonyms are repeated sixteen times in this epistle. In order to understand the word "rejoice," let us consider the word "revive." A person cannot be revived unless he has already had life; likewise a person cannot rejoice unless he has already known the joy of the Lord. The word "rejoice" simply means to allow the joy of the Lord to spring up in his soul again and again.

This rejoicing is not dependent upon outer circumstances as we can see here in the experience of the Apostle Paul. It is a deep emotion, springing up from within, that comes with the presence of the Lord. Once as a young convert, the writer was greatly impressed as he watched Mother Ira, a veteran missionary, who had spent her life in China. She was sitting on the platform of the church, lost in the Spirit, with her face aglow, saying over and over again, "Joy, Joy, Joy, Joy." This is an example of what the Apostle Paul is writing about here in this Epistle to the Philippians.

There was one man at Philippi who would understand this epistle well, for he had personally witnessed Paul's joy. After Paul had been beaten and chained in the dungeon, Paul still sang the songs of Zion and rejoiced in the Lord. This rejoicing

under great adversity and persecution had brought a miracle and the conversion of the jailer.

D. PAUL'S THANKSGIVING:

In the beginning of this letter, Paul expresses his thanksgiving for:

1. The Philippians. Apparently the Philippian church was a church that brought great joy to the Apostle Paul. The church ministered to him with financial gifts. They expressed their love for him. Apparently there was very little in the Philippian church that caused Paul any concern.
2. Confidence in Christ. In Philippians 1:6, it states, "*Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in me will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ.*" This Scripture expresses Paul's confidence in the fact that Jesus can finish that which He begins in our lives. As we study this verse, we all should be thankful that we too can have confidence that God can complete that which He has begun in our individual lives. This is not an unconditional eternal security, but it is a security, which may cause all of us to have great confidence in Christ! Certainly, He is our keeper!
3. The Preaching of the Gospel. Paul is thankful that his persecution at Rome has been the means for the furtherance of the gospel. Being chained to a Roman guard could not hinder him from proclaiming the gospel until it was known throughout the Palace. He also was thankful that others were preaching the gospel. He does admit that some of them were preaching the gospel with wrong motives, possibly to try to create some jealousy on Paul's part. Regardless of whether or not their motives were right or not, Paul was thankful that Christ was being preached.

E. PAUL'S DESIRE TO BE WITH CHRIST:

Scriptural Reference:

"For me to live is Christ, to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21).

The Apostle Paul gives the great motto of his life here. He desired to exalt Jesus Christ whether it was in this life or by death.

He expresses his desire to leave this world to live with Christ; but above this, he wanted to do the will of God and whatever would give the greatest glory to the Lord. He realizes that he could minister as long as he stayed in this life and so was willing to remain in the flesh that he might be a blessing to those to whom he ministers.

F. EXHORTATION TO HUMILITY:

In chapter two of Philippians, the Apostle Paul exhorts the church to humility and then gives them the example of Jesus Christ.

The student should give consideration to the meaning of the phrase "*if any bowels and mercies*" (verse 1). In New Testament times, it was considered that all the emotions had their origin within the body, and this was an expression that "from the organs of the body came the emotions." We would use the word "heart" instead of bowels. We might repeat this phrase by wording it thus, "if any tender mercies." The Philippians were exhorted to have the mind of Christ, who was the greatest example to

all men of humility. I shall quote these verses from the Living New Testament: *"Who though He was God, did not demand and cling to his rights as God, but laid aside his mighty power and glory taking the disguise of a slave and becoming like men and he humbled himself even further going so far as actually to die a criminal's death on the cross"* (Philippians 2:6-8, LNT).

Every student should memorize verses 9-11 for here the power of Jesus' name is expressed. The name of Jesus is above every name! His name is higher than the name of the greatest earthly king, or the most famous conqueror in this world. At that name, every knee shall bow and every tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord. This is a very positive statement showing the deity of Jesus. There is only one Lord and if Jesus Christ is that Lord bringing glory to God through the Father, then Jesus must be one with God the Father.

G. WORKING OUT OUR SALVATION:

Scriptural Reference:

"Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Philippians 2:12).

It is God that gives the Christian both the desire and ability to do God's will. However, the Christian must continually exercise himself, to keep in prayer and worship where he can become a strong, victorious Christian. Salvation is not by works, but definitely the Christian must put forth the effort to receive all that Christ can do for him.

The example that we would use here is for a cold man to come to the fire and be warmed. It is the fire that warms him. A man who is chilled with the cold must come to the fire before the fire can do its work. Also the man must remain near the fire if he is to remain warm. Likewise, we are exhorted to work at our salvation. This is a salvation in the present tense, being constantly worked out in our lives daily.

H. PAUL'S CO-WORKERS:

In the latter part of chapter two, Paul wrote commending two of his co-workers. He said that Timothy was a son of his in the gospel. He was a minister who would not seek his own interest but would have their welfare at heart. In the salutation of this epistle, Paul unites his name with Timothy's; undoubtedly, it was Timothy who wrote the epistle while Paul dictated it to him.

The other co-worker was Epaphroditus. He speaks of him as being his companion in labor and fellow soldier. He was the messenger for the Philippian church who brought their offering to him. After arriving at Rome, he was very sick. Paul thanked God for his mercy in healing this Christian worker and expressed how sorrowful he would have been had he lost him. It was Epaphroditus that carried this epistle to Philippi.

LESSON SIX

SELF HELP TEST

Place the correct word in each blank:

1. Philippi was a city of _____.
2. This was Paul's first church in _____.
3. A person cannot _____ unless he has known the joy of the Lord.
4. This letter was carried by _____.
5. Jesus was the greatest example of all men of _____.
6. The _____ had personally witnessed Paul's joy.
7. Being chained to a _____ did not hinder Paul from preaching.
8. Philippians 1:6 does not teach _____ eternal security.
9. Paul was thankful that the Gospel was preached even by men with wrong _____.
10. The Christian must continually _____ himself.
11. _____ was Paul's son in the Gospel.
12. Epaphroditus brought an _____ for Paul from Philippi.
13. This epistle was written during Paul's first _____ at home.
14. _____ was one of the early converts.
15. The city of Philippi was founded by _____.
16. It was thought that all _____ had their origin within the body.
17. One day every _____ shall bow at the name of Jesus.
18. Timothy would not seek his own _____.
19. Luke had joined Paul's party at _____.
20. There were only a few _____ who lived at Philippi.

Use these words to fill in the above blanks:

guard
Lydia
Europe
Macedonia
offering
humility
jailer

rejoice
Augustus
Epaphroditus
motives
Timothy
knee
imprisonment

exercise
Troas
Jews
unconditional
interest
emotions