

JOYFUL

ALL OF LIFE WITH JESUS

PHILIPPIANS



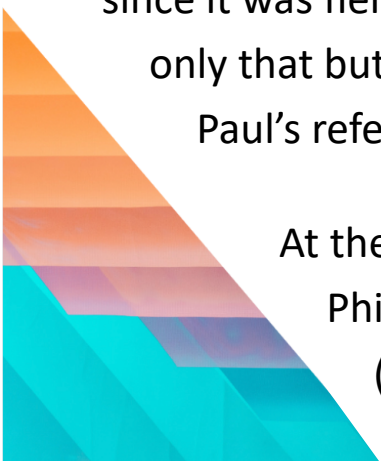
Introduction

This is such a joyful letter to explore. We might be familiar with many of the great statements of Philippians: “shine like stars”, “be like Christ who did not consider equality with God something to be grasped but became like a servant”, “do not be anxious(!)”, “rejoice in the Lord always” just to name a few. But what is often overlooked is that these statements are written in the context of Paul sitting in prison. How might we find JOY in God in all things and in every season? How might we take up the privilege of partnership in the gospel made possible by the God who became flesh for our sake. Only by being captivated by His humility, obedience, servanthood and exaltation will we find a joy to be enjoyed with other saints and in serving others. For we have discovered the secret to contentment and joy in a way the world will never know unless it sees Jesus for who He is: the humble, crucified and exalted messiah.

Why Paul wrote this

First Jesus community that Paul started in Eastern Europe. You can read about its beginnings in Act 16 where Paul meets Timothy and invites him to join him in planting churches. The next church he started was in Philippi where they are kicked out after saving a slave girl who others were making money from. There remained tension between that church and the rest of the Roman colony of Philippi since it was fiercely patriotic and Jesus is an alternate power. Not only that but alternate teachings were floating about (see Paul’s reference to the circumcision group in chapter 3).

At the time of Paul’s writing, he is in prison. The Philippian church was concerned for his welfare (since ancient Roman prison’s didn’t provide basics



and family and friends were necessary to provide for prisoners). Timothy remained by Paul's side but in addition the Philippians sent Epaphroditus with a care package. On the way to prison, Epaphroditus nearly died. This gives more reasons for the Philippians to be anxious.

Paul writes the letter to reframe his and their circumstances and help them see their personal identity in Christ and citizenship in His kingdom. At the centre of the letter is the "Messiah Poem", a poem/hymn which so richly describes the character of our God revealed in our humble saviour Jesus. Paul points to the centrality of Jesus and our life in him, so much so that he says "to live is Christ". The outworking of this is joy that transcends circumstances that would otherwise cause anxiety (4:9).

An outline of Philippians

1. Introduction (1:1-11)
2. The significance of Paul's circumstances (1:12-26)
3. The challenge of the Philippians circumstances (1:27-4:9)
 - * Standing united
 - * Examples of Christian unity (Timothy, Epaphroditus)
 - * Warning against theological error
4. Conclusion admonition (4:10-23)

Study 1 – Gospel Partnership (1:1-11)

Intro

What sparks joy for you!?

What is joy? And how is it different (but perhaps related to) happiness, fun, excitement?

Read Phil 1:1-11

How does Paul see the Philippians? (v1, 3, 8)

What does it mean for Paul to consider himself as a partner with the Philippians?

How is Paul able to speak of them in such glowing terms (both theologically and experientially)?



Live it out

Where have you experienced great gospel partnership? How does Paul's framing of it help you re-appreciate partnership in the context of church at it's best and otherwise!?

How might we cultivate the "affection of Christ Jesus" among the saints at TAC?

Paul is thankful for the love of the Philippian church and also prays that they would be able to discern what is best in the case of competing loves. What might be examples of us needing this discernment for "what is best"?

Pray

Rewrite the prayer of v9-11 in your own words and pray it for each other in your group.

Study 2 – Gospel Conviction (1:12-30)

Intro:

- What sort of things have frustrated you in the past week? How many were the result of circumstances over which you had little control?

Failure and the fear of failure are a very powerful in our lived experienced and in the decisions we make. Both Paul and the Philippians could have easily felt like their plans had failed with Paul now in prison. That could have left them carrying significant anxiety about what's next. Look at how Paul responds.

Read Phil 1:12-26

- List everything we learn about Paul's circumstances.
- How does Paul respond or reframe these? What does this tell you about his understanding of the gospel?
- What gives Paul joy throughout these challenges? How would you describe his goal?
- What kind of freedom does Paul enjoy while he sits in prison?



Read Phil 1:27-30

- The Philippians are also having a difficult time. What might be happening for them?

- How does Paul speak into their concerns?

Living it out

- How might we re-frame our challenges and fears? Think back to what you said to question 1.

Pray

Study 3 – Humility (2:1-11)

Intro

- Have you ever been totally in awe of someone or something? For example, meeting a celebrity, something amazing on holidays. How did you respond?

Read Phil 2:1-4

- Can you think of particular times when you have experienced what Paul lists in verse 1?
- Describe the kind of unity that Paul describes in verse 2. It could be something you've experienced at church.
- What might stop you from considering others and their interests before your own? What makes this particularly hard? Have you been blessed or encouraged by the humility of others?



Read Phil 2:5-11

- Try and put verses 6-7 in your own words. As you explore what what it means that Jesus emptied himself you might find it helpful to look at passages like John 4:5-6, John 11:35. Note that what it doesn't mean is that Jesus gave up his deity.
- Why do you think Jesus was obedient to the point of death? For some helpful passages read Hebrews 12:2, Luke 22:39-44, Exodus 34:5-8.
- Why does God exalt Jesus? What does this say about glory and even life? How do you feel about that?
- What does this poem show you about who God is in his very nature?

Living it out

- How can we serve one another in humility and still be joyful?
- One day every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that Jesus is Lord. How should that shape the way we live now and until that day?

Pray

Study 4 – Holding Firm (2:12-30)

Paul has urged the Philippian Christians to live a life worthy of the gospel of Jesus (Philippians 1:27). This is not something that will be natural for us to do. We struggle enough to even live up to our own rules and expectations. Living a life worthy effort Jesus might seem beyond our reach. However the call to do so is not empty.

Intro

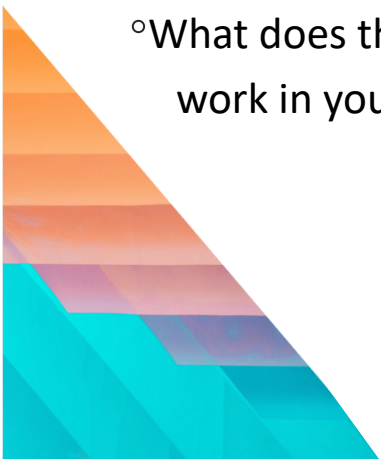
Share an aspect of your life where you have had to work hard at learning something, or learning to do something?

Read Philippians 2:12-18

- Why do you think Paul starts with the word “therefore”?
- What are we called to do?

The greek word for “work out” means to “continually work to bring something to completion or fruition.” We do this by actively pursuing obedience in the process of progressive sanctification, which Paul explains further in the next chapter of Philippians. There He describes himself as “straining” and “pressing on” toward the goal of Christ-likeness (Philippians 3:13-14)

- What does the phrases “with fear and trembling” and “God at work in you” bring to the idea of working out your salvation?



- How are these verses (Philippians 2:12-18), reflect the attitude of Jesus in the previous section? (Phil 2:1-11)
- What are some of the outcomes of this living? V 14ff

Note, 2:17, Drink offerings were an integral part of the OT sacrificial system; the drink offering accompanies a “sacrifice.” Paul’ has talked of his suffering in 1:12-20, and here, being “poured out” also draws attention to this; yet not even this can rob him of his joy in Christ.

Living it out

- In what ways are you challenged by these verses?
- In what way do you think we struggle in living it out (both in church and individually)?
- What practical steps can you take to help live out v14ff

If you have time...

In Philippians 2:19-30, Paul describes two individuals (Timothy and Epaphroditus) who are helpful partners in the gospel with him. Paul was imprisoned, yet he still cared for the Philippian believers, so much so, that when he could not get to see them, he sent others so that Paul could hear how they were going. Timothy and Epaphroditus were such people.

Read Philippians 2:19-30

- How is Timothy a faithful partner in the Gospel from v19-24? What does his heart for God's people look like?
- Why does Paul want to send Timothy?
- How is Epaphroditus a faithful partner in the Gospel from v19-24? What does his heart for God's people look like?
- What do we learn about Paul in all of this?

Living it out

- In what ways are you challenged by these verses? Why do we struggle to be like these?
- Think about your weekly routine. How might these verses shape your own interests, to have the interests of others?

Pray