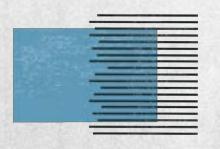
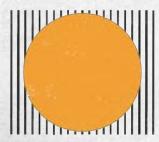
PHILIPPIANS

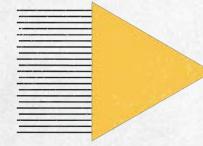
HOLD FAST

STAND FIRM

WALK WORTHY



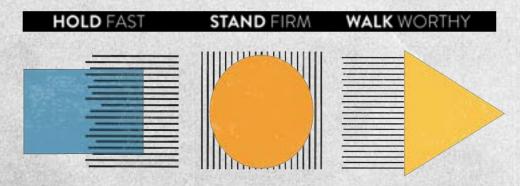




PHILIPPIANS

The Apostle Paul traveled all over the Mediterranean world pointing Jew and Gentile, slave and free, to worship Jesus as Messiah, and he did it no matter what consequences he might face from Rome or Jerusalem. His epistle to the church at Philippi gives a brief look into some of those consequences that he suffered, but also reveals the example of how to live regardless of the consequences of our faith. Even from the vulnerability of imprisonment, he continues to press his gospel vision even to his captors. He would welcome death if it would not interfere with his work to their benefit.

It is not hard to see why he would use language that encourages the Christian no matter the circumstances . . .



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SESSION 1 TO THE GLORY AND PRAISE OF GOD 4

¹ Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons: ² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. 3 I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, ⁴ always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, 5 because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. 6 And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. 7 It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because

I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. ⁸ For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. ⁹ And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, ¹⁰ so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, ¹¹ filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

Philippi was a Roman colony in Macedonia, a proud Roman colony. The city's name came from the father of Alexander the Great, Philip II of Macedon. It was the site where Octavian and Antony defeated the assassins of Julius Caesar, Brutus and Cassius. In a sense, it was where the Roman Republic ended, and the great Roman Empire began. Octavian would become Caesar Augustus, ruler of the known world, and Philippi would be known for its loyalty to the emperor. Yet, in the first three verses of Paul's epistle to the church at Philippi, we hear a different name proclaimed three times—Jesus the Christ—and it bears witness to Paul's current condition. He is imprisoned for the gospel. Paul preaches a different Lord in the midst of world that bows to the divine Lord Caesar, but ironically this letter proves that nothing would stop Paul from preaching the "righteousness that comes though Jesus Christ."

- Read Acts 16:11-40. Describe the three separate people Paul interacts with in Philippi. Imagine them being part of the same church community.
- Who specifically is Paul writing to? How would you describe his attitude toward them from this section of the epistle?
- 3 How would you describe the "saints," "overseers," and "deacons" mentioned? What are these categories?
- 4 Philippians 1:3-11 is a prayer from Paul. What are the main ideas in this prayer? Do you think the prayer has anything to do with the content of the letter? Why/why not?
- Do you ever pray with others? Are your prayers affected by whom you pray with? Why/why not?
- Oo you think verse 6 is true about you as well as the church at Philippi? Why/why not?



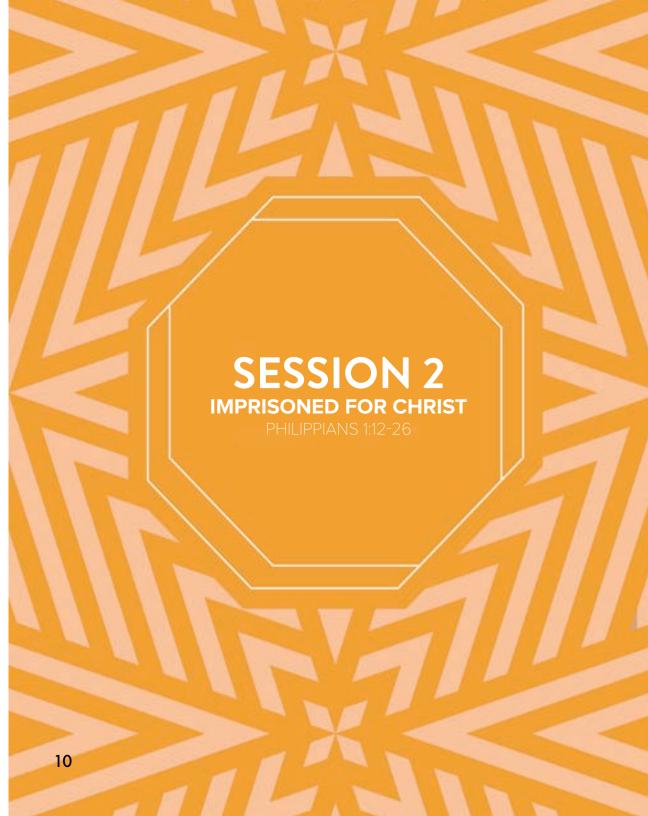
- 7 The words behind "partnership" in verse 5 and "partakers with" in verse 7 are rooted in the Greek word koinonos. If you have been around church for a long time, you may be familiar with another noun form of the word, koinonia. How might Paul's use of the word broaden the definition of the word?
- The "day of Christ" occurs twice in this session's text. What do you think Paul means? Do you remember Old Testament references to "the Day of the LORD"? What might they have in common?
- Trace the thought from verse 9 through 11. Paul's prayer seems to indicate steps of cause-and-effect. Identify the steps as best you can. What do you think of Paul's logic? How might his prayer appeal to us as well?



What is Paul's prayer? That the saints of Philippi overflow in a love that is always trying to know rightly, to discern earnestly, and thus ensuring praiseworthy decisions and ultimately becoming blameless and fruitful, ready for the returning King. That bears saying once more. He wants them ready for their Returning King. Paul would sit in chains, and with joy call them into this type of love. This kind of love only comes from one place—the heart of the Christ Himself. Paul recalls this in two ways. First, he yearns for them with literally the "guts" (affections) of Jesus. It is Jesus' compassion to which Paul refers. Second, he refers to them as partners and partakers with him. They aren't second string. They are players on the King's field intended to bring glory and praise to God. And so are we.

⁹ And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, ¹⁰ so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, ¹¹ filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

PHILIPPIANS 1:9-11



¹² I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, 13 so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. 14 And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. ¹⁵ Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will. 16 The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. 17 The former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment. 18 What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice, 19 for I know that through your prayers and the

help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, 20 as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. 21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. 22 If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. 23 I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. 24 But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. 25 Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith, ²⁶ so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again.

Paul rejoices. Why? Because he says the gospel has no boundaries, not even from prison. It is simply a change of venue, a change of audience. In this case, the audience is the imperial guard. Even when envy and rivalry are the hidden motivation, and even when that rivalry is directed towards his own ministry, Paul can rejoice. Why? The gospel is being preached. It is still true even if it comes from the lips of an enemy or a charlatan. One might question Paul's mental state here, because he would go as far as stating that even losing his life would be gain when Christ is at the center.

- Read Acts 22:30-23:11 and Acts 25:1-12. What seems to be the reason Paul is being held? If Paul is in Rome because he appealed to Caesar, what does it mean that his "imprisonment is for Christ"? What are the two possible verdicts to his trial, what would they say about Paul and what would they mean for his future?
- 2 Describe what characterizes the two different groups Paul outlines in Philippians 1:14-17. What is common to both?
- Have you ever experienced Christ preached in a way that was envious, full of rivalry or self-aggrandizing? Explain.
- In Philippians 1:19 Paul assumes that the Philippian church is praying for him. Is anyone assuming that your prayers are being made on their behalf? Why/why not?
- Also, in Philippians 1:19, Paul states that their prayers and the Spirit of Christ will somehow turn out for his deliverance. After reading Philippians 1:20-26, what does he mean by "deliverance"?



- 6 Paul talks about his "defense" of the gospel in Philippians 1:7, 16. Read 1 Peter 3:15 and compare how "defense" is used there. Are they similar? How would you define "defense of the gospel" and is this something you do? Explain.
- Paul says he will remain for the Philippians "progress and joy in the faith." What do you think this means? How do you think Paul would define "joy" in this sense? Has anyone ever seemed this devoted to you? Explain.
- What is the one thing that you find the most joy in? How would you say that your joy compares to Paul's joy experienced in this text?



Paul reveals a distinct and unexpected attitude that rings out from this session's text. He is so focused on Christ that everything he says and does carry this attitude. Perseverance. Determination. Joy. It is almost as if he cares less about his own skin than those to whom he is writing. He wants them to succeed. He wants them to have joy. He wants them to know Christ like he knows Christ. He wants them to take his attitude. Tradition tells us that Paul was eventually killed in Rome. He died with his attitude intact, preaching the Christ along the way, knowing that the One he knew had ultimate authority even over his own life. He did it all with joy. Do you have problems experiencing joy? What is at the center of your joy? Can you trust that it will be there in good times and bad, . . . in life or death?

²⁰... as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. ²¹ For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

PHILIPPIANS 1:20-21

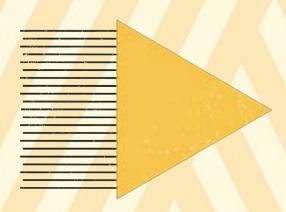
SESSION 3 A LIFE WORTHY PHILIPPIANS 1:27-30

²⁷ Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, ²⁸ and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to

them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God. ²⁹ For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, ³⁰ engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

Imagine it. You look up and hear the reading of this letter, likely by Epaphroditus, a local boy you have known for years. The letter is from the wise old teacher that had come to you to share good news, news of your salvation. He has told you the story of how a different King has come and delivered you from darkness. He explains that he is now in chains because of this King, and not certain of how it will turn out, but he assures you that your belief in this King will lead to your suffering for His sake as well. How would you respond to this message?

- When we read a letter (the genre of epistle) in the Bible, it is like hearing only one side of a conversation. If you only had this section of the letter, what are the possible challenges that Paul is trying to address?
- There is one Greek verb behind the translation "let your manner of life" and it has to do with "being a citizen." Since Philippi is a Roman colony, why might Paul use a word that includes the idea of the city and citizenship? How might the same word help us?
- By reading further in this section, what are elements that Paul wants his hearers to include in their concept of citizenship?
- Describe a time in your life when you were striving to be of "one spirit and one mind" with others. When you look around your local church, do you feel this way? Why/why not?
- There are opponents. We don't have much information about them at this point, but how does Paul want the Philippian church to respond to them? What will Paul's suggested strategy lead to?



6 Read Romans 12:14-21 where Paul writes to a different church. Does Paul's strategy for dealing with "opponents"

seem sound? Have you ever utilized his strategy? Explain.

- 7 Do you think suffering is part of your faith? Explain. How might our suffering be different than what Paul is talking about? How might it be similar?
- Do you think the conflict that Paul speaks of in Philippians 1:30 is entirely external, internal, or both? Discuss.
- When you consider the human tendency of "fight or flight" which one best categorizes you? How does this impulse affect your faithfulness?



Living worthy of the gospel of Christ seems to be linked to how we operate as citizens in Paul's mind. But is it our earthly citizenship, like the people of Philippi being loyal to their Roman colony, or is Paul referring to our citizenship in the kingdom of God? I would suggest Paul makes no such distinction. When you operate as a citizen in God's kingdom, the earthly kingdoms will hear and see the reverberations of that worthy living in this one. The truth is that societies of this world that reject the Christ can also reject the Christ-follower, and thus, Christians experience suffering. Standing firm in unity, striving side by side for the faith of the gospel becomes central to the Christian life. Our Western citizenship is at odds with this message because we are atomized, we are taught to be individualistic. How can we stand firm together as the local church? What are practices that should be part of our weekly rhythm and which practices should we drop all together? Whatever our conclusions, at the center of our motivation is the salvation from God found in the good news of Jesus Christ.

²⁷ Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, ²⁸ and not frightened in anything by your opponents.

PHILIPPIANS 1:27-28

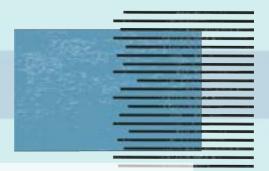


¹ So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, ² complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. 3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. 9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee

should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. 12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. ¹⁴ Do all things without grumbling or disputing, 15 that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, 16 holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. 17 Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. 18 Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.

From his call to a worthy and determined walk that may lead to suffering, Paul continues to press his hearers to recognize how unity works, and it is all about having the mind of Christ. It is Jesus' example that stands as the indelible representation of a worthy life. Jesus is the standard of humility that will help the Philippian church as they experience pressures, whether from inside or out.

- Paul commands his audience to "complete his joy"—a strange mandate indeed. How would Philippians 2:1-4 define what he is demanding and how does it link to the previous session?
- Philippians 2:3 speaks of "selfish ambition and conceit." Where have we seen similar negative terms used in this letter already? How might they be related? What is the opposite of this selfish ambition and conceit in Paul's eyes?
- 3 Describe what seems to be a movement simultaneously down and up in Philippians 2:5-11. Some would say that these verses form an early "Christ Hymn." What would you say is the core message of the hymn and how might it support Paul's concern in the letter so far?
- 4 Humility is difficult to talk about. No one can claim it without denying it, but denying it can almost seem to claim it. Has someone in your life revealed a level of humility that you believed was praiseworthy? Explain.
- 5 Have you ever experienced false humility? Have you ever acted with false humility? Explain. What are the problems that can be caused by false humility?



- In Philippians 2:12-13 Paul says that they should "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." The term behind "your own" is plural. What do you think Paul means? How does verse 13 complete Paul's thought? Do you think "work" is what saves you? Do you think "work" is part of the Christian life?
- 7 How does Philippians 2:14 possibly allude to a challenge in Philippi? How does Philippians 2:1-4 support your suggestion?
- In Philippians 2:15 Paul says that the people in the church in Philippi "may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish." Do you think this is possible? How?
- Read Romans 12:1-2 where Paul uses sacrificial language. Compare it to Philippians 2:15 and discuss how living the Christian life can illustrate a new twist on the old sacrificial system (of Judaism and the Pagan world).



Jesus is the center. In His incarnation He humbled Himself. Human, but not just human—a servant. Obedient to death, but not just any death—crucifixion. Paul says our obedience finds its perseverance and power in the Christ's obedience. If you think about it, our movement toward humility is a relatively short distance. His was vast, from Heaven to earth, from majesty to servitude. Why is humility so difficult? The Christian life includes obedient work and effort. The important distinction is that Jesus' obedient work was the model. It is what saves. Our work tells the world from where our obedience and citizenship come—the King Himself. There are two equally unfortunate errors. On one hand, we can think that our work is sufficient to save. On the other, we can think our work is unnecessary. In which direction do you lean? Who can you ask to help you to avoid these two errors?

¹² Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

PHILIPPIANS 2:12-13

SESSION 5 REAL LIFE EXAMPLES PHILIPPIANS 2:19-30

¹⁹ I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you. 20 For I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. ²¹ For they all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. ²² But you know Timothy's proven worth, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel. 23 I hope therefore to send him just as soon as I see how it will go with me, ²⁴ and I trust in the Lord that shortly I myself will come also. 25 I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need, ²⁶ for he has been longing for you all and has been distressed because you heard that he was ill. 27 Indeed he was ill, near to death. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. ²⁸ I am the more eager to send him, therefore, that you may rejoice at seeing him again, and that I may be less anxious. 29 So receive him in the Lord with all joy, and honor such men, 30 for he nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me.

Two other examples are brought forward. Timothy and Epaphroditus have proven faithful to Paul and to the Philippians, so they too serve as examples of Christ's humility. It may seem sort of unexpected to hear about these two men in the middle of the letter, but looking closely we can see a pattern.

- Who were the people that were critical to strengthening your faith? How did they help form you?
- Discuss the contrast in Philippians 2:20-21. While we don't have the identity of the negative example, how does the language of "seeking their own interests" fit with previous sections of Philippians? When was a time you sought your own interest?
- Read Acts 16:1-3; 1 Corinthians 4:17, 16:10; 2 Corinthians 1:19; 1 Thessalonians 3:1-6; How has Timothy proven his worth to Paul? What did he do with Paul and for Paul?
- 4 Paul says that Timothy was like a son who served with him "in the gospel." If gospel means "good news," what do you think it means to serve with someone in the gospel? What is the center of this service? How can we serve in the same way?



- 5 Epaphroditus was sent from Philippi to Paul with a gift, and he almost died in the process of delivering it. Paul calls him brother, fellow worker, fellow soldier, messenger and minister. What does Paul reveal about himself in his description of Epaphroditus?
- Paul tells the Philippians to honor such men as Epaphroditus. From this section, what makes him honorable? How do these characteristics differ from those that our culture deems "honorable"?
- 7 How do the descriptions of Timothy's and Epaphroditus' activities help make Paul's point so far?



While this section may seem to be a simple log of details from Paul's journey, the details also exemplify the humility of Jesus outlined in the previous section. You can actually see humility in His followers. We see mutual service in the gospel and consideration of the needs of the other, in fact, serving each other's needs at the risk of one's life. These are marks of a Christian and Paul wants the Philippians to know what it looks like. It is not a mystical concept but can be observed and measured in human activity. Are you ever proud to see what your church family is doing or are you the type that criticizes all the things that aren't the way you think they should be? Which way leads to being of the same mind? Which one brings joy?

⁶ For this reason I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands, ⁷ for God gave us a spirit not of fear but of power and love and self-control. ⁸ Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony about our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but share in suffering for the gospel by the power of God . . .

2 TIMOTHY 1:6-8

SESSION 6 A DIFFERENT KIND OF RIGHTEOUSNESS PHILIPPIANS 3:1-21

1 Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you. ² Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh. ³ For we are the circumcision, who worship by the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh— ⁴ though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the

flesh, I have more: ⁵ circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless. ⁷ But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things

and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— 10 that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, 11 that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. 12 Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. 13 Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call

of God in Christ Jesus. 15 Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. 16 Only let us hold true to what we have attained. 17 Brothers, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us. 18 For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. 19 Their end is destruction, their god is their belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. 20 But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

Imitation is not always a positive word in our culture. It can often be called fake, inauthentic, or "less than." Think imitation crabmeat. But in this final example, Paul points to himself. Here he encourages imitation, but not before he puts his own past on trial to show the gospel and its implications on a person's life when rightly understood. Through the lens of Christ's righteousness, life looks different. Death looks different. This is only true because Paul understands that he belongs to the One whom he imitates, which is exactly what he believes the Philippians need to understand in order to live their lives better together.

- In Philippians 3:2-3, who are the "dogs"? How might the other descriptions help us get to the answer? Is this the first time Paul has mentioned opponents? What is the potential consequence of having contrary voices in their midst?
- Read Genesis 17:1-14. What is circumcision in the Bible? What does it mean? How is Paul using it here in Philippians?
- Read Philippians 3:4-6. Consider Paul's quick résumé. What does each element mean? How does this help define "confidence in the flesh"? What is the goal of the confidence Paul is speaking of?
- 4 Are there ways you have confidence in the flesh? Explain.
- Describe Paul's idea of righteousness in Philippians 3:8-11. How can righteousness depend on faith?
- Paul says "I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own." To what do you think "it" refers? Explain.



- 7 How do you think Paul's "striving" fits into a faith that is not supposed to trust individual works of righteousness? Go back and reread Philippians 2:12-13 and discuss how these ideas fit together.
- Citizenship is brought up again in Philippians 3:20. Recall the history of Philippi (Session 1) and the discussion on Philippians 1:27-30 (Session 3). What kinds of citizenship is Paul comparing?
- Philippians 3:19-21 start to look to the future. Who has ultimate authority and what will it mean for humanity? What is the result of trusting in earthly citizenship? What is the result of trusting in the One who makes you part of His kingdom?



Philippi was full of retired Roman soldiers and had all the laws of Rome. That was one of the benefits of being a Roman colony. You were an image of the center of gravity no matter how far away you might be. Simply put, being a Roman colony was a picture of Roman faithfulness and Roman honor. But Paul reveals a different kind of faithfulness. He uses himself as both a negative and a positive example. His past reveals what it looks like to be utterly faithful to a code, but he calls it rubbish. Let's be honest, following the rules is important, but when your trust and value is in your own abilities to follow a set of rules, or when you look down on those that are outside of your particular "system," there can only be faith in your own righteousness. Paul's righteousness, the kind that comes from outside of himself, is different. He strives for it and calls others to imitate it. Every trust, every value that is outside of "the righteousness of God that depends on faith" is an enemy to the gospel. We must ask where we are looking to build our own value and where our ultimate trust is? Dig. Fight. Strive. Talk with a trusted advisor to help you turn toward the center of the gospel, Jesus Himself.

⁸ Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith.

PHILIPPIANS 3:8-9

SESSION 7 REAL LIFE IN THE CHURCH PHILIPPIANS 4:1-9

¹Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved. ² I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. ³ Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life. 4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. ⁵ Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand; 6 do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication

with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. 8 Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. 9 What you have learned and received and heard and seen in me-practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

The Bible can be so powerfully practical sometimes. Do we have disagreements with others? Of course. Do we struggle with bad attitudes? Certainly. Do we experience anxieties? Yes! Disunity, ungodly attitudes, and anxieties can cause us to lose balance and challenge our firm footing. This week's Scripture passage gives us rock solid commands on how to hold fast, stand firm and walk worthy.

DISCUSSION

- Name all the ways Paul describes the Philippian Christians in verse 1. Do you think these descriptions can apply to you? Why/why not?
- The "therefore" in Philippians 4:1 is basically saying, "That is how you stand firm in the Lord." Look at the last few verses of Philippians 3 from last session to determine what he is referring to. What does Paul mean?
- Paul asks for believers to help two specific women to reconcile their relationship. From reading this letter, why do you think this was so important to Paul? Can you recall any other verses that would speak to the importance of unity in the body of Christ and reconciliation?
- 4 Disagreements in the church happen. Have you ever intervened to help a dispute that was not your own? What did you do? Did it help? Why/why not? How can you promote reconciliation?
- 5 Paul commands us to, "Rejoice always in the Lord." What does this mean and how can we do this? Read Habakkuk 3:17-18, James 1:2, and 1 Peter 4:13.



- 6 Do you experience anxiety? What is causing anxiety in your life right now? In Philippians 2:28, Paul reveals he has anxiety. What is causing him anxiety in this instance? Read 2 Corinthians 11:28, Matthew 6:25-31, 1 Peter 5:7. What can these verses teach you about anxiety and how to deal with it?
- How does praying with thanksgiving change the way we pray? What is the opposite of thanksgiving? What does it look like to pray that way? Do we have to feel thankful to pray with thanksgiving?
- What could you do if you have prayed as this verse commands and you still feel anxiety? How can you support one another in this struggle?
- How does Paul tell us that our thoughts motivate actions? Can you really change your thoughts? How? What kinds of thoughts produce godly actions?



Remembering the "why", the reasons behind something, helps us stick with it when the going gets tough. We must remember what is really at stake when we get into prideful squabbles, or get stuck in worldly anxieties. The Church is God's plan. We are His vessels—his body on earth—to carry out the mission to seek and save the lost. If we don't heed these commands in Philippians 4:1-9, we will be ineffective in His kingdom. Eternal souls are at stake. Our obedience matters in this fight. When we remember our "why", letting go of petty disagreements or working through massive heartbreak is worth it. Persistent prayer allows the peace of Christ to guard our hearts and minds and it is exceedingly profitable. To be sober-minded and ready to be used by the King is a noble motivator. We must hold fast to stand firm in the Lord for the sake of the gospel. Don't give up this week on these hard things. Remember, we too flourish when we walk in our Father's ways. What step can you take this week?

⁸ Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.

PHILIPPIANS 4:8



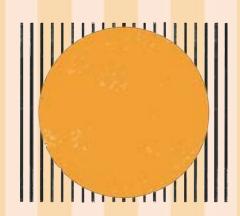
¹⁰ I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. 11 Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. 12 I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. 13 I can do all things through him who strengthens me. 14 Yet it was kind of you to share my trouble. ¹⁵ And you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only. 16 Even in

Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again. 17 Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit. 18 I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. 19 And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. 20 To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen. ²¹ Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me greet you. 22 All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household. 23 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

The end of the letter is as amazing as its start. Paul shows what gospel maturity looks like in his explanation of how contentment and joy can be had no matter the circumstances. Even after directly addressing the disunity in their midst, he describes his thankfulness for the Philippian church and their unbridled generosity. His metaphoric language is telling. It's as if he imagines standing in the temple complex, watching the smoke of the sacrifices flowing into heaven, and the glorious aroma sneaking into his senses. That is the smell of forgiveness and closeness with God. That smell is only a shadow of the forgiveness and reconciliation found in the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

DISCUSSION

- Read 2 Corinthians 8:1-5. This generosity is likely about the church at Philippi. Do you know this kind of generosity from another? Share a story.
- Behind the word "partnership" in Philippians 4:15, is a verb form of koinonia. Go back and read Philippians 1:5 ("partnership"), 2:1 ("participation"), 3:10 ("share") and bring together all of the uses with this one to describe what the larger idea of sharing and partnership might mean to Paul.
- What is contentment in your opinion? Describe a time you experienced it and what you think was at the root of it.
- 4 Paul says he knows how to be brought low and how to abound. Which of these happens to you more? Which do you think you handle better? Why?
- 5 Philippians 4:13 is a popular verse. Have you heard it before? How is Paul using it?



- 6 Philippians 4:19 also may be familiar to you. Maybe you have been encouraged to memorize it. In the context that Paul uses it, what does it mean? Is this different than you had thought previously?
- What is one of the biggest takeaways you gathered from Paul's letter to the Philippians? How will you be able to use it or put it into action?
- 8 How will you "hold fast, stand firm, and walk worthy" after studying this book?



Here we see a second reference to Rome's great leader. In Philippians 1:13 he speaks of the "imperial guard" and at the end of the letter he speaks of "Caesar's household." These are menacing bookends. In a sense, he is in the belly of the beast. He is in the clutches of world power, but if we are reading carefully Paul is not intimidated. He sees opportunity. He is not afraid, in fact, he seems full of joy and contentment. It seems crazy, but there are *greetings* from Caesar's household. Somehow, those that should be against Paul and his claim of a different King, they stand with him. When we strive to walk worthy, the gospel has the power to breech the greatest obstacles. Where are you holding back from sharing the beauty and goodness of your King?

⁹ And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, ¹⁰ so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, ¹¹ filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

PHILIPPIANS 4:9-11



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