

PHILIPPIANS

Lesson One (1:1-11)

Salutation (1:1-2)

1 Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus. To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: 2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

V.1 Paul And Timothy – In his earlier years, Paul had been known by the Hebrew name Saul. He was raised a strict Pharisee (Acts 26:5; Phil. 3:5) and was loyal to the Jewish traditions. This misguided loyalty led him to assist in the stoning of Stephen (Acts 7:58) and to persecute the Lord's church (Gal. 1:13-14). When Saul was converted on the road to Damascus, he realized that all his Jewish zeal and legalistic righteousness were worthless. (See Phil. 3:4-11) He became an apostle and was sent forth to the Gentiles (Acts 26:17-18). On the second and third of his great missionary journeys, he traveled to Philippi.

Timothy was a younger co-worker of the apostle Paul. His mother was a devout Jewish woman (Acts 16:1; II Tim. 1:5), but his father was a Greek. Timothy was converted by Paul and became his assistant. He is named in six epistles as Paul's "co-author" (II Cor., Phil., Col., I & II Thess., Phlm.). Timothy was with Paul in Philippi on both the second and third missionary journeys, and the Philippians knew his worth (Phil. 2:22).

At the writing of this epistle, both Paul and Timothy were in Rome, where Paul was imprisoned and awaiting trial.

Servants Of Christ Jesus – Paul was so well known among his Philippian brethren that he felt no need to mention the fact that he was an apostle, as is stated in most of his other epistles. The only title is "servant" or "slave." The Greek word means simply a slave, a person owned by someone else. In the world of the first century, a slave had no legal or civil rights. He was entirely at his master's disposal. Paul gladly accepted this position of humble servanthood for the Master.

The word "Christ" means "the anointed one" and is the equivalent of the Hebrew word "Messiah." In the Old Testament, at least three types of people were anointed: prophets (Isa. 61:1), priests (Exod. 29:7), and

kings (I Sam. 15:1). God's only Son was anointed to be all three.

"Jesus" was the historical name given by the angel to both Mary (Luke 1:31) and Joseph (Matt. 1:21). It is the same as the Old Testament name Joshua, and means "Jehovah is salvation."

To All The Saints In Christ Jesus – The saints are "the holy ones." To be holy means to be "set apart" for special ownership and use. Every Christian should consider himself a saint, set apart for the service of God. No elite, separate class of sainthood is to be found in the church of the New Testament.

Who Are At Philippi – Philippi is a city with an interesting history. For a long time, it was just another obscure village of Macedonia, the northeast province of ancient Greece. Then gold was discovered nearby, and suddenly the little village was important. Philip, the king of Macedonia, took over the gold and renamed the city in his own honor. The gold enabled Philip to hire soldiers and begin the unification of all the separate cities and provinces of Greece. His son, Alexander the Great, led the Greek armies to conquer the entire Mediterranean world. Later, the Roman armies conquered Greece and made Philippi a Roman colony.

In Acts 16, Paul was on his second missionary journey when he had a vision in the night. He saw a man of Macedonia beseeching him, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." When Paul got to Macedonia, he began his work in Philippi. It was here that he converted Lydia, the seller of purple. It was here that he cast out a spirit of divination from a slave girl. And it was here that he was cast into jail and converted the Philippian jailer. The church in Philippi was especially close to the apostle Paul, supporting him with frequent offerings (Phil. 4:15; II Cor. 11:9). They were a generous church, despite their deep poverty (II Cor. 8:1-5). One of the immediate reasons for writing this epistle to the Philippians was to thank them for their recent gift to Paul in his imprisonment.

With The Bishops And Deacons – A bishop is literally an "over-seer" and is equated with the elder in Titus 1:5 and 7. (See also Acts 20:17 and 28, where "guardians" or "over-seers" is this same word.) The deacon is literally a "servant." The household servants of John 2:1-11 are called by this name.

V. 2 Grace To You – Every one of the thirteen epistles signed by Paul begins and ends with a mention of grace. The Greek word for grace is closely related to the word for joy, and means "unmerited favor or goodwill." This means that although we are unworthy and undeserving, God likes us anyway!

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And Peace – Peace is best defined as “well-being of the soul.” Despite outward circumstances (such as Roman imprisonment), the Christian has inner peace. He commits his anxieties to God and focuses his mind on the positive things of God (Phil. 4:6-9), and the God of peace is with him.

It has often been noted that “grace” (*charis*) is very similar in Greek to the usual Greek greeting (*chairein*). Also, “peace” was the usual Hebrew greeting (*shalom*). Since so much of Paul’s ministry involved bringing together Jews and Greeks into one body, it seems somehow appropriate that this Greek-Jew greeting should begin each of his epistles.

From God Our Father And The Lord Jesus Christ – Note how closely the work of Father and of Son are inter-connected in Philippians. At least a dozen times in this brief epistle, the Father and Son are names together in the same sentence. Perhaps one can best see this relationship between the Father’s majesty and the Son’s lordship in Phil. 2:5-11, especially verse 11.

Prayer For Philippians (1:3-11)

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 thankful for your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. 6 And I am sure 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 thus 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 may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, 11 filled with the fruits of righteousness which come through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

V. 3 I Thank My God – This statement of thanksgiving is also found in all of Paul’s other epistles except Galatians and Titus. It would seem that Paul must have spent a great deal of time in prayer, praying for so many different people. Before Paul could exhort the Philippians to pray (4:6), he first had to set the example.

In All My Remembrance Of You – The Philippians were very dear to Paul’s heart. He thought of them often, and every memory caused him to pause and thank God for these people.

V. 4 Always In Every Prayer Of Mine – The word for prayer used here means an “entreaty” or

“supplication” for a specific need. The New Testament commends this kind of specific prayer, as opposed to prayer that is general and vague. One special benefit of specific petitions is that we can be more keenly aware when God answers them.

Making My Prayer With Joy – Joy is one of the dominant themes of Philippians. The words “joy” and “rejoice” are found a total of eighteen times. Considering that Paul is imprisoned, facing a possible death sentence, that is a lot of joy!

Paul’s Greek readers would have been impressed with this tone of the epistle from the very beginning. Their eyes would have quickly caught the following pattern:

v. 2 “grace” – *charis*

v. 3 “I thank” – *eucharisto*

v. 4 “joy” – *chara*

V. 5 Thankful For Your Partnership In The Gospel – Their partnership (Gk. *koinonia*) included their money (4:10-15). They supported Paul, moreover, not as an act of benevolence, but as an active partnership in his work. (See II Cor. 11:9) Their missionary money was not sent because they felt sorry for Paul, but because they felt enthusiastic for the gospel! They were “partners” in the fullest sense of the word.

From The First Day Until Now – The very first day Paul and his coworkers arrived in Philippi, they found hospitality in the home of Lydia (Acts 16:15). When Paul went on to Thessalonica, the Philippian brethren sent him support more than once (Phil. 4:15-16).

V. 6 And I Am Sure – Paul’s confidence (repeated six times in this epistle) certainly seems out of character for a man waiting to face trial and possible martyrdom. Paul knew that the Lord was yet in control, and victory was assured.

He Who Began A Good Work In You – It is God who initiates the act of salvation. We do not first seek Him; rather, He first sought us. He works in us, both to will and to work for his good pleasure (2:12-13). With God motivating and empowering us, we can then “work out” our own salvation.

Will Bring It To Completion – The saving grace of God is not just a one-time event in our lives. From the moment we come to Christ until our lives shall end, we must keep on pressing forward (3:12-14). This is God’s intention for our lives. With our cooperation, He will bring it to a successful completion.

There is a possible allusion in this verse to the making of a sacrifice or burnt offering. Just as men begin and then bring to completion the act of sacrificing, so God was working among the Philippians.

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At The Day Of Jesus Christ – This day is probably the day of the Second Coming, the time of the consummation of the ages. The final victory of the church will be won and Jesus Christ will be acknowledged as Lord of all (2:10-11).

V. 7 It Is Right For Me To Feel Thus About You All – Paul knew the Philippians well enough to feel thankful and confident for them. His very personal attachment to them was based on their partnership in his work.

Paul said “you all” five times in this first chapter (v. 4, 7 twice, 8, and 25). Though the Philippian church apparently had some problems with disunity and personal conflicts (2:1-4; 4:2-3), Paul wanted them to know how he cared for them *all*.

Because I Hold You In My Heart – The heart is used here as the very center of Paul’s being, including both will and emotion.

For You Are All Partakers With Me Of Grace – Because they had also received God’s grace, Paul called them his “co-partners,” using much the same word as “partnership” in verse five. And as always, to receive the blessing of grace is also to receive the responsibility of service. The “grace” shared by Paul and the Philippians included their partnership in evangelism. (Notice a similar use of the word “grace” in Ephesians 3:7-8).

Both In My Imprisonment And In The Defense And Confirmation Of The Gospel – Not only had the Philippians shared in Paul’s missionary work; they also shared in his courageous stand for the gospel in Roman imprisonment. One of their number had even gone to Rome to serve Paul (2:25-30). With their support and with the help of God, Paul would defend the gospel and establish its truth even in Rome. It is noteworthy that Paul was not planning to defend himself, but the gospel.

V. 8 For God Is my Witness – Paul similarly called upon God to witness to his absolute truthfulness in Gal. 1:20.

How I Yearn For You All With The Affection Of Christ Jesus – The intensity of Paul’s feeling is well expressed in the Greek phrase he used, translated in the King James Version as “in the bowels of Jesus Christ.” The word literally means the inward parts, such as the stomach, lungs, heart, liver, etc. This area was once considered the seat of emotions in a man. The ancient Greeks had noticed, for example, that the intense feelings of pity, compassion, homesickness, and sentimental yearning were actually “felt” more in the pit of the stomach than anywhere else. Jesus felt this emotion frequently in the gospels, and Paul said that his own feeling was like that of Jesus.

V. 9 My Prayer That Your Love May Abound More And More – The specific petitions of Paul’s prayer are now listed. It is interesting that Paul did not pray primarily for their health or wealth, as often we pray for one another today. His concerns were matters of an eternal nature, beginning with the greatest of all—love. (See I Cor. 13:13).

With Knowledge And All Discernment – Love is not blind. Real love should abound with knowledge and discernment. This means that love should have perception that is sharpened by experience. Love should perceive, for instance, when to be gentle and when to be stern. Love always wants to meet the needs of the one who is loved, and perception helps the lover know which course of action to take.

Love without knowledge may be a misguided, pointless love. Knowledge without love profits nothing (I Cor. 13:2). Paul prayed for a full portion of both to be given his readers.

V. 10 So That You May Approve What Is Excellent – The word “approve” was the classical term for assaying metals to determine their genuineness. The words “what is excellent” were used by Greek philosophers to refer to “the things that really matter.” Paul wanted the Philippians to be able to test and prove out in their own lives the things that really matter. He wanted to spare them the tragedy of wasting all their days in trivial affairs of no lasting consequence (I Cor. 3:12-15). A similar thought is found in Romans 12:2, where they are exhorted to “prove” the will of God in their transformed lives.

And May Be Pure And Blameless For The Day Of Christ – The word “pure” probably first meant to “be tested in sunlight” where any imperfection would be seen. The word “blameless” meant “without stumbling.” Paul knew that the Philippians, like all Christians, still had some impurities in their lives and still sometimes stumbled. He prayed that they might grow on toward perfection (3:12-14), never content to settle for something less. Then at the day of Christ’s second coming, Paul could rejoice that they, too, had finished the course and kept the faith (II Tim. 4:7).

V. 11 Filled With The Fruits Of Righteousness – This fruit (not plural, but singular as in Gal. 5:22) is the harvest which Christ’s righteousness should produce in our lives. Our own lives should exhibit the same kind of right living that Jesus had. The Spirit of Christ living in us will also produce love, joy, peace, patients, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Gal. 5:22-23).

Which Come Through Jesus Christ – The fruit of righteousness is not something we manufacture on our

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own. Paul had long since abandoned the futile attempt for self-righteousness and knew that the only true righteousness was based on faith in Jesus Christ and came from God (3:9).

To The Glory And Praise Of God – God’s glory is his own majesty and shining splendor. In the scriptures, this word “glory” is often surrounded with the imagery of brilliant light (I Tim. 6:16). We can do nothing to enhance the glory of God, but we can acknowledge it by our fruit-filled lives. We praise God not only with our lips, but also with our lives.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. Who was Timothy? Was he of any special importance to the Philippians?
2. Has your understanding of words been influenced by ecclesiastical usage? What are “saints”? What are “bishops”? What are “deacons”?
3. What words are always found in the opening of Paul’s epistles? What is their significance?
4. What kind of “prayer” was Paul talking about in verse four?
5. What did “partnership in the gospel” mean for the Philippians? What will it mean for us?
6. Paul spoke of the defense of the gospel in verse seven. Does the gospel need to be defended?
7. Why does the King James Version employ the phrase “bowels of Jesus Christ”?

8. Is it wrong to pray for health and wealth? Could our prayers indicate our appraisal of “the things that really matter”?
9. Is love blind? Does love always forget, forgive, and overlook? How does this work with parental love? How does this work with God’s love?
10. Who gets the credit for the fruits of righteousness we produce? Why?

A.B.A. REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Briefly describe the background of Paul.
2. “In his earlier years, Paul had been known by the _____ name _____.”
3. During which missionary journeys did Paul visit Philippi?
4. Timothy’s mother was a devout _____ woman, but his father was a _____.
5. How many epistles list Timothy as Paul’s co-author? List these epistles.
6. During which missionary journeys did Timothy accompany Paul?
7. Why would Paul apply the term “servants” to himself and Timothy? What legal standing did a servant have in the ancient world?
8. Where were Paul and Timothy when Philippians was written?
9. Explain the meaning of the words “Christ” and “Jesus.”
10. Summarize what this lesson teaches about “saints.”

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11. Summarize the history and background of Philippi.
12. List one immediate reason for Paul writing Philippians.
13. Explain the meaning of “bishops” and “deacons.”
14. What does this lesson teach about “grace” and “peace”?
15. In Philippians, how many times are the Father and Son named together in the same sentence?
16. Name the two epistles, written by Paul, which do not contain the statement of thanksgiving “I thank my God.”
17. Explain the meaning of the word “prayer” in verse 4.
18. “_____ is one of the dominant themes of Philippians. The words “_____” and “_____” are found a total of _____ times.”
19. Briefly define these Greek words: charis, eucharisto, chara, and koinonia.
20. Explain the meaning of “I am sure that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.”
21. How many times does Paul express “I am sure.” in this epistle?
22. In what way can Christians “work out” their own salvation?
23. Explain the meaning of “...how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.”
24. Based upon verse 9, what were the primary concerns of Paul’s prayers. How does this compare with the primary concerns of your own prayers?
25. Why is it so important to combine love, knowledge, and discernment?
26. Explain the background/meanings of these words in verse 10: approve, pure, and blameless.
27. Explain “the fruits of righteousness” in verse 11.
28. What imagery often surrounds the word “glory”?
29. What is the most important lesson you have learned from this section, and how can you apply this lesson in your own life?

Lesson Two (1:12-30)

Good News From Prison (1:12-18)

12 I want you to know, brethren, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, 13 so that it has become known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ; 14 and most of the brethren have been made confident in the Lord because of my imprisonment, and are much more bold to speak the word of God 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 partisanship, 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.

V. 12 I Want You To Know, Brethren – When Paul was imprisoned, many questions must have swept over the Philippian church. Is all lost? Will Paul be forced to quit? Are we supporting a hopeless cause? So Paul wrote to them to set the record straight and to put their fears to rest.

That What Has Happened To Me – The account of what had happened to Paul is recorded in the last few chapters of Acts. Following his arrest and the false accusations of the Jews, Paul appealed to Caesar to hear his case. When he finally was taken to Rome, he was

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confined to a private dwelling, secured at his own expense. Although he was free to preach to all who came to him, he was kept in chains under constant guard (Eph. 6:20). During this imprisonment, he wrote Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon.

Has Really Served To Advance The Gospel – Paul was in chains, but the gospel was not. In addition to the opportunities to preach and write, as noted above, the next verse tells of another unique opportunity for the gospel made possible by imprisonment.

V. 13 It Has Become Known Throughout The Whole Praetorian Guard – The praetorian guard was an elite body of 10,000 soldiers who made up the emperor's personal army. They were distinguished by special privileges and double pay. Paul was under the special guard of these soldiers as an imperial prisoner. Every hour of the day, Paul was shackled to a praetorian soldier, connected by a length of chain. Perhaps Paul could not get away from them, but neither could they get away from him! Hour after hour, until another soldier would come to relieve him, each soldier was Paul's captive audience. Soon the gospel message had spread through the entire cohort.

That My Imprisonment Is For Christ – Soon every soldier knew this was no ordinary prisoner—he was an ambassador of Jesus. Paul does not say that every praetorian soldier became a Christian, but they did all hear the gospel.

V. 14 And Most Of The Brethren Have Been Made Confident – How could the imprisonment of a fellow preacher make one feel more confident? It was Paul's attitude and continuing success that made the difference. The forces of evil were doing their worst—but Paul was still cheerful, optimistic, and preaching!

In The Lord – It must not be overlooked that their confidence was not in Paul or in themselves. Their confidence was in the Lord. The victory belonged to Him.

And Are Much More Bold To Speak The Word Of God Without Fear – It was no small thing to proclaim God's word in the world of the first century. The Roman government, with Nero as emperor, was increasingly hostile to Christianity. The Jewish leaders led an active crusade to stir up trouble against it. The common people were tolerant of practically any religion, but were totally intolerant of a religion that claimed to be the only true one.

V. 15 Some Indeed Preach Christ From Envy And Rivalry – Incredible as it may seem, some men were being motivated to preach the gospel by base motives such as envy and strife. Envy is more than simple jealousy; it is pain at the success of someone else.

It does not want to equal or surpass another person's success; it wants to see that person's success ruined. Rivalry is strife, expressing open hostility. Both envy and rivalry are listed among the works of the flesh in Gal. 5:19-21.

But Others From Good Will – Those who preached the gospel out of base motivations did not prevent Paul from seeing all the rest, who preached with a heart of sincere good will.

V. 16 The Latter Do It Out Of Love – This second group, those preaching from good will, were motivated by love. In context here, this love is not only love for God, but also love for Paul himself.

Knowing That I Am Put Here For The Defense Of The Gospel – The good-hearted preachers appreciated the reason for Paul's imprisonment. They were sympathetic for both Paul and the Gospel he preached. They were concerned for the defense of the gospel which Paul would make before the emperor.

For an example of the kind of defense Paul would likely make before Caesar, see Acts 17:22-31; 22:1-21; 26:1-29; and I Cor. 15:1-11. The best defense of the gospel is the historical truth of the risen Christ.

V. 17 The Former Proclaim Christ Out Of Partisanship – Referring again to the first group, Paul named their motivation as "partisanship." This word means selfishness or personal ambition. It describes the person who will do absolutely anything to advance his own causes. Like envy and rivalry named in verse fifteen, partisanship is also a work of the flesh.

Not Sincerely, But Thinking To Afflict Me In My Imprisonment – Those who operated from impure motives somehow thought that by preaching the gospel, they would afflict Paul. They may have thought to arouse Paul's jealousy at their success, or they may have thought to stir up more government opposition to preachers.

V. 18 What Then? – If these people thought they would make Paul sick with jealousy, they greatly misjudged him. They would have found it hard to understand, but Paul preached with complete honesty and selflessness (I Thess. 2:3-6). He could only rejoice at the successful preaching of others.

Whether In Pretense Or In Truth, Christ Is Proclaimed – What really mattered was not the petty evaluation of one another's motives, but the proclaiming of the message. Paul was perfectly content to leave the matter of motives between the other preachers and their Master.

It should be noted that Paul did not condone any and every doctrinal error just so long as they preached about Jesus. The problem of doctrinal error will be

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confronted later, in Chapter three. In the situation of this passage, the preachers were preaching the truth, but their own motive were poor.

And In That I Rejoice – Just as Paul was undaunted by the soldiers of Rome, he was unaffected by these preachers. Notice his total selflessness. If the world was hearing the truth of the gospel, he could only rejoice.

Optimism For The Future (1:19-26)

19 Yes, and I shall rejoice. For I know that through your prayers and 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 shall 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 it is to be life 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 shall 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.

V. 19 Yes, And I Shall Rejoice – At this point, Paul turned his attention from the events of the past to the prospect for the future. As far as the eye could see down the path that lay ahead of him, the Lord was still in control and winning the victory.

Through Your Prayers And The Help Of The Spirit Of Jesus Christ – Paul was counting on two powerful resources to help him be victorious. The first was prayer offered in his behalf by the faithful Philippian church. Having faced so many perils already (II Cor. 11:23-28), he knew first hand the sustaining power of their prayers. The second resource was the help of the Holy Spirit. The word for “help” used here by Paul goes back to the Greek theater. It was customary for a wealthy patron of the arts to provide all the necessary equipment, costumes, salaries, etc. to make the production possible. It was this word for the generous provision of all necessities that Paul used in reference to the Holy Spirit’s “help.”

This Will Turn Out For My Deliverance – The word Paul used for “deliverance” may also be translated “salvation,” as in the King James Version. One translation tends to look toward a release from imprisonment, while the other looks toward a final home in heaven when he dies. In light of Paul’s statement in

verse 25, he probably had reference to release from prison.

V. 20 As It Is My Eager Expectation And Hope – Paul “watched with outstretched head” in eager confidence. He did not shrink back in fear of the coming consequences.

That I Shall Not At All Be Ashamed – Paul knew that as long as he stood with Jesus, no one could put him to shame. He was also eager to see that others should not be ashamed. (See Rom. 1:16; II Tim. 1:8, 16; I Pet. 4:16).

But That With Full Courage Now As Always Christ Will Be Honored In My Body – The word for “full courage” was the term used in ancient Athens for the right of free speech which belonged to every citizen. The main thought in Paul’s mind, apparently, was that he would have the boldness to speak out for Christ before the Emperor Nero.

Whether By Life Or By Death – Paul was not taking it for granted that he would escape death. Verse 27 also mentions the possibility that he might not be released. The most important thing was that Jesus would stand by Paul in life or in death, and Paul would live or die to honor Him.

V. 21 For To Me To Live Is Christ – As Paul had written years earlier to the Galatians, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me” (Gal. 2:20). Paul had learned the secret of discipleship, self-denial, and had let Jesus take over his life (Matt. 16:24). He had given up all his former life in order to gain Christ and be found in Him (Phil. 3:8-9). In doing this, Paul was not accomplishing the impossible; rather, he was setting an example he expected all of us to follow (Phil. 3:17).

And To Die Is Gain – Death would be gain in at least two ways. First, Christ and his kingdom would be honored by Paul’s martyrdom (v. 20). Secondly, Paul himself would have great gain by going to be with Jesus (v. 23). It is this second thought that Paul carries into the following verses.

V. 22 If It Is To Be Life In The Flesh – Life, not death, is indeed what Paul supposed the outcome would be (v. 19, 25).

Fruitful Labor For Me – Paul’s only attachment to this life was his burning desire to evangelize and teach. It was not so much in his own interest as in the interests of others (2:4) that Paul wanted to stay alive.

Yet Which I Shall Choose I Cannot Tell – More accurately, “what I shall choose I do not make known.”

V. 23 I Am Hard Pressed Between The Two – Paul was between a rock and a hard place. He faced not two dreadful consequences, but two appealing

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possibilities. The choice was not really Paul's to make—and it was just as well, for Paul had a very hard time deciding.

My Desire Is To Depart And Be With Christ – Paul had a desire so strong that the word used by him here is usually translated “lust” or “craving.” The word for “depart” is a picturesque word used when a ship is untied from its mooring and sails away, or when a tent is taken down in preparation for a journey. (See II Cor. 5:1-4)

What happens to a Christian when he dies? Some passages in the New Testament seem to indicate that he “sleeps” until the second coming of Christ (I Cor. 15:51-52; I Thess. 4:14-17) and then is raised from the dead. However, a greater number of passages indicate that the departed Christian goes immediately to be with Jesus (Luke 16:19-31; 23:43; John 11:25-26; Acts 7:55-59; II Cor. 5:1-8; Phil. 1:23; Rev. 6:9-11).

For That Is Far Better – Paul knew what it was like to be in the presence of the Lord (Acts 9:3-6). He also tells of a man who was caught up to the third heaven and was privileged to see and hear things in Paradise. Presumably he was speaking of himself (II Cor. 12:1-7). This may help us understand Paul's seemingly unnatural desire to die.

V. 24 But To Remain In The Flesh Is More Necessary On Your Account – It is striking that Paul's only real reason for wanting to continue in this life was to help others.

V. 25 Convinced Of This, I Know That I Shall Remain – It was not a revelation from the Lord, but a logical analysis of the situation, that caused Paul to conclude that he would be allowed to go on living. What he goes on to say in verse 27 shows that this conclusion is less than absolutely sure.

For Your Progress And Joy In The Faith – Just as the gospel was advancing (*prokope*) in verse 12 through the work of Paul, so shall the Philippians progress (*prokope*) through him.

V. 26 Ample Cause To Glory In Christ Jesus – Literally, “that your reason for boasting might overflow” in Christ Jesus.

A Challenge For The Future (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 stand 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 omen 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 which you saw and now hear to be mine.

V. 27 Let Your Manner Of Life Be Worthy Of The Gospel – Literally, the Philippians were to “live out their citizenship” in a manner worthy of the gospel. As Roman citizens of a Roman colony, they knew something about the rights and responsibilities of citizenship. This same imagery is also used in 3:20.

No Christian can live in such a way as to be worthy of the sacrifice Christ made for him. He can, however, allow his life to be shaped and directed by what he recognizes to be of supreme worth—the gospel.

Whether I Come And See You Or Am Absent – The most important thing was not whether Paul was released from prison. Paul's logical conclusion might prove to be wrong; their united stand for Christ must prove to be steadfast.

Stand Firm In One Spirit – During this same imprisonment, Paul wrote of the Christian's struggle against the hosts of wickedness (Eph. 6:10-20). The Christian must put on God's armor, and having done all, must stand.

With One Mind Striving Side By Side For The Faith Of The Gospel – Paul's emphasis on unity of purpose reaches a climax in just a few more verses (2:2). One of the most important ingredients for success in any army is unity of mind and purpose. Teamwork is required among those who would “contend for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3).

V. 28 Not Frightened In Anything By Your Opponents – Paul used the word here for a horse that is “spooked” by some small or imaginary sight and rears back in terror. Even the Roman empire should not incite them to panic.

A Clear Omen To Them Of Their Destruction – Even when they threw the Christians to the lions, the Romans could not get the best of them. The hymns of victory were a dramatic prophecy of the ultimate destruction of all who would exalt themselves against the power of God.

But Of Your Salvation, And That From God – The united unflinching stance of the Christians was a clear demonstration of their coming salvation. Do not forget, though, that salvation is not earned by a given measure of courage or earthly success. It is from God, and it is His gift (Eph. 2:8-9).

V. 29 For It Has Been Granted To You – God has given two precious privileges to the Christian. The first is obvious; the second is startling.

That You Should Not Only Believe – The capacity for faith should not be considered a human invention. It

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is a gift of God, available to all men (II Pet. 3:9; Rev. 22:17).

But Also Suffer For His Sake – The privilege of suffering for Jesus is a gift from God. Paul had experienced it firsthand, and he could see it coming for the Philippians. This time of testing should be received with joy (James 1:2-3; I Pet. 4:12-14).

V. 30 Engaged In The Same Conflict Which You Saw And Now Hear To Be Mine – Paul’s first visit to Philippi found him beaten and thrown in jail. Now, after many other hardships and trials (II Cor. 11:23-28), he was imprisoned again. They should not be surprised if similar things happen to them.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. How did imprisonment advance the gospel?
2. What were the evil motives of some preachers? What were they trying to do to Paul?
3. Should we be big-hearted and approve of all preaching, so long as it includes mention of Jesus?
4. Did Paul expect to be released from imprisonment?
5. What could have happened that would have caused Paul to be “ashamed”?
6. Why was Paul eager to die? Why did he also want to continue living?
7. What happens to the Christian when he dies?
8. What is the background of the words “manner of life” (v. 27)? Is it possible for our manner of life to be worthy of the gospel?
9. What two privileges has God given to Christians?
10. What was the example of suffering set by Paul? Was this typical or rare in the first century?

A.B.A. REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What New Testament book records the events that led to Paul’s imprisonment in Rome? Summarize these events.
2. Name the New Testament books written by Paul during his Roman imprisonment.
3. What was the “praetorian guard”?
4. Explain why “it was no small thing” to share the Gospel in the world of the First Century.
5. Explain the difference between “envy” and “jealousy.”
6. Contrast the differences between those who preach Christ from envy/rivalry and those who proclaim Jesus from good will/love.
7. In what ways could the preachers, who proclaimed Christ out of partisanship, possibly hope to afflict Paul during his imprisonment?
8. Explain Paul’s words, “whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed and in that I rejoice.”
9. List two powerful resources, in verse 19, that would help Paul be victorious. How can these resources also help you overcome difficult situations?

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10. What is the background of the word “help” in verse 19?
11. How does the King James Version translate the word “deliverance” in verse 19?
12. What is the background of the word for “full courage” in verse 20?
13. Was Paul certain that he would escape death at the end of his imprisonment? How could Paul’s death honor Christ?
14. List two ways in which Paul’s death would be “gain.”
15. Explain the words “desire” and “depart” in verse 23.
16. List seven New Testament passages which indicate that a departed Christian goes immediately to be with Jesus.
17. According to verse 24, why did Paul want to “remain in the flesh”?
18. What is the Greek word for “progress” in verse 25?
19. What is the literal translation of “ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus”?
20. What is the literal translation of “Let your manner of life be worthy of the Gospel”?
21. Explain the background of the Greek word for “frightened” in verse 28.
22. Why should the capacity to believe be considered a privilege from God?
23. How can suffering for Jesus be a privilege and gift from God?
24. How was Paul treated during his first visit to Philippi?
25. What are you personally willing to endure to proclaim the Gospel? Take a moment to ask God to give you the strength and boldness to share the Good News with others.
26. What is the most important lesson that you have learned from this section, and how can you apply this lesson in everyday life?

Lesson Three (2:1-11)

The Mind Of Christ (2:1-11)

1 So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any incentive of 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 selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better 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 you have 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, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. 9 Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, 10 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.

V. 1 So If There Is Any Encouragement In Christ – This verse establishes a fourfold pattern of Christian participation and involvement. On the basis of this, Paul will go on in the next verse to issue a fourfold commandment for unity. This unity is made possible by an attitude of humility and servanthood (v. 3-4). Our perfect example of this attitude is Christ (v. 5-8).

The encouragement in Christ named here is the “exhortation” that we know because we are in Him, and He is in us. If there is any awareness of this urging in

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the believer, he is called upon to respond to the challenge of verse two.

Any Incentive Of Love – The word “incentive” carries the ideas of both “comfort” and “encouragement or urging.” Love has a strong ability to urge and constrain (II Cor. 5:14).

Any Participation In The Spirit – Participation (*koinonia*) can also be translated “fellowship” or “partnership.” In fact, marriage, the closest of all human relationships, was often called “the *koinonia* of life.”

Our intimate involvement with the Holy Spirit is a strong incentive toward Christian unity. The same Spirit indwelling my life is also living in you. We have something in common far more precious than a common blood-line, a common nationality, or a common friendship. If I reject you and the Spirit in you, I am rejecting a part of myself.

Any Affection And Sympathy – As in Chapter one, verse eight, the King James version has “bowels” instead of “affection” as a translation of the Greek work *splangchna*. As before, this pit of the stomach area is used figuratively to represent man’s most tender emotions. The word “sympathy” is the same word often used in the Old Testament for the tender mercies of God.

To sum up verse one: If the reader has any sensitivity whatsoever to the spiritual dimension of life, let him respond to the challenge of the next verse.

V. 2 Complete My Joy – The Philippians were already Paul’s “joy and crown” (4:1), but perhaps one thing was still lacking: their total unity in the Lord.

By Being Of The Same Mind – Literally, “set your minds on the same thing.” The point of agreement is not so much in the realm of doctrine and opinion, but in the unity of attitude and purpose. A further illustration of this “same mind” is the mind of Christ (v. 5-8). It is the attitude of humility and servanthood that all Christians must share.

Having The Same Love – No two men will ever agree completely in all their ideas. For this reason, it is not a unity of the head but a unity of the heart which Paul seeks.

Being In Full Accord – Literally, being “joined in soul.”

And Of One Mind – As in the beginning of the verse, the word used (“setting your minds on one thing”) has reference to attitude rather than doctrine. Absolute doctrinal conformity is impossible; for every time a Christian learns more truth, he would have to dis-fellowship all his brothers.

V. 3 Do Nothing From Selfishness Or Conceit – The word used here for “selfishness” is the same word Paul used for “partisanship” in 1:17. A person

motivated by selfishness will do anything to advance his own cause, even stepping on the fallen bodies of his brothers to reach the top. So long as people are motivated by selfishness, unity is impossible.

“Conceit” is a very graphic word, literally meaning “empty glory.” So long as people are seeking the empty glory that comes from men (John 5:44), they are out of tune with God and unity is impossible.

In Humility Count Others Better Than Yourselfes – The Christian must “set his mind in a humble, lowly way” and consider the rights of others ahead of his own. The perfect example of all this is Jesus Christ, who did not try to advance his own position in heaven, who had divine glory and then emptied himself, who died on the cross that others might live.

V. 4 Let Each Of You Look Not Only To His Own Interests, But Also To The Interests Of Others – This attitude is the functional key to Christian unity. It was manifested in Christ, as well as in Paul (2:17), Timothy (2:20-21), and Epaphroditus (2:25-30).

V. 5 Have This Mind Among Yourselfes – Literally, “set your mind this way.” Every Christian should have the same attitude of the Master, who became servant of all. He who washed his disciples’ feet was not establishing a worship ritual, but leaving us an example of humble servanthood. Since the servant is not greater than his Master, we have no right to think of ourselves as “too good” for any lowly service.

Which You Have In Christ Jesus – What follows is one of the grandest passages in all the Bible to teach the deity of the Lord Jesus. It was not for this purpose, however, that the passage was written. It is the ultimate example of loving, sacrificial servanthood.

V. 6 Who Though He Was In The Form Of God – In the beginning (John 1:1) before anything was created (John 1:3; Col. 1:16-17), Jesus existed in heaven with the Father. He existed in the very “form” of God. Unlike our English word, the Greek word for “form” is more than just an outward or superficial similarity. It points to the very essence of God the Father and says Jesus was the same. He was not only with God—He was God! (John 1:1)

It is quite impossible to define the precise nature of the Trinity using human thought and human language. In some divine way, the Son is of the same essence and being as the Father, and yet is a separate personality. The New Testament affirms in several places that Jesus is God (John 1:1, 18; 20:28; Titus 2:13; Heb. 1:8; II Peter 1:1), but always maintains the careful distinction between the Son and the Father.

The Son is God. The Father is God
But the Son is not the Father.

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Did Not Count The Equality With God A Thing To Be Grasped – Paul was not trying to prove the deity of Christ to the Philippians. They already accepted it as true. Instead, he was reminding them that Jesus could have clung to his divine rights and privileges, but did not. His manner of existence was equal to that of the Father, and he might well have decided to “hang on to it at all costs,” but he did not.

V. 7 But Emptied Himself – Of what did Jesus empty himself? Consider the following possibilities:

- A. His heavenly glory and privileges.
- B. His omnipotence (state of being all-powerful)
- C. His omniscience (state of being all-knowing)
- D. His omnipresence (state of being everywhere present)
- E. His divine essence

It is quite obvious that Jesus laid aside the glorious privileges of heaven when he became a man. He was excluded from the Bethlehem inn, from the hearts of God’s chosen people, and from ownership of a simple place to lay his head.

What about omnipotence? As the Son of Man, Jesus put a voluntary self-limitation on his powers. He did the works which his Father gave him to do (John 5:19, 36; 14:10). He steadfastly refused to work miracles to his own advantage (Matt. 4:1-4). In a physical sense, he could become weary (John 4:6) and he could die (John 19:30). Still, his mastery of all nature and of death itself shows that he was not just a man. He was a man. And he was God.

What about omniscience? The clearest case here of a self-limitation is found in Matt. 24:36, where as the Son of Man, Jesus did not know the day or hour of his second coming. Still, he knew the hearts of his enemies, he knew when Lazarus had died, and he knew when his hour had or had not come. Even from the age of twelve, he knew his identity as the unique son of the heavenly Father (Luke 2:49).

What of omnipresence? Obviously Jesus could not be in two places at once while he was in human form. Much of his adult ministry was spent simply travelling from place to place so he could teach more people.

Finally, what of his divine essence? Did he ever cease to be God? No—never at any time. Even as he emptied himself to become fully man, he continued to be fully God.

Taking The Form Of A Servant – The kind of servant Jesus became was actually a “slave” or “servant under bondage.” He was not just a king disguised as a beggar—he actually became the most lowly among men. It was necessary that Jesus fully experience humanness and be tempted in every respect, so that he could offer

his own life to satisfy our sentence of death (Gal. 4:4-5) and become our sympathetic high priest (Heb. 4:5).

Being Born In The Likeness Of Men – It is admittedly difficult to combine Jesus’ human and divine natures. But we must do so, and we must avoid either of two extremes. Modern theologians often conclude Jesus was a very good man, but in no way God. The ancient Docetics concluded that Jesus was wholly divine, but in no way really human. When he walked in the sands of Galilee, for instance, he left no footprints! The refusal to admit that Jesus Christ had come in the flesh was one of the earliest heresies of the church (II John 7).

V. 8 And Being Found In Human Form – The word for “form” is not the same as the word for “form” in verse six. This time the word implies a changeability, or a form that is not permanent (I Cor. 7:31). Jesus was always God, even from the beginning, and always continued to be God. At a given point in time, he became a man, taking on a nature which would not be permanent.

He Humbled Himself – As if it were too little that Jesus had stooped from the highest heaven to the lowest earth, he humbled himself even further!

And Became Obedient Unto Death – Jesus did not desire or welcome the cross. He offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death. And although he was God’s own Son, he learned obedience in the things that he suffered (Heb. 5:7-8). See also the beautiful parallels in Heb. 12:2 and I Peter. 2:21-14.

Even Death On A Cross – Crucifixion was one of the most hideous forms of execution ever devised by man. The Greeks used a simple upright stake, but the Romans always added the crossbeam. The victim was tied or nailed to the beams with great spikes through his wrists and feet. While the weight of the body hung from the wrists, the lungs were unable to inhale and exhale effectively. The victim would have to shift his weight to his pierced feet, thrusting himself up to gasp for breath. The hours of death on the cross were not spent quietly hanging there, but were spent in a constant struggle for breath. The ultimate cause of death was loss of blood, shock, and suffocation.

V. 9 Therefore God Has Highly Exalted Him – Literally, God has “hyper-exalted” him. (This is the only use of this word in the New Testament.) Just as Jesus made the supreme sacrifice in humiliation, so also the Father has honored him with the highest exaltation. Jesus became the perfect example of the principle he had taught his disciples: “For every one who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.” (Luke 14:11)

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And Bestowed On Him The Name Which Is Above Every Name – Various suggestions have been offered as to what this “name” is. Perhaps it is “Jesus” (v. 10); perhaps it is “Lord” (v. 11); perhaps “Jesus Christ” (v. 11), or perhaps Jesus’ ultimate name is yet unknown to us. At any rate, it is not the name itself that is important. What is important is that this name or title marks Jesus as supreme above all others. He holds first rank over all the universe. He is equal with the Father.

V. 10 That At The Name Of Jesus – The “name of Jesus” could be either the name which is “Jesus,” or the name which belongs to Jesus (see above). The wording of the text does not allow us to be dogmatic in our interpretation.

Every Knee Should Bow – The knee bows in worship of the divine. No man (Acts 10:25-26) or angel (Judges 13:15-16) may receive worship, for it belongs exclusively to God (Matt. 4:10).

“As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall give praise to God.”
(Isa. 45:23; Rom. 14:11)

The Father thus presents the Son as the worthy object of worship.

In Heaven And On Earth And Under The Earth – Every creature must acknowledge that Christ is worthy of worship. Whether angelic or human, whether in heaven or on earth or under the earth—all must worship Jesus Christ.

The phrase “under the earth” was probably not intended to be a specific statement concerning the whereabouts of demons or of deceased humans. More likely, it just completes the sequence, indicating that any and every sphere of existence is subject to Christ.

V. 11 And Every Tongue Confess – Every creature must sooner or later recognize and admit that Jesus Christ is Lord. Those who have not made confession as an act of conversion (Rom. 10:9-10) will make their confession as an admission of defeat.

That Jesus Christ Is Lord – The full force of “Lord” (*kurios*) is not appreciated by modern, English-speaking people. This word had come through a long history of development before it was ready to serve as a fitting title for Jesus Christ.

The *kurios* was originally the owner of a piece of property. Next, the *kurios* was the owner and master of a slave. Then, when the Greek mystery religions began to develop, *kurios* was used in reference to the deity they worshipped. By this point in ancient history, then, the *kurios* was recognized as owner, obeyed as master, and honored as a god.

What happened next had tremendous impact on the word. When the translators of the Old Testament (200 B.C.) tried to translate the divine name YHWH (Jehovah) into Greek, they faced a problem. No one knew how to pronounce the sacred name, since the vowels were omitted. There was no way to transliterate the name from Hebrew to Greek, letter by letter. The solution was to translate YHWH as *kurios*. Thus, especially to the Jewish mind, the title *kurios* even had reference to God Himself.

All of this came together to make up the meaning of our word “Lord.” And Jesus Christ is Lord.

To The Glory Of God The Father – There is no competition in heaven between Father and Son. One does not seek glory above or apart from the Other. When the Son is worshipped as Lord, it brings glory to the Father. When the Father is worshipped, it is along with, and by means of, the Son.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. What is “participation in the Spirit”? What does it have to do with unity?
2. What does it mean to be “of the same mind”? Do we have to think alike before we can have unity?
3. How can we count others better than ourselves if they are actually inferior? How can the example of Jesus help us in this?
4. What two or three key words would you choose to describe the mind of Christ?
5. Was Jesus God?
6. Of what did Jesus empty himself?
7. To what extent could “God in disguise” actually experience what it is like to be a man?

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8. What is the name which is above every name?
9. Why was Paul careful to include all three regions—in heaven, on earth, and under the earth?
10. What is the history and meaning of the title “Lord”?

A.B.A. REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Why are humility and servanthood essential to Christian unity?
2. Explain the meaning of “incentive” in verse 1.
3. What is the Greek word for “partnership,” and how can it be translated?
4. What role does the Holy Spirit play in uniting all Christians?
5. What is the Greek word for “affection” in verse 1? Explain the meaning of this word.
6. Provide a literal translation of “by being of the same mind” in verse 2. Explain whether these words focus upon unity in doctrine/opinion or attitude and purpose.
7. What is the literal translation of “being in full accord” in verse 2?
8. Why is it impossible to have absolute doctrinal conformity?
9. “So long as people are motivated by _____ is impossible.”
10. What is the literal meaning of “conceit” in verse 3?
11. What did Jesus do to provide a perfect example of humility and counting others better than Himself?
12. Provide a literal translation of “have this mind among yourselves” in verse 5.
13. “Every Christian should have the same _____ of the _____ who became _____ of all.”
14. What do verses 5 and 6 teach about the deity of the Lord Jesus?
15. Explain the meaning of the Greek word for “form” in verse 6. What does this word teach about the deity of Jesus?
16. List 6 New Testament verses which teach that Jesus is God.
17. Explain the words “did not count the equality with God a thing to be grasped” in verse 6.
18. Provide a brief definition of omnipotence, omniscience, and omnipresence.
19. “As the Son of Man, Jesus put a _____ - _____ on His _____.”
20. “The kind of servant Jesus became was actually a ‘_____’ or ‘_____.’”
21. Why was it necessary for Jesus to fully experience humanness and be tempted in every respect?
22. What did the ancient Docetics conclude about Jesus?

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23. “The refusal to admit that _____ had come in the _____ was one of the earliest _____ of the church.”
24. Explain the meaning of the word “form” in verse 8.
25. Summarize the teaching of Hebrews 5:7-8.
26. Contrast the type of “cross” used by the Greeks and Romans.
27. Describe the process of executing a victim by crucifixion.
28. In crucifixion, what was the ultimate cause of death?
29. What is the literal meaning of “highly exalted” in verse 9? How many times is this word used in the New Testament?
30. Explain the phrase “under the earth” in verse 10.
31. “Every creature must sooner or later _____ and _____ that Jesus Christ is _____. Those who have not made _____ as an act of _____ (Rom. 10:9-10) will make their _____ as an _____ of _____.”
32. What is the Greek word for “Lord” in verse 11?
33. Explain the development of the Greek word “kurios.”
34. What problem arose in the translation of “Jehovah” into Greek?
35. “Thus, especially to the Jewish mind, the title _____ even had reference to _____.”

36. What was the most significant lesson you have learned from this section? What impact will this lesson have in your life?

Lesson Four (2:12-30)

Work Out Your Own Salvation (2:12-18)

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 God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

14 Do all things without grumbling or questioning, 15 that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, 16 holding fast 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 as a libation 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.

V. 12 Therefore, My Beloved, As You Have Always Obeyed – The word “therefore” points to a connection with something said earlier. The point of connection here lies in the “obedience” of Jesus in verse eight and the fact that the Philippian brethren have “always obeyed.” They have obeyed both God and his spokesman Paul.

Not Only As In My Presence But Much More In My Absence – Paul had problems in other places with people turning against him when he was gone from them (II Cor. 11:1-4; Gal. 4:12-20), but he had confidence that the Philippians were more loyal.

Work Out Your Own Salvation – The verb “work out” means to “accomplish, carry out, or carry through with something.” The verb is a present imperative, meaning that we must “carry out and keep on carrying out” our salvation.

In a single stroke, this phrase corrects at least three possible errors in understanding salvation:

1. Our salvation was *not* a one-time past event.
2. We are *not* totally passive in salvation.
3. We can *not* be saved by the efforts of others in our behalf.

With Fear And Trembling – Fear is something of a paradox in the New Testament. It is easy to go to one extreme or the other in promoting or relieving fear. On

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the one hand, we must conduct ourselves in fear as long as we live (I Pet. 1:17) lest we be judged to have failed to reach the promised rest (Heb. 4:1). We should fear God who has the power to cast us into hell (Luke 12:5). On the other hand, we are told not to fear, for it is the Father's good pleasure to give us the kingdom (Luke 12:32). We did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear (Rom. 8:15). Perfect love casts out all fear (I John 4:18).

This dilemma is partly caused by the wide range of meanings of the word "fear." Sometimes it means terror, alarm, and fright. At other times it means reverence, respect, and awe. In this verse, Paul did not encourage a cringing terror or alarm, but a sober respect for the consequence of failure.

V. 13 For God Is At Work In You – Verse thirteen must always be considered along with verse twelve, for the two verses make up a single sentence. If verse twelve is isolated from its context, you will have an unhealthy emphasis on self-earned salvation and an unnatural fear of failure. Just remember this important fact: God is at work in you!

Both To Will And To Work For His Good Pleasure – Both our decision to serve and the service itself would have been impossible without God working in us. While God allows—and requires—our participation in salvation, the ultimate credit for salvation belongs solely to God.

Verse thirteen must also be taken in context. Isolated, it might be taken as proof of man's total depravity and inability to make any positive response in salvation. Verses twelve and thirteen, taken together, provide a remarkable balance. They show the beautiful joint participation of God and man in the plan of salvation.

V. 14 Do All Things Without Grumbling Or Questioning – Christians should serve God with an eager willingness. They should not "grumble" as the children of Israel did when they "murmured" in the wilderness (Exo. 15:24; 16:2, 7, 8). They should not "question" as the Pharisees did when they stood back questioning and complaining about Jesus (Luke 5:22).

V. 15 Blameless And Innocent, Children Of God Without Blemish – William Barclay notes the following progression in these three descriptions of the Christian. First is what he must be to the world—blameless. His life is of such purity that no one can find anything in it to blame. Second is what he must be in himself—innocent. Even beyond what the world can observe in his outward behavior, he must know in himself an integrity of purpose, an "unmixed" character. Third is what he must be in the sight of God—without blemish. This word was

often used in the Old Testament of the animals which were chosen to be sacrificed to God. Before they were fit to be brought before Him, they had to be totally without flaw or blemish.

If the Philippians are seen as a sacrifice offered to God, then Paul is seen as the libation, or drink offering, poured out upon that sacrifice (v. 17)

In The Midst Of A Crooked And Perverse Generation – The word "crooked" could be used for both a "crooked" road or a "dishonest" man. The word "perverse" means "thoroughly twisted and distorted." Together they describe people who are warped out of moral alignment with God. It should be noted that the moral atmosphere of the first century was no worse than that of the twentieth century. Any generation—or any person—that does not know God is warped.

"They are no longer his children because of their blemish, they are a perverse and crooked generation." (Deuteronomy 32:5)

Among Whom You Shine As Lights In The World – The darker the night, the brighter the light! Just as God appointed the sun, moon, and stars as lights (*phoster*) in the generations of men upon the earth. As Jesus was the light of the world (John 8:12), so are his disciples (Matt. 5:14). They must not obscure the light by blemishes and impurity, but let it shine, so men will give glory to God (Matt. 5:16).

V. 16 Holding Fast The Word Of Life – The Greek word for "holding fast" may also be translated "holding forth." If translated as "holding fast," the reference is to personal commitment to the truth of the gospel. If understood as "holding forth," the emphasis is more on evangelism. When one thinks of the Olympic runner carrying the torch, both ideas blend into one. If the Christian is to "shine" as a light for his dark generation, he must "hold fast" and "hold forth" the gospel.

In The Day Of Christ – The last great day, the time of the consummation, as in Chapter one, verse ten.

I May Be Proud That I Did Not Run In Vain Or Labor In Vain – As a great relay runner, Paul had carried the torch of evangelism to the Philippians. If they dropped the torch or failed to pass it on to succeeding runners, Paul would have run his part of the race for nothing.

V. 17 Even If I Am To Be Poured As A Libation – Paul had the mind of Christ, the attitude of self-sacrificing servanthood. He pictured himself here as a drink offering (see Num. 28:14, 31) poured out upon the altar. His life was expendable.

Upon The Sacrificial Offering Of your Faith – Literally, "upon the sacrifice and priestly service" of

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your faith. Paul saw their faith as a sacrifice offered in priestly service at the temple, and himself as the drink offering poured on top of it.

I Am Glad And Rejoice With You All – Paul had already stated that his only reason for living was for their progress and joy in the faith (1:24-25). If his life was used—or used up—for the benefit of their faith, Paul could only rejoice.

V. 18 Likewise You Also Should Be Glad And Rejoice With Me—It was one thing for Paul to be glad to make the sacrifice of his life for the Philippians; it was quite another thing for them to be glad to have him do it. Still, it was necessary that they understand and accept this as the will of God. Paul wanted them to learn to “rejoice in the Lord always” (4:4), even for the things that might initially cause their hearts to break.

Timothy And Epaphroditus (2:19-30)

19 I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I may be cheered by news of you. 20 I have no one like him, who will be genuinely anxious for your welfare. 21 They all look after their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. 22 But Timothy’s worth you know, 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 shall come also.

25 Titus 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 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 your service to me.

V. 19 I Hope In The Lord Jesus To Send Timothy – Another major reason for sending this letter to Philippi was to prepare them for the coming of Timothy. Paul was not certain what the future held for him (v. 23). It was his expectation to be acquitted, to send Timothy with up-to-the-minute news, and to journey to Philippi himself shortly afterwards (v. 24).

So That I May Be Cheered By News Of You – Paul also anticipated the possibility that Timothy would have enough time to return from Philippi before Paul’s release.

V. 20 I Have No One Like Him, Who Will Be Genuinely Anxious For Your Welfare – Like Paul,

Timothy had the mind of Christ, the attitude of self-sacrificing servanthood. Paul had no one “equal-souled” to Timothy, for Timothy’s concern for the Philippians could even be called “anxiety.” (This strong word for concerned involvement is the same word Jesus forbade in reference to material concerns in Matt. 6:34.)

V. 21 They All Look After Their Own Interests, Not Those Of Jesus Christ – Is this a blanket condemnation of all Paul’s other co-workers? Does this describe Luke, Titus, and Mark? Perhaps Paul referred only to the few co-workers presently available for appointment to this mission. Or perhaps Paul simply meant that in comparison with Timothy, all others were made to look selfish by contrast. At any rate, it is not our task to evaluate Paul’s assistants, but to learn to be self-sacrificing servants who care for the interests of others (2:4).

V. 22 But Timothy’s Worth You Know – Timothy’s “worth” was the approvedness which comes from having been tested in the fire and found genuine. (See notes on 1:10) The same word is used by Paul in Rom. 5:4 to describe the “character” which is produced by enduring suffering.

How As A Son With A Father He Has Served With Me – The Philippians had observed Timothy’s service during both the second (Acts 16:3) and third (Acts 18:5) missionary journeys. They could understand quite well the closeness in the relationship between Paul and his “genuine child in the faith” (I Tim. 1:2).

V. 23 I Hope Therefore To Send Him Just As Soon As I See How It Will Go With Me – Paul seems to have expected a decision to be reached shortly. While he expressed some uncertainty about the future here, it should be noted that his uncertainty is not in the Lord, but in Nero.

V. 24 And I Trust In The Lord – Paul’s confidence was also expressed with the same Greek word in 1:6 and 25. Nero was unstable, but the Lord was not!

Shortly I Myself Shall Come Also – Was Paul in fact released from this imprisonment in Rome? Not only does church history affirm this, but it is required in order to fit the epistles to Timothy and Titus into the chronology of Paul’s life. The traditional view is no doubt correct that following his release, Paul wrote I Timothy and Titus; and during his later imprisonment, he wrote II Timothy.

V. 25 I Have Thought It Necessary To Send To You Epaphroditus – Paul wanted to make it clear that Epaphroditus was returning home to Philippi by Paul’s own decision, not as a matter of Epaphroditus’ own pleasure or as the result of his personal failure.

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My Brother And Fellow Soldier, And Your Messenger And Minister To My Need – Epaphroditus had been sent from Philippi to bring gifts to Paul (4:18) and to be Paul’s personal assistant during his imprisonment. This long and impressive array of titles was given as a precaution against anyone thinking that Epaphroditus had failed.

V. 26 For He Has Been Longing For You All – The word used here for “longing” is the same word Paul used in 1:8 to express how he himself “yearned” for these same brethren.

And Has Been Distressed Because You Heard That He Was Ill – This shows the genuineness of the servant’s heart. Even in desperate sickness, the main concern of Epaphroditus was that his brethren back home would be worried.

V. 27 Indeed He was Ill, Near To Death – The Philippians had heard correctly about his illness. He was so sick, he very nearly died (v. 30).

But God Had Mercy On Him – Epaphroditus’ recovery was not viewed as a process of nature, but as an act of God.

On Me Also, Lest I Should Have Sorrow Upon Sorrow – Paul felt sorrow first of all because by coming to Rome, Epaphroditus had become sick. Paul would have felt much additional sorrow if this generous service had also led to Epaphroditus’ death.

V. 28 I Am The More Eager To Send Him, Therefore, That You May Rejoice – The Philippians’ joy had been threatened by Epaphroditus’ sickness. His return would confirm to them that in all things they could depend upon the Lord and rejoice (4:4).

V. 29 So Receive Him In The Lord With All Joy – This repetition perhaps indicates that Paul was afraid they might not receive Epaphroditus well. It would have been easy for them to have reservations about him, thinking of him as a “drop-out.”

And Honor Such Men – The principle involved here goes beyond Epaphroditus and the first century. Too many times veteran missionaries and preachers have returned home with broken health and depleted finances, only to find indifference to their plight.

V. 30 For He Nearly Died For The Work Of Christ – Like Paul and Timothy, Epaphroditus had the mind of Christ, the attitude of self-sacrificing servanthood. He was willing to lay down his life, if necessary, for the cause of Christ.

Risking His Life – The word for “risking” was the secular term for gambling. He “took a chance” and laid his life on the line for Jesus.

This same word was later used to name the “Parabolani,” a brotherhood of “riskers” who voluntarily cared for the sick when no one else dared to come near.

To Complete Your Service To Me – None too subtly, Paul reminded the Philippians that they owed a lot to Epaphroditus. He had “filled in” for their “lacking” in service to Paul. Those who had not gone had no room to criticize the one who had.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. In what sense do we work out our own salvation? Can salvation be earned?
2. What extremes will result if either verse 12 or 13 is isolated from its context?
3. In what three respects is the Christian’s life to pass inspection? (See verse 15)
4. How could Paul have “run in vain”?
5. What is a libation? In what way could Paul liken his own life to a libation?
6. What do you know about Timothy? What did the Philippians know about him?
7. Were all Paul’s other co-workers selfish?
8. Why did Paul build up Epaphroditus so much?
9. What lesson must the church learn today about men like Epaphroditus?

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10. What vivid imagery is behind the phrase “risking his life”?

A.B.A. REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What does the verb “work out” mean in verse 12?
2. Explain what is significant about the verb “work out” being a present imperative.
3. List 3 possible errors, in understanding salvation, that are corrected by Paul’s words, “work out your own salvation.”
4. Explain the paradox surrounding the word “fear” in the New Testament.
5. What is the proper way to understand the word “fear” in verse 12?
6. What role should “fear and trembling” have in following Paul’s words, “work out your own salvation”?
7. Why is it important to always understand verse 12 (“work out your own salvation with fear and trembling”) in the context of verse 13 (“for God is at work in you both to will and to work for His good pleasure)?
8. Why is it also important to understand verse 13 in the context of verse 12?
9. “Verses twelve and thirteen, taken together, provide a remarkable _____. They show the beautiful _____ of _____ and _____ in the plan of _____.”
10. Summarize William Barclay’s insight on the words blameless, innocent and without blemish.
11. How were the words “without blemish” used in reference to animals sacrificed to God in the Old Testament? What does this indicate about the need for purity in the lives of Christians?
12. Explain the meanings of the words “crooked” and “perverse” in verse 15.
13. What judgment upon sinful living is found in Deut. 32:5?
14. What is the Greek term for “lights”? In what sense are Christians “lights in the world”?
15. In verse 16, what are two ways that the Greek word for “holding fast” may be understood?
16. In what way should a Christian “hold fast” and “hold forth” the Gospel?
17. Explain the meaning of the word “libation” in verse 17.
18. What is a literal translation of “upon the sacrificial offering of your faith”?
19. Today, would Paul liken your faith as “a sacrifice offered in priestly service at the temple?” Why or why not?
20. What major reason, for writing Philippians, is expressed in verse 19?
21. What is the connection between the word “anxious” (in verse 15) and Matt. 6:34?
22. What is the connection between the word “worth” (in verse 22) and Romans 5:4?
23. Name the missionary journeys in which Timothy faithfully served with Paul.

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24. Was Paul ever released from this imprisonment in Rome? Explain your answer.
25. When did Paul write I & II Timothy and Titus?
26. How does Paul describe Epaphroditus in verse 25?
27. What does Paul share about the illness of Epaphroditus?
28. What lessons can be learned from the faithful, self-sacrificing servanthood of Epaphroditus?
29. What is the meaning of the word “risking” in verse 30?
30. Who were the “Parabolani”?
31. What is the most important lesson that you have learned this section of study, and will it change your life in any way?

Lesson Five (3:1-21)

No Confidence In The Flesh (3:1-11)

1 Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is not irksome to me, and is safe for you.

2 Look out for the dogs, look out for the evil-workers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh. 3 For we are the true circumcision, who worship God in spirit, 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 any other man 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 born of Hebrews; as to the law a Pharisee, 6 as to zeal a persecutor of the church, and 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 refuse, in order that I may gain Christ 9

and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own, based on law, but that which is 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 if possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

V. 1 Finally, My Brethren, Rejoice In The Lord

– In Paul’s mind, this was a fitting conclusion for all that preceded:

- 1:13 I am in prison
- 1:20 I may even die
- 1:29 You will struggle and suffer
- 2:7 Christ emptied himself and died
- 2:17 I am being poured out
- 2:30 Epaphroditus nearly died

So rejoice!

To Write The Same Things To You – In a previous personal note to the Philippians, or perhaps when he was there in person, Paul had warned them against the Judaizers. Now he would do it again.

Not Irksome To Me, And Is Safe For You – This was not “something causing fear or reluctance” for Paul, and it would work toward the “security” of the Philippians.

V. 2 Look Out For The Dogs – This was a term of supreme contempt for the Judaizers. Under the Levitical law, dogs were unclean animals. They were dirty scavengers like jackals and hyenas.

Look Out For The Evil-workers – This describes the same group of Judaizers, becoming more specific in its description.

Look Out For Those Who Mutilate The Flesh – The Judaizers insisted that faith in Christ was not enough. One must also earn God’s favor by keeping certain Old Testament laws, such as circumcision. Thus seeking to justify themselves by their own works, they were severed from Christ and fallen from grace (Gal. 5:4).

In this verse, Paul changed the regular word for circumcision (“around-cut”) to the word for mutilation (“down-cut”). This was to show that the ritual of circumcision was no longer a means of obtaining God’s favor. It did not secure righteousness; it merely hacked off some flesh.

V. 3 For We Are The True Circumcision – Christians are the covenant people of God. They are the true Israel of God (Gal. 6:16; Rom. 9:6-8, 25-26), circumcised with a circumcision not made with hands (Col. 2:11). God’s children are determined not by coincidence of physical ancestry, but by these factors:

They worship God in spirit (John 4:23)

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They glory in Christ Jesus (Gal. 6:14)

They put no confidence in the flesh

V. 4 Though I Myself Have Reason For Confidence In The Flesh Also – Paul did not want anyone to cry, “Sour grapes!” He was not opposing Jewish legal righteousness just because he had never been able to obtain it. Quite the opposite was true—he had it all, but found it worthless.

If Any Other Man Thinks He Has Reason – Paul welcomed a contest of confidence with the Judaizers. He knew that such a comparison would demonstrate two things: he himself had more reason to boast than any Judaizer; and since all his self-righteousness was worthless, theirs was worth even less.

I Have More – Paul’s reasons for confidence in the flesh can be summarized as follows:

Advantages by Birth:

1. Circumcised on the eighth day
2. Of the people of Israel
3. Of the tribe of Benjamin
4. A Hebrew born of Hebrews

Advantages by Personal Attainment:

5. As to the law, a Pharisee
6. As to zeal, a persecutor of the church
7. As to legal righteousness, blameless

V. 5 Circumcised On The Eighth Day – The law required that the male baby be circumcised when eight days old (Lev. 12:3; Luke 1:59). It is probably that the local Judaizers were born as Gentiles, “Johnny-come-lately” on the circumcision scene.

Of The People Of Israel – Not just a descendant of Abraham (as were also the Ishmaelites) or of Isaac (as were the Edomites), Paul was a true Jew—a descendant of Jacob.

Of The Tribe Of Benjamin – Benjamin was an honored tribe among the people of Israel. It was the tribe of the first king (I Sam. 10:20); it remained loyal to Jerusalem under Rehoboam (I Kg. 12:21); and it helped rebuild Jerusalem after the exile in Babylon (Ezra 4:1).

A Hebrew Born Of Hebrews – Paul was the Hebrew-speaking child of Hebrew-speaking parents.

As To The Law A Pharisee – Paul and his parents (Acts 23:6) were members of the strictest sect of the Jewish religion (Acts 26:5). The Pharisees faithfully observed the most minute detail of the law, scrupulously tithing even their garden spices (Matt. 23:23).

V. 6 As To Zeal A Persecutor Of The Church – Paul was not claiming perfect sinlessness. Rather, he was affirming perfect adherence to the external standards of legalistic righteousness. Every tithe, every feast, every sacrifice—all had been properly observed by the young Pharisee.

V. 7 But Whatever Gain I Had, I Counted As Loss – When Paul added up his virtues, he made a surprising discovery. The grand total was not just a small figure, or even just a zero, but a minus! The more he had worked to save himself, the farther he put himself from God.

It should be noted that Paul did not say that he decided to give up a number of valuable things to gain Christ. He said that he finally realized that all his “gain” was really “loss”!

V. 8 Because Of The Surpassing Worth Of Knowing Christ Jesus My Lord – Everything became “loss” in comparison with the excellency of knowing Christ. Furthermore, “knowing” Christ involved more than mere mental acquaintance. The word means “to have an intimate personal experience” with someone. To know Jesus is to be changed by him. To know Jesus is the essence of eternal life (John 17:3).

For His Sake I Have Suffered The Loss Of All Things, And Count Them As Refuse – Paul gave up nothing of value in order to gain Christ. It was only “refuse,” a word for excrement or garbage. The closest modern equivalent is “sewage.”

Paul’s loss was only sewage; his gain was the Son of God.

V. 9 Not Having A Righteousness Of My Own, Based On Law – As Paul made so plain in Romans 3:21-4:25 and Gal. 2:16-5:6, man is not justified by works of law. He cannot save himself. Neither can he combine his own merit with the ransom price paid on the cross, trying to “help” Jesus win salvation. Paul’s own righteousness was like filthy rags (Isa. 64:6), and he was glad to take it off and throw it away.

That Which Is Through Faith In Christ – The only righteousness recognized by God is that which comes through faith in Christ. When Paul committed himself to Jesus, trusting in his death on the cross for justification, he put on a new nature—he put on Christ! (Gal. 3:27)

V. 10 That I May Know Him And The Power Of His Resurrection – Again the word for “know” means intimate personal involvement (v. 8). This participation in Christ would empower Paul with the same mighty strength which raised Jesus from the dead (Eph. 1:18-20).

Share His Sufferings, Becoming Like Him In His Death – If Paul was to experience all that is Jesus, he had to have the same willingness to suffer. If Paul should ultimately suffer a martyr’s death, he would count it a privilege (1:29).

V. 11 That If Possible I May Attain The Resurrection From The Dead – Paul did not say this to

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express any lack of assurance in his own salvation. Rather, it is a humble statement of complete dependence upon God. It represents the complete and final rejection of all confidence in the flesh (v. 4-7).

Press On Toward The Goal (3:12-21)

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 Brethren, 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 be thus minded; and if in anything you are otherwise minded, God will reveal that also to you. 16 Only let us hold true to what we have attained.

17 Brethren, join in imitating me, and mark those who so live as you have an example in us. 18 For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, live as enemies of the cross of Christ. 19 Their end is their destruction, their god is the belly, and they glory in their shame, with minds set on earthly things. 20 But our commonwealth is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power which enables him even to subject all things to himself.

V. 12 Not That I Have Already Obtained – In contrast to his former life of confidence in the flesh, now Paul exhibits complete humility.

But I Press On – Jesus had laid hold on Paul with a goal in mind for him, so now Paul was engaged in an all-out “pursuit” of that goal. To “press on” meant to “chase or pursue.”

V. 13 Brethren, I Do Not Consider That I Have Made It My Own – As if in penance for even having listed his one-time virtues, Paul again humbly renounces any self-attainment.

But One Thing I Do – The emphasis is on the word “one.” Paul had a single-minded dedication to this purpose.

Forgetting What Lies Behind And Straining Forward To What Lies Ahead – The picture is of a runner in a race. He may have made some serious mistakes in the early stages of the race, but he cannot dwell on that now. Instead, he “stretches out ahead” as he sees the finish line approaching.

V. 14 I Press On Toward The Goal – The goal is the “mark or target which one sets his sight on.” Paul fixed his vision on this mark and pressed on, “pursuing” it.

For The Prize Of The Upward Call Of God In Christ Jesus – He who reaches the “goal” will win the “prize.” In this case, the prize is an eternal one (I Cor. 9:24-27), the crown of righteousness (II Tim. 4:7-8).

V. 15 Let Those Of Us Who Are Mature Be Thus Minded – The word “mature” (KJV “perfect”) means “full-grown, complete, adult.” All those among the Philippians who had reached this maturity of faith were encouraged to be “thus minded,” to have the attitude or mind-set which pressed on toward the goal. (This is the same word as “have this mind” in 2:2 and 2:5.)

If In Anything You Are Otherwise Minded, God Will Reveal That Also To You – Anyone who didn’t see it this way should expect to get straightened out by God at some future time. How would God reveal it to them? By direct revelation? By further apostolic or prophetic teaching? By a rebuke on judgment day? Paul does not say.

V. 16 Only Let Us Hold True To What We Have Attained – Even though we have not yet attained all things, we have attained some things. Therefore, we must hold true (“stay in line with”) those things we have attained. In “forgetting what lies behind” (v. 13), we must not abandon such progress as we have made. We must forget our failures and preserve our successes.

V. 17 Brethren, Join In Imitating Me – Without any boasting or undue pride, Paul could point to himself as an example of Christian behavior (4:9). He was not guilty of the kind of inconsistency which says, “Do as I say, not as I do.” The secret to this kind of leadership by example is found in I Cor. 11:1, “Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.”

And Mark Those Who So Live As You Have An Example In Us – Paul did not consider his Christian life to be unparalleled. To the contrary, he knew there were many who followed the same example (“pattern”). He urged the Philippians to mark (“set their sight on”) such people and follow their example as well.

V. 18 For Many, Of Whom I Have Often Told You And Now Tell You Even With Tears – Paul was keenly aware that many people did not live exemplary lives. He did not brush this off as inevitable, but was moved to tears at their loss.

Live As Enemies Of The Cross Of Christ – Who were these enemies of the cross? The Judaizers? The heathen Gentiles? In the context of these verses (especially as a contrast to verse 17), these enemies were probably people who had once made a profession of faith in Christ, but now had fallen back into sensuality and self-indulgence. Such people are actually the worst enemies Christianity has.

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V. 19 Their End Is Destruction – God is not mocked. Such people will reap their just reward—eternal destruction in hell. (See Rom 6:21, II Cor. 11:15; Heb. 6:8.)

Their God Is The Belly – Followers of the cross learn to deny, but the enemies of the cross live for self-gratification. Their lives are controlled by the lusts of the flesh. The word for “belly” includes much more than just the appetite for food and drink. All physical, sensual appetites are included.

Their Glory In Their Shame – Such people not only live debased lives, they even take perverse pride in their wickedness. While they think they enjoy the freedom of permissiveness, they are actually in bondage to their lusts.

With Minds Set On Earthly Things – Such people do not have the mind of Christ. Whether or not they wallow in the filth of the most extreme sins, they have set their minds (see 2:2, 2:5, 3:15) on earthly things—and this is equally damnable! The Christian must set his mind on the things above (Col. 3:2).

V. 20 But Our Commonwealth Is In Heaven – Just as the Philippians were citizens of far away Rome, so the Christians are citizens of the “homeland” in heaven. Christians do not take an excessive interest in earthly affairs (“with minds set on earthly things”), because this is not their real home.

From It We Await A Savior, The Lord Jesus Christ – The Christian’s eyes are fixed on heaven. Almost as people held captive in a foreign land, they await their Deliverer. (See I Thess. 1:9-10; 4:16-17.)

V. 21 Who Will Change Our Lowly Body To Be Like His Glorious Body – The Savior will rescue them from their earthly captivity and will change (“transform”) their lowly bodies of flesh. The corruptible will become incorruptible (I Cor. 15:53) and the Christian will appear with Jesus in glory (Col. 3:4). Then the Christian’s body will be like (“conformed to”) the glorious body of Christ. (See also I John 3:2.)

By The Power Which Enables Him Even To Subject All Things To Himself – The One who has the “effective, working power” to subject all the universe to his control will use that power to make our bodies changed and eternal.

STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. Why did Paul call certain people “dogs, evil workers, those who mutilate the flesh”?

2. Who are the true covenant people of God? Do they have a mark of circumcision?
3. Why did Paul list all his former virtues?
4. What is “a Hebrew born of Hebrews”?
5. How could Paul claim to have been blameless? Didn’t he also call himself the “chief of sinners” (I Tim. 1:15)?
6. Did Paul have to give up a lot in order to gain Christ?
7. What is the difference between righteousness based on law and the righteousness that depends on faith?
8. How is the Christian life like a race?
9. Who were the “enemies of the cross”? Describe them.
10. Will we have bodies in heaven? Will our bodies be like the body of Jesus after the resurrection?

A.B.A. REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Explain the meaning of the term “dogs” in verse 2
2. “The _____ insisted that _____ in Christ was not enough. One must also _____ God’s _____ by keeping certain _____ laws, such as _____.”

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3. What is significant about Paul changing the regular word for “circumcision” to the word for “mutilation”?
4. List 3 factors which determine if one is a true child of God.
5. List 7 reasons why Paul could have put confidence in the flesh.
6. According to Leviticus 12:3, when was a male baby to be circumcised?
7. Paul was a direct descendant from Israel’s tribe of _____. What made this particular tribe so “honored” in the Old Testament?
8. Summarize the lawkeeping habits of the Pharisees.
9. What did Paul mean by the words, “as to righteousness under the law blameless”?
10. Explain Paul’s words, “But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss.”
11. What is the meaning of “knowing” in verse 8?
12. Explain the meaning of “refuse” in verse 8.
13. “Man is not _____ by works of law. He cannot _____ himself. Neither can he _____ his own _____ with the _____ price paid on the cross, trying to ‘help’ Jesus _____ salvation. Paul’s own _____ was like _____, and he was glad to take it off and _____.”
14. What is the only righteousness that is recognized by God?
15. Explain the meaning of the “know” and “the power of His resurrection” in verse 10.
16. Is the “power of Christ’s resurrection” available to Christians today? See Eph. 1:18-20.
17. What does it mean to “share in His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death”?
18. Is Paul questioning the assurance of his salvation in verse 11? If not, then what does he mean?
19. What is the meaning of the term “press on” in verse 12?
20. What picture is behind Paul’s words “Forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead”?
21. Why is it so important for a Christian to forget past mistakes and focus upon “straining forward to what lies ahead”?
22. “In ‘forgetting what lies behind’ (v. 13) we must not _____ such _____ as we have made. We must _____ our _____ and _____ our _____.”
23. What did Paul mean when he wrote, “mark those who so live as you have an example in us”?
24. Who were the “enemies of the cross of Christ” in verse 18?
25. What is meant by the word “belly” in verse 19?
26. What do 1 Cor. 15:53, Col. 3:4, and 1 John 3:2 teach about a Christian’s future “transformed” body?
27. What is the most significant lesson your have learned from this study, and how will this improve your relationship with Jesus?

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Lesson Six (4:1-23)

Rejoice In The Lord (4:1-9)

1 Therefore, my brethren, 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 And I ask you also, true yokefellow, help these women, for they 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 all men know your forbearance. The Lord is at hand. 6 Have no anxiety 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 passes all understanding, will keep your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

8 Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is gracious, 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, do; and the God of peace will be with you.

V. 1 Therefore, My Brethren – Because they have a home in heaven and because they were soon to be rescued by their Savior, the Philippians were to stand fast.

Whom I Love And Long For – As in 1:8, Paul “yearned” for these special brethren who were so dear to his heart.

My Joy And Crown – The word for “crown” is not the royal diadem, but the woven crown or wreath placed on the head of the winner of an athletic contest. If the Philippians held fast to the gospel (2:16) and stood firm in the Lord, then Paul had his victory. He had not run in vain.

Stand Firm Thus In The Lord, My Beloved – The present tense of this imperative verb indicates that standing firm must be a continuing action. It was not a single battle the Philippians faced, but a war of attrition. They had to “stand firm and keep on standing firm.”

V. 2 I Entreat Euodia And I Entreat Syntyche – These are feminine names, evidently referring to two of the women in the Philippian church. If Paul had not cared so much for these people, he might well have “minded his own business.” But his love for them made it his business!

To Agree In The Lord – Literally “to set the minds on the same thing” as in 2:2. While one can only speculate as to the source or nature of their squabble, the remedy for it is plain. They must both set their minds on the same thing in the Lord. They must have the mind of Christ and deny self. Perhaps they could not ever agree on everything, but they could agree to love one another.

V. 3 And I Ask You Also, True Yokefellow, Help These Women – Paul also dared to involve another person in this dispute. Various of Paul’s co-workers have been suggested as the “yokefellow,” but it seems likely that “yokefellow” (Gk. *Syzygus*) was simply the person’s name. Thus, “genuine yokefellow” would mean “Syzygus, rightly so named.”

For They Have Labored Side By Side With Me In The Gospel – These women labored (“contended together”) with Paul, and their work is described by the same word used in 1:27. From the very first day in Philippi, Paul and his team were joined by devout women in the team effort of spreading the gospel.

Together With Clement And The Rest Of My Fellow Workers, Whose Names Are In The Book Of Life – Clement and the others are unknown to us, but they are well known to God. Their names are recorded in heaven where they would dwell with God (Luke 10:20; Heb. 12:23; Rev. 3:5; 13:8; 21:27).

V. 4 Rejoice In The Lord Always; Again I Will Say Rejoice – This is the keynote of the epistle. The words “joy” and “rejoice” are used eighteen times. Despite imprisonment or suffering, the command is the same: “Rejoice”! Even when it is not possible to rejoice in the situation, it is still possible to rejoice in the Lord . . . always!

V. 5 Let All Men Know Your Forbearance – Forbearance is the willingness to temper legal justice with mercy, to show gentle consideration. One very effective witness to non-Christians is the kind of patience and forbearance that comes as a fruit of the Spirit.

The Lord Is At Hand – The Lord is “near” in two ways. His presence is always with us and his second coming is only a trumpet blast away. Either of these facts should cause us to be more forbearing toward people.

V. 6 Have No Anxiety About Anything – “Worry is an insult to God.” Christians must learn to turn over their cares and anxieties to God. They must not “be anxious for the morrow” (Matt. 6:34) but must trust God for their daily needs. (Note the use of “anxious” in a positive way in 2:20.)

But In Everything By Prayer And Supplication With Thanksgiving Let Your Requests Be Made

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Known To God —A talk with God will relieve anxiety. Four different words are used here to describe the kind of communication we make to God. “Prayer” is the general word for a message addressed to God.

“Supplication” is a more specific word for a petition or entreaty, often in behalf of someone else. It beseeches God to do something. “Thanksgiving” is gratitude expressed to God for his goodness and grace. In this sense, thanksgiving can be offered “in everything,” no matter how tragic the circumstances. “Requests” are the specific things we desire of God.

V. 7 And The Peace Of God, Which Passes All Understanding – Notice how the peace of God in this verse is sandwiched between right praying (v. 6) and right thinking (v. 8). This peace of God surpasses and “rises above” all human thought. Whenever we are distraught and cannot think of any possible solution, we must turn the matter over to God.

Will Keep Your Hearts And Your Minds In Christ Jesus – “Keep” is a military word meaning “to stand guard over.” Our security and peace of mind does not depend upon our own watchfulness, but on the sovereign providence of God.

The “hearts” and “minds” should not be understood as totally separate parts of a man, such as “emotion” and “intelligence.” Throughout the scriptures, “heart” includes willing, feeling, and thinking. It is the center of man’s being.

V. 8 Finally, Brethren, Whatever Is True – Notice that the right thinking of this verse is sandwiched between the “peace of God” in verse seven and the “God of peace” in verse nine.

Things that are “true” conform to reality. The ultimate norm of truth is the Lord himself (John 14:6) and his Word (John 17:17).

Whatever Is Honorable – This means things that are noble, dignified, serious, and worthy of reverence. They have the dignity which grows out of moral excellence.

Whatever Is Just – Things that are right, fair, and in accordance with God’s commandments are “just.”

Whatever Is Pure – This moral purity is undefiled by contamination with sin. This word was frequently used to describe the “chastity” of a virgin.

Whatever Is Lovely – The Christian’s thoughts are not all stern and sober. His thoughts also include what is “attractive and pleasing” and whatever “calls forth love.”

Whatever Is Gracious – Literally, “well-sounding.” This includes things that are attractive, appealing, and praise-worthy. This word also softens the serious tone of the first words in this series.

If There Is Any Excellence – This is the comprehensive classical Greek word for “virtue.” It points to what is brave, beautiful, and morally upright. This kind of virtue is held in honor by all men.

If There Is Anything Worthy Of Praise – Simply, that which is approved and praiseworthy.

Think About These Things – The Greek word for “think” can be understood in two different ways, both of which are applicable here. First, it means to compute the worth of. Christians should evaluate these virtues and choose them instead of evil. Second, it means to let the mind dwell on. This kind of right thinking promotes peace of mind.

V. 9 What You Have Learned And Received And Heard And Seen In Me, Do – The first two words point to Paul’s teaching and the other two point to his personal example (as in 3:17).

And The God Of Peace Will Be With You – Real inner peace does not come from mystical meditation, but from God, the source and giver of peace.

Thank You For The Gifts (4:10-23)

10 I rejoice 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 complain of want; for I have learned, in whatever state I am, to be content. 12 I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound; in any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and want. 13 I can do all things in 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 for even in Thessalonica you sent me to help once and again. 17 Not that I seek the gift; but I seek the fruit which increases to your credit. 18 I have received full payment, and more; I am filled, 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 for ever and ever. Amen.

21 Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren 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.

V. 10 I Rejoice In The Lord Greatly That Now At Length You Have Revived Your Concern For Me

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– After an indefinite interval of delay, the Philippians had “caused their concern to bloom again,” sending gifts to Paul in Rome. The emphasis is not on the delay, but on rejoicing in the present concern.

You Were Indeed Concerned For Me, But You Had No Opportunity – Paul used the imperfect tense, saying in effect, “You were caring all along.” He was careful to remove any possible tone of reproach for the tardiness of their support.

V. 11 Not That I Complain Of Want – Paul did not “speak according to his lack.” He was in want, but that was not what prompted these words.

For I Have Learned, In Whatever State I Am, To Be Content –The word “content” was a popular word with Stoic philosophers to describe the “self-sufficient” man. He was totally independent of everybody and everything, and nothing could affect him. It is clear, however, that Paul was not “self-sufficient” but “God-sufficient” (v. 6, 13, 19).

V. 12 I Know How To Be Abased, And I Know How To Abound – To be “abased” meant to experience humiliation and poverty. To “abound meant to have an over-flowing abundance and have all one’s needs supplied. Paul could face deprivation without complaint and could face affluence without over-exultation.

I Have Learned The Secret Of Facing Plenty And Hunger, Abundance And Want – Whether stuffed or starving, Paul was not unduly concerned, for his belly was not his god (3:19). Paul had come to grips with the fact that either too much or too little material wealth can often turn a man against God.

“Give me neither poverty nor riches . . . lest I be full and deny Thee and say, ‘Who is the Lord?’ or lest I be poor, and steal, and profane the name of my God.” (Proverbs 30:8, 9)

V. 13 I Can Do All Things In Him Who Strengthens Me – In context, this means the ability to face any circumstance without despair. Paul could not always get food (II Cor. 11:27), but he could face hunger victoriously. He could not always escape his enemies, but he could face prison triumphantly. He could not always get the financial support he needed, but he could face poverty and win.

Who was the One who strengthened Paul? After the sixth century, most manuscripts added the word “Christ.” In other places in this epistle, the one who supplies strength is:

<u>Christ</u>	<u>(either)</u>	<u>God</u>
1:11	1:6	2:13
1:19	1:10	4:6
1:21		4:9
3:21		4:19

V. 14 Yet It Was Kind Of You To Share My Trouble – Literally, “you did nobly, being partners (as in 1:7) in my affliction.”

V. 15 In The Beginning Of The Gospel, When I Left Macedonia – See notes on 1:5, 6.

No Church Entered Into Partnership With Me In Giving And Receiving Except You Only – Paul was glad to make the gospel available free of charge (I Cor. 9:6-18) wherever he preached. Only the church in Philippi was allowed to support Paul in a continuing “partnership” in the gospel.

V. 16 Even In Thessalonica You Sent Me Help – Thessalonica was another city of Macedonia, and was Paul’s next stop after Philippi on the second missionary journey (Acts 17:1).

V. 17 Not That I Seek The Gift – As in verse 11, Paul was eager to get finances into the proper perspective.

I Seek The Fruit Which Increases To Your Credit – It was not that Paul—much less the Lord—needed their money. They needed to experience the blessing of giving. By investing in evangelism, they were putting money in their own account (thus, “to your credit”) in heaven. (See Matt. 6:20.)

V. 18 I Have Received Full Payment – These words were the first century equivalent of “paid in full.” Paul had received full payment—and more! He considered himself overpaid!

A Fragrant Offering, A Sacrifice Acceptable And Pleasing To God –Just as Paul saw his own ministry as a sacrifice, he also saw the financial support of the Philippians as a sacrifice. Strong imagery from the Old Testament temple sacrifices is present here.

V. 19 And My God Will Supply Every Need Of Yours According To His Riches In Glory In Christ Jesus – The extent to which God is prepared to provide our needs is inexhaustible. The only limitation lies in the word “need.” God has not promised to supply everything we may think we want.

V. 20 To Our God And Father Be Glory For Ever And Ever – All the activity of the kingdom—even the adoration of the Son—must resound to the glory of the Father (1:11; 2:11).

Amen – From the Aramaic language, meaning “it is firm, so be it.”

V. 21 Greet Every Saint In Christ Jesus – As at the beginning (1:1), all God’s “set-apart” people are included.

V. 22 All The Saints Greet You, Especially Those Of Caesar's Household – Included among the ranks of the Christians in Rome were members of Caesar’s household! This did not necessarily mean his

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own family, but included all those associated with the imperial palace: slaves, freedmen, household servants, and others. Paul was in chains, but the gospel was not! (See 1:12-14.)

V. 23 The Grace Of The Lord Jesus Christ Be With Your Spirit – As always, Paul closed with a note of grace (1:2).

STUDY QUESTIONS:

1. What kind of crown was Paul talking about in verse one? How was this connected to the Philippian brethren?
2. Why did Paul intrude into a private squabble between two women in Philippi?
3. How is it possible to rejoice always? Isn't there a time to weep and a time to laugh (Eccl. 3:4)?
4. What is forbearance?
5. What is the specific meaning of each of the four words dealing with prayer in verse six?
6. What is the connection between prayer, the peace of God; right thinking, and the God of peace? (See v. 6-9)
7. Which is a greater threat to one's faith: poverty or wealth?

8. If we "can do all things in him who strengthens" us, will we always be healthy, wealthy, and successful? Was Paul?
9. Why did Paul allow the Philippians to give him money when he allowed no other church to do so?
10. How could the gospel have reached inside the very household of Caesar?
11. What have you learned from the study of Philippians? In what specific ways will this study change the way you think and the way you live?

A.B.A. REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What is the meaning of the word "crown" in verse 1?
2. What is indicated by the "present tense" of the imperative verb "stand firm" in verse 1?
3. Are "Euodia" and "Syntyche" masculine or feminine names? Who are these people?
4. What was the remedy for the squabble between Euodia and Syntyche?
5. Explain the meaning of "yokefellow" and "Syzygus."
6. Summarize what Rev. 3:5, 13:8, and 21:27 teach about the "book of life."
7. What is "forbearance"?

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8. List 2 ways in which the Lord is “near.”
9. “_____ is an _____ to God. Christians must learn to turn over their _____ and _____ to God.”
10. Provide a brief definition of the following words: prayer, supplication, thanksgiving, and requests.
11. Define the word “keep” in verse 7.
12. What is the proper understanding of the words “hearts” and “minds” in verse 7?
13. “Things that are ‘_____’ conform to reality. The ultimate norm of _____ is the _____ and _____.”
14. What is meant by “whatever is honorable”?
15. What is the meaning of “whatever is just”?
16. Define “whatever is pure.”
17. How does this lesson describe “whatever is lovely”?
18. Provide a definition of “whatever is gracious.”
19. Explain “if there is any excellence.”
20. Explain 2 ways in which the Greek word for “think” can be understood.
21. What are some things that others have learned, received, heard, or seen in you that you would like them to practice in their own lives?
22. What are some things that others have learned, received, heard, or seen in you that you do not want to become incorporated into their lives? What steps will you take to overcome these areas in your own life?
23. How did Stoic philosophers use the word “content”?
24. Explain these words: “Paul was not ‘self-sufficient’ but ‘God-sufficient.’” How can Christians become more “God-sufficient”?
25. What does it mean to be “abased”?
26. Explain the teaching of Proverbs 30:8-9.
27. In its proper context, what is the meaning of Phil. 4:13?
28. How many churches entered into a continuing partnership to support the work of Paul?
29. “_____ was another city of _____, and was Paul’s next stop after Philippi on the _____ missionary journey.”

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30. What did the words “full payment” mean in the First Century, and what did they mean to Paul?
31. What is significant about the word “need” in verse 19?
32. The word “amen” comes from the _____ language. What does “amen” mean?
33. What is the meaning of “Caesar’s household” in verse 22?
34. Why do you think Paul always closed his letters with a note of grace?
35. What is the most meaningful lesson that you have learned from this section, and how will it change your life and improve your relationship with Jesus?
36. What specific blessings have you gained from this course on Philippians? What can you do to promote the “joy” that Paul felt in his life? Take a moment to ask God to use *your life* to spread the love, joy, peace, and message of Jesus with those around you and lead them into a saving relationship with Christ!