

# Studies in the Epistles

## Unit B - Philippians

### Study 1. Christ - The Christian's Life

READ: Philippians 1: 1-30



KEY VERSE:

Philippians 1: 21

**“For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”**

#### THE BEGINNINGS OF THE CHURCH

Philippi was the first European city to which Paul brought the good news of the Lord Jesus. Details of what happened are recorded in **Acts 16**. Until that time, there were no Christians in Philippi, but God blessed the preaching of the gospel by Paul and his friends. Before long, a church came into existence. We feel sure that Lydia and the jailer were among its very first members!

#### THE LETTER TO THE CHURCH

About ten years have gone by. Paul is now a prisoner (**verse 7**) - most probably in Rome, nearly a thousand miles from Philippi! Although his circumstances are now unpleasant, he has very happy memories of his friends at Philippi. (See **verses 3 & 4**) In the intervening years, they had sent gifts to help him (**4: 15**), and now yet another gift has come to him. The main reason for writing this letter is to thank them for their continuing **“fellowship** (partnership) **in the gospel”**. (**verse 5**)

#### I. PAUL'S PRAYER FOR THE CHURCH (verses 9-11)

He had such a close relationship with the believers at Philippi that it was not difficult for him to keep praying for them. He longed to hear of them growing spiritually in their love for the Lord and for each other. (**verse 9**) He also desired that their lives would be marked by **“the things that are excellent”** and that they would be **“filled with the fruits of righteousness . . . to the glory and praise of God”**. (**verses 10 & 11**) Perhaps we should each ask ourselves, ‘Am I making good progress as a Christian?’

#### 2. PAUL'S REPORT ON HIS IMPRISONMENT (verses 12-18)

Paul had a great desire to see the gospel spreading! Strange as it may seem, this was one effect of his being in jail. **“The things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel.”** (**verse 12**) Within Caesar's palace, the gospel had become a central talking-point! Not everyone was preaching it for the right reasons, but Paul rejoiced in its proclamation, even though some people's motives were wrong. (**verse 15**) We, too, should be deeply concerned about the world-wide spread of the gospel. Read **verse 18** again.

#### 3. PAUL'S COMMENTS ON HIS FUTURE (verses 19-26)

As he awaited the outcome of his trial, Paul was unsure whether he would be set free or executed. True, he had a great desire **“to depart and be with Christ, which is far better”**. (**verse 23**) But perhaps it was God's will that he should continue to live, and be involved in the work which God had given him to do. Whatever the verdict, his great longing was that **“Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death”**. (**verse 20**) The main priority of his life was Christ - **“For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”** (**Key Verse**) This is the secret of happy, useful Christian living, and of certainty regarding the life to come.

#### 4. PAUL'S CHARGE TO THE CHURCH (verses 27-30)

In **verse 27** Paul charges the Christians to ensure that their conduct is **“worthy of the gospel of Christ”**. It is important to understand that a living relationship with Jesus as Lord makes demands upon how we behave. If all the members of a church are **“striving together”** in a spirit of unity, it will strengthen them against whatever persecution or suffering they may be called upon to face.

**Study 1. Christ - The Christian's Life**

**1 THE FIRST CONVERT AT PHILIPPI WAS LYDIA. READ ACTS 16: 14 & 15 AND WRITE A BRIEF ACCOUNT OF WHO SHE WAS AND WHAT HAPPENED TO HER.**

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**2 WHAT QUESTION DID THE JAILER ASK ON THE NIGHT OF THE EARTHQUAKE, AND WHAT ANSWER WAS HE GIVEN? (ACTS 16)**

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**3 EXPLAIN IN YOUR OWN WORDS THE MAIN PURPOSE FOR PAUL WRITING THIS LETTER TO THE CHURCH AT PHILIPPI.**

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**4 PAUL REFERS TO THE FACT THAT THE LORD JESUS IS COMING AGAIN WHEN HE USES THE PHRASE "THE DAY OF CHRIST". (VERSES 6 & 10) HOW SHOULD CHRISTIANS LIVE IN VIEW OF THIS, ACCORDING TO VERSES 10 & 11?**

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**5 OUTLINE SOME OF THE GOOD THINGS THAT PAUL SAYS RESULTED FROM HIS PRESENT IMPRISONMENT. (SEE VERSES 12-18)**

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**6 SUMMARISE BRIEFLY PAUL'S VIEWS ON LIFE AND DEATH, SUPPORTING YOUR ANSWER WITH SUITABLE REFERENCES FROM PHILIPPIANS I.**

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**7 WHAT DO YOU THINK WOULD BE THE MAIN FEATURES OF A CHURCH WHERE CONDUCT IS "WORTHY OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST"? (VERSE 27)**

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#### Study 2. Christ - The Christian's Mind

READ: Philippians 2: 1-30



KEY VERSE:

Philippians 2: 5

**“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus.”**

#### 1. AN APPEAL FOR UNITY AND HARMONY (verses 1-4)

As we saw in **chapter 1**, Paul found great joy in his relationship with the Church at Philippi. Look again at **1: 3 & 4**. Nevertheless, he was concerned about the dangers of rivalry among the members. He realised that this could easily lead to disunity and division. So he appeals to them, on the strength of all the blessings they have in Christ, to make his joy full by being one in love, one in heart, and one in mind. (See **verse 2**) No one should act out of selfish ambition; rather, each one should be of a lowly mind, thinking first of others.

#### 2. THE EXAMPLE OF HUMILITY IN THE LIFE OF THE LORD JESUS (verses 5-11)

Paul calls attention to the Lord Jesus as the perfect example of the attitude which he has been encouraging the Christians to develop. **“Let this mind be in YOU, which was also in Christ Jesus.”**

- a. **See how high He was!** Eternally, He was **“in the form of God”**. (verse 6) This means He always was, and is, one with God and equal to Him in every way. He could not be greater!
- b. **See how low He came!** In **verses 7 & 8**, Paul describes the voluntary humiliation of the Lord Jesus. He willingly humbled Himself to the point of death, even the death of the cross. (verse 8) He is the greatest and most perfect illustration of what it means to look out **“for the interests of others”**. (See **verse 4**)
- c. **See how exalted He is now!** Read again **verses 9-11**. Paul wants the Christians to understand that greatness is not achieved by selfish ambition, but by lowly service and sacrifice. The proof of this is seen in the fact that **“God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name”**. (verse 9)

In view of such wonderful facts, Paul appeals to the Christians to live lives pleasing to God. He calls upon them to **“shine as lights in the world”** (verse 15) and to remain faithful to the teachings of the gospel message. (See **verse 16**)

#### 3. TWO HUMAN EXAMPLES OF UNSELFISH SERVICE

##### Timothy (verses 19-24)

It was Paul's plan to send Timothy soon to strengthen the Church at Philippi. Having had years of experience working with Timothy, Paul knew how dependable he was. He was not like many others who were seeking only their own well-being. Timothy's priorities were, first, **“the things which are of Christ Jesus”**, and then, the well-being of the Christians. Read **verses 20 & 21**, again. So we can see that Timothy's **“proven character”** makes him a good example of what Paul has been teaching.

##### Epaphroditus (verses 25-30)

Epaphroditus was the man who had travelled all the way from Philippi to Paul - perhaps almost a thousand miles - in order to hand over the gift from the Church. (Note how Paul refers to him as **“your messenger”** verse 25) He had become very sick, and almost died, but at the time of writing the letter, he was sufficiently recovered to undertake the return journey to Philippi. Paul speaks of him very highly as **“my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier”** (verse 25), and is pleased to be able to say that **“for the work of Christ he came close to death, not regarding his life . . .”** (verse 30) Epaphroditus is, therefore, another good example, or illustration, of those who follow their Lord's footsteps, putting others before themselves.

This chapter, then, has a big challenge for us. God does not want us to be selfish, inward-looking Christians. He desires to see 'the mind of Christ' reflected in us, just as it was in Timothy and Epaphroditus. Humble, unselfish service for others marked the earthly years of the Lord Jesus. **“Let this mind be in you . . .”**

**Study 2. Christ - The Christian's Mind**

**1 EXPRESS IN YOUR OWN WORDS HOW THE CHURCH AT PHILIPPI CAN ADD TO PAUL'S JOY.**

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**2 ACCORDING TO VERSES 3 & 4, WHAT SHOULD A CHRISTIAN'S ATTITUDE BE TOWARDS OTHERS?**

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**3 PAUL HAS A GREAT EXAMPLE TO SHOW THEM, (VERSES 5-8) HOW DOES HE DESCRIBE THE DEPTHS OF HUMILIATION TO WHICH THE LORD JESUS WILLINGLY CAME?**

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**4 EXPLAIN AS CLEARLY AS POSSIBLE WHY IT WAS NECESSARY FOR THE SON OF GOD TO BECOME A MAN.**

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**5 GOD HAS NOW EXALTED THE LORD JESUS. (VERSES 9-11)**

**A) WHAT HAS GOD GIVEN HIM?** .....

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**B) HOW WILL EVERYONE EVENTUALLY REACT TO HIM?**

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**6 IN WHAT WAYS DID TIMOTHY SHOW CHRIST-LIKE CHARACTERISTICS?**

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**7 ANSWER THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS ABOUT EPAPHRODITUS.**

i. How does Paul describe him?

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ii. Why did he visit Paul?

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iii. What happened to him?

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iv. Why should such men be held in esteem?

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#### Study 3. Christ - The Christian's Goal

READ: Philippians 3: 1-21

This study sheet belongs to:



KEY VERSE:

Philippians 3: 14

**“I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.”**

#### 1. ENCOURAGEMENTS AND WARNINGS (verses 1-3)

Christians have many reasons for rejoicing! There may be times when our circumstances depress us, but our Saviour, the Lord Jesus, does not change, and we can **“rejoice in the Lord”**. (verse 1) The Church at Philippi was being troubled by people who were teaching them that they must submit to the ancient Jewish rite of circumcision. Paul rejects this very strongly, stressing that we must trust only in Christ. We put **“no confidence in the flesh”** - that is, in what we are as natural human beings.

This is very important. Each of us must be certain that we are depending only upon the Lord Jesus for our eternal salvation.

#### 2. PAUL'S UPBRINGING, AND HIS SURRENDER TO CHRIST (verses 4-9)

If anyone could boast about **“the flesh”**, it was Paul! He had many natural and religious advantages. (See verses 4-6) But there came a point in his life when he realised that these could never give him acceptance with God. Only Christ could do that, so he said, **“What things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ”**. (verse 7) It is most likely that he is referring to his conversion on the road to Damascus. (See Acts 9)

There was never a hint of regret about the change that he made, from trusting in his own goodness, to trusting in Christ. Although many years have passed by, he still remains convinced - **“I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord . . .”**. (verse 8) Let us all be clear about this, as Paul was: natural advantages of birth and upbringing, and religious ceremonies provide no foundation for salvation! Only the Lord Jesus can give us that!

#### 3. PAUL'S LIFE AS A CHRISTIAN (verses 10-14)

Having recalled the beginning of his life as a Christian, Paul went on to express what being a Christian meant to him. He lived his life very purposefully, his great desire being to **“know Him and the power of His resurrection”**. (verse 10) Having caught a glimpse of the greatness and glory of Christ, his life's goal was to become ever increasingly identified with Him. For Paul, there was no such thing as 'taking things easy'; he believed strongly that God had some purpose in view when He **“apprehended”** (or **“laid hold”**) of him, and his aim was to live in such a way that God's purpose would be achieved. Read **verse 12** again.

Paul pictures himself as a competitor in a race. He puts from his mind the things of his earlier life and he presses on towards the finishing line, in anticipation of winning **“the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus”**. (verse 14) He lived his life with an undivided goal - to know Christ better, through total commitment to Him.

#### 4. CHRISTIANS ARE CITIZENS OF HEAVEN (verses 17-21)

Paul urges his readers to **“join in following my example”**. (verse 17) Not everyone, by any means, is a runner in the Christian race! The fact is that many people live shameful and sinful lives - indeed, they are **“enemies of the cross of Christ”**. (verse 18) They are not Christians at all! True believers, however, belong to Heaven. They are its citizens, now living for a short while on earth. They eagerly await the coming again of their Lord. When that great happening takes place, their lowly bodies will be transformed. They will all be like their glorious Lord! (verse 21) What a wonderful prospect!

**Study 3. Christ - The Christian's Goal**

**1** WRITE THREE THINGS OF WHICH PAUL WAS PROUD OF BEFORE HE BECAME A CHRISTIAN. (VERSES 5-6) .....

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**2** READ VERSE 7 AGAIN.

A. WHAT PARTICULAR EVENT IN HIS LIFE IS PAUL REFERRING TO?

B. WRITE OUT FROM ACTS 22: 10 THE QUESTION HE ASKED WHEN SURRENDERING HIS LIFE TO THE LORD. ....

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**3** IN THE LIGHT OF PHILIPPIANS 3: 8 & 9 EXPRESS, AS CLEARLY AS YOU CAN, HOW IMPORTANT THE LORD JESUS BECAME TO PAUL

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**4** PAUL'S GREAT SPIRITUAL AMBITION WAS TO KNOW CHRIST IN A DEEPER AND FULLER WAY. (VERSE 10) HOW DO YOU THINK A CHRISTIAN TODAY COULD MAKE PROGRESS IN THIS MATTER?

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**5** VERSES 12-14 COMPARE THE CHRISTIAN LIFE TO RUNNING A RACE.

A. IN WHAT WAY ARE WE TO RUN? (VERSE 13) .....

B. READ HEBREWS 12: 1-2.

(i) What things should we lay aside? .....

(ii) Why should we run the race "Looking unto Jesus"?

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**6** A CHRISTIAN HYMN BEGINS: "I AM A STRANGER HERE; HEAVEN IS MY HOME".

A. WHICH VERSE IN PHILIPPIANS 3 SUPPORTS THIS? .....

B. EXPLAIN WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A 'CITIZEN OF HEAVEN'. ....

C. WHAT IMPACT SHOULD THIS TEACHING HAVE ON THE EVERYDAY LIFE OF A YOUNG CHRISTIAN? .....

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**7** ACCORDING TO PHILIPPIANS 3 WHAT IS GOING TO HAPPEN WHEN THE LORD JESUS COMES AGAIN?

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#### Study 4. Christ - The Christian's Strength

This study sheet belongs to:



KEY VERSE:

Philippians 4: 13

**"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."**

#### 1. AN APPEAL FOR UNITY AND HARMONY (verses 1-4)

In this chapter, Paul appeals very lovingly to the Church to **"stand fast in the Lord"**: (verse 1) False teaching would have the effect of turning them aside, as would disagreements among their own members. He names two women in the church - Euodia and Syntyche - and begs them to agree **"in the Lord"**. Instead of bickering and squabbling, they, like ourselves, should be helping and encouraging each other.

#### 2. AN ANSWER TO ANXIETY AND WORRY (verses 5-9)

Under the pressures of modern life, even the best Christians can become worried and anxious. Is there an answer to such problems? Yes! Whatever it may be that is causing us concern, we can bring it to God **"by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving"**: (verse 6) When we follow this advice, we discover that the peace of God stands like a guard at our hearts and minds, strengthening us against Satan's attacks!

Another key part of the answer to worry lies in the control which we exercise over our minds. We are responsible for our own thoughts, and we should, therefore, seek God's help to fill our minds with good things. Read **verse 8** again. The more we **"meditate on these things"**, the less room there will be for anxious cares or evil thoughts.

#### 3. PAUL'S ATTITUDE TO HIS OWN DAILY NEEDS (verse 11-14)

Paul was not a greedy, selfish man. There had been times when his material resources were completely exhausted, and he found himself without either food or money. In these conditions, he **"learned to be content"**: (verse 11) He had such trust in his

#### READ: Philippians 4: 1-23

Master that he could accept his circumstances, whatever they were. Throughout his years as a Christian, his experiences had taught him that he could **"do all things through Christ who strengthens me"**. (See Key Verse)

He means that **"Christ keeps on putting His strength into me"**. Here is a fresh challenge for us! Are we prepared to commit every aspect of our lives to Christ, and allow Him to work in and through us?

#### 4. PAUL'S APPRECIATION OF THEIR GIFTS (verses 10 & 15-19)

This letter is really Paul's 'Thank you' to the Church at Philippi. **"I am full,"** he writes, **"having received from Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you . . ."**. Perhaps it was a gift of money, or clothing, or both! And this was not the first time they had sent to him. Read **verse 15 & 16**. Paul deeply appreciated what they had done, not merely because it had met his financial needs, but because it was in reality an aspect of their worship - **"a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God"**: (verse 18) Paul was convinced that God would repay them, one day, with a good rate of interest! (Read **verse 17** thoughtfully)

In a similar way, we can use our money and possessions to promote the work of the gospel, and to encourage preachers and missionaries in their service for the Lord.

#### 5. FINAL WORDS (verses 20-23)

It need not surprise us that a man who lived his life so fully for God and Christ should desire that **"glory for ever and ever"** should be given to **"our God and Father"**: (verse 20) Let us remember that this glorious God achieves His purposes here on earth mainly through **"the saints"** - His 'holy ones', as the word means. All those who have believed the gospel and are spiritually united to Christ are 'saints'. **"The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ"** (verse 23) can enable YOU to honour and serve God. Are you ready to yield yourself entirely to Him?

## Study 4. Christ - The Christian's Strength

1 A. WHO WERE EUODIA AND SYNTYCHE? ..... 2  
 B. WHAT DOES PAUL IMPLORE THEM TO DO? .....

2 PAUL REPEATS A SENTENCE IN THIS CHAPTER WHICH HE HAS ALREADY USED IN CHAPTER 3. WHAT IS IT AND WHAT DO YOU THINK IT MEANS?  
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3 HOW CAN WE HAVE THE "PEACE OF GOD" GUARDING OUR HEARTS AND MINDS?  
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4 LOOK AT THE THINGS ON WHICH WE SHOULD MEDITATE IN VERSE 8. HOW DO YOU THINK OUR LIVES WOULD BE AFFECTED IF WE "MEDITATE ON THESE THINGS"?  
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5 PAUL WRITES ABOUT THE "PEACE OF GOD" (VERSE 7) AND THE "GOD OF PEACE" (VERSE 9). COMPLETE THESE SENTENCES.  
 A) THE "PEACE OF GOD . . . WILL ....."  
 B) THE "GOD OF PEACE WILL ....."  
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6 PAUL WRITES, "YOUR CARE FOR ME HAS FLOURISHED AGAIN". (VERSE 10)  
 A. IN WHAT WAY HAD THIS TAKEN PLACE?  
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 B. WHO WAS INVOLVED IN WHAT THE CHURCH HAD DONE?  
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 C. DESCRIBE HOW PAUL VIEWS THEIR GIFT IN GOD'S SIGHT.  
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7 "I HAVE LEARNED IN WHATEVER STATE I AM, TO BE CONTENT."  
 A. WHAT DOES THIS CHAPTER TEACH US ABOUT PAUL'S ATTITUDE TO HIS NEEDS?  
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 B. WHAT DOES VERSE 19 TEACH US ABOUT HIS CONFIDENCE IN GOD?  
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100  
 Total marks for this Unit

Return your study sheets to:

25  
 Total marks for this study