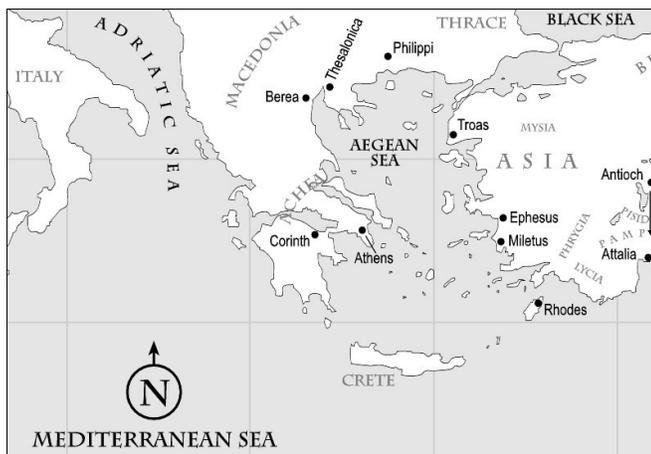




Rejoice in the Lord always

a study of the letter to the Philippians

Troy Church of Christ



- What is the correlation between love and sincerity? (See also: 1 Peter 1:22; 1 John 3:18; Romans 12:9)

Preaching Christ

- Paul's use of the *gospel* and *Christ* in this letter are often interchangeable. What does that tell us about Paul's view of the gospel?
- When you see someone you think may be preaching Christ out of less than the best of motives, what is your reaction? What was Paul's? Why was Paul able to have the attitude he did? (See also: Isaiah 55:11)
- Scot McKnight (Jesus Creed blog): "Paul is so confident in the gospel that he is happy when others preach the Christ out of bad motives. Why? _____."

For me to live is Christ, to die is gain.

- What did Paul say would be a very difficult decision?
- Why was he content to continue on in ministry, even though chained, and even though he longed to be with Christ? What fruit did he hope to see (vs 25)?

Conduct yourselves in a manner worthy...

- Verse 27 - Ultimately, all of our hopes, faith, and convictions come down to this—action.
- Paul says we have not only been given the gift of belief, but also the gift of suffering. What runs through your heart & mind when you read such passages? How does that affect your decision making when facing challenges and difficult decisions?

Homework

Back in verse 25, Paul mentions that he hopes to see their progress and joy. Who would you like to see progressing in the faith? Who would you like to see growing in their joy? What can you do to encourage them?

Background

The church at Philippi and the apostle Paul had great affection for one another. It is noted by many that no other letter contains as familiar, positive, and loving language as this brief epistle. The congregation had its start in Acts 16, when Paul was directed by the Holy Spirit and a vision of a Macedonian man asking for help to make an unexpected stop at his city. This little church on the Roman frontier had a great impact. The Macedonian churches, while far from wealthy, were known for their generosity toward their Jewish brethren during the famine in Jerusalem (II Cor. 8 & 9), and for their consistent support of Paul in his ministry. Paul wrote this letter during his time of house arrest in Rome (Acts 28).

I thank my God every time I remember you...

- What does Paul pray for the Philippian church?
- What insight does he hope they will gain?
- From James Burton Coffman's *Commentary on the Old & New Testaments*:
It has often been pointed out that this word is derived from two Latin words, *sin* (without) and *cere* (wax). Italian marble vendors and certain merchants of porcelain fell into the habit of hiding flaws in their merchandise by filling cracks and blemishes with a certain kind of wax; but the more reputable dealers advertised their wares as *sin cere* (without wax); and from this derived the meaning of the English word "sincere." The true meaning of it is "without deception" or "without hypocrisy."



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Ice Breaker

1. What is a truly selfless act that you have seen, heard of, or read about recently that moved you and even challenged you to think about how you live?

The Foundation of Joy and Unity

2. Paul lists four things that are the foundation of his appeal to the Philippian Christians to strive for complete joy & unity. What are they?

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Then Make My Joy Complete By...

- “being of the _____”
- “having the _____”
- “being in _____ and of _____.”

3. What are all these characteristics going to require of us?

Three Threats to Unity

4. In his commentary on this passage, William Barclay points to three threats to our Christian unity that Paul is seeking to address. They are:

- Selfish ambition/rivalry
- See II Corinthians 10:12 & ff.
- Desire for personal prestige
- See Matthew 5:16
- Concentration on self
- Competitive spirit (“Why does no one love God as much, or do as much as I do?”)
- Hedonism (gratification of the flesh)
- Preferences disguised as faith
- Putting others down to make self feel better

5. Why are these traits so divisive?

Have this attitude, that was in Christ Jesus

Verses 5-11 are believed to be one of the early hymns of the 1st century church. They contain language that is even more poetic in the original Greek than comes across in the English.

6. What did Christ set aside when he became a man?

7. How would you describe the attitude you see in Christ as described in this hymn?

THEREFORE (Verses 12-13)

8. The Greek word for “work out” in the phrase “work out your salvation with fear and trembling” is *κατεργαζομαι* (*katergazomai*), meaning “to bring to completion” It’s similar to the idea of running to the finish line without giving up.

9. Why do you think we are to run to the finish line with “fear and trembling?” (hint: see Hebrews 10:19-31)

10. What is the key phrase in vs. 13?

- See Ephesians 3:20-21

William Barclay: “There be no salvation without God, but what God offers man must take. It is never God who withholds salvation, but man who deprives himself of it.”

Challenging Yourself...

Take some time alone to reread Philippians 2. Consider these questions as you go to God in prayer:

- Are there barriers in your own attitudes and habits that are potential unity breakers?
- What can you do to better see and tend to the needs of others, and be less self-involved/centered?



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Ice Breaker

1. If you could change one thing that happened today, what would it be?

Keeping It In Perspective

2. Where was Paul when he wrote Philippians, and what had he been through just shortly before he got there?

Do Everything Without Complaining

Complain - Greek: γογγυσμος - grumbling; murmuring, complaining, secretly holding a grudge

3. Why do we complain so much?
4. What kind of atmosphere does constant complaining create? At work? Home? Church? (see Numbers 13-14)
5. How does the definition including "secretly holding a grudge" change your perspective on this passage?

Do Everything Without...Disputing

Dispute - Greek: διαλογισμος - a deliberating, questioning about what is true; hesitation; doubting; disputing; arguing

6. Back in 2:1-2 Paul made it clear this section of the letter was devoted to fostering unity in the church. What effects do constant disputes and needless questioning have on the church?
7. How do I know the difference between when I have a legitimate question and when I may just be expressing a personal hesitation that could undermine unity?

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Thanks to Mikel Rice

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SLOW DOWN ... WATCH OUT FOR THAT OASIS
... CAREFUL FOR THE DUNE ... CAN'T YOU
SEE THAT PALM TREE?

So That...

Blameless - Greek: αμεμπτος - blameless, deserving no censure; irreproachable

Pure - Greek: ακεραιος - free from guile, innocent

8. In verse 15, Paul gets down to the real motivation for giving up our complaints, murmurs, and arguments. What is it?
9. How can giving these behaviors and attitudes up bring us to be blameless? Pure?
10. What is the ultimate fruit of this change in our character?

Challenging Yourself...

Challenge yourself to get through the rest of the week without complaining. Instead of offering what's wrong, offer help, or solutions. Think about how your words affect your ability to bear witness to the work of God.



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Ice Breaker

1. What is the dumbest thing you did in your youth to fit in or gain the approval of others?

6. What does he say is of the greatest value?

7. From what you know of Paul's losses and hardships in following Jesus, what would have been the most difficult for you to handle? What did he gain?

Watch Out For Those Dogs

2. What were the "evil workers" trying to persuade the Philippian brothers to do, and why? What is Paul's objection to their teaching?
3. What is the "true circumcision"? (Colossians 2:8-15; Galatians 5:1-15)
4. Why is legalistic righteousness so dangerous a teaching? What is its appeal?

Aim Higher

8. What was his ultimate goal in life?
9. Paul was not alone in his aim, or his attitude. Read Hebrews 11:32-40 to see others who shared his perspective.

Keeping It All In Perspective

5. How does Paul view his personal résumé? Do you view this heritage and accomplishments this way? Why/why not? How would taking the same view change you perspective, practically speaking?

Challenging Yourself...

Sit down and write out a list of what the world would say defines you as Paul did in Philippians 3:3-6. As you make the list, think about how you feel and what you think of these things. You may find it's easier to take pride in your list than to consider it rubbish. You may even try to justify why they have more worth than Paul implies. Paul's attitude is easier to read than to attain, but with God's help, there's no reason we can't reach the same point. Spend some time in prayer with God about gaining the perspective of the apostle and those OT saints of Hebrews 11.



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Be Ye Perfect...

The word “perfect” in the New Testament is different from what we think of most often when we read the English word “perfect”, which means “excellent or complete beyond practical or theoretical improvement.” I think we can all agree none of us are befitting such a description! Rather, it is translated from the Greek word “τελειος”, which means, “to make perfect, complete, to carry through completely, to accomplish, finish, bring to an end; to complete, to add what is yet wanting in order to render a thing full.” (Strongs) (3:12)

- How does this affect your understanding of Paul’s words here in regard to his own walk? In your own? (see also Colossians 1:28, Matthew 5:48, and Matthew 19:21)

Passion for the Prize

- Paul uses very vivid language to describe his goals. What is the image he uses? (3:12-14)
- What is Paul’s view of the past? Why is he able to view the past in this way?

William Barclay, “[Paul] says that he is trying to grasp that for which he has been grasped by Christ. That is a wonderful thought. Paul felt that when Christ stopped him on the Damascus Road, he had a vision and a purpose for Paul; and Paul felt that all his life he was bound to press on, lest he fail Jesus and frustrate his dream. Every man is grasped by Christ for some purpose; and, therefore, every man should all his life press on so that he may grasp that purpose for which Christ grasped him.”

- Here again, we see this word “τελειος” in the phrase “all who are *mature*.” Again here, it means not those who are flawless, but those who are fairly mature (and maturing) in Christ. Sum up in your own words the view those who are mature in Christ are to have. (3:15)
- What did Paul hope for those brethren who didn’t yet agree with him on this point? (3:15)
- What is Paul’s admonition in 3:16? (see Ephesians 6:10 & ff.)

Dangerous Detours

- Paul encourages the Philippians to imitate his example. Do

you feel comfortable encouraging others to follow yours? Why/why not? Why do you think Paul was comfortable in calling people to follow his example? (3:17)

- What is the “pattern” that Paul says we are to take note of in one another? (3:17)

One of the challenges to the early Christians was the beginning of Gnostic thought. Gnostics believed that there were two realities—one physical and one spiritual. They believed that the physical (and therefore your body) was inherently evil, and the spirit was essentially good. Further, they taught that the spirit could not be corrupted by the deeds of the flesh, so what you did with your body did not affect the holiness of your soul. You can immediately see both the appeal of this philosophy, and how diametrically opposed to the teachings of Christ and the apostles it is. It is thought by some scholars that this is the problem Paul is addressing in 3:17-19. Some of the Gnostics were even teaching that in order to fully “mature” (that word again), you had to plumb not only the heights of virtue, but the depths of depravity of the flesh. They had no problem with gluttony, drunkenness, sexual perversion, etc. because they believed such experiences only made them “more mature.” Sound familiar? As a religion, Gnosticism may be dead, but its philosophy is alive and well in our culture today, and still poses a great challenge to Christians.

- How does Paul describe these enemies of Christ? (3:18-19)

Eagerly waiting

- Where did the Philippian Christians have their citizenship? (3:20)
- The Philippian people held their Roman citizenship with high regard, and it sometimes got in the way of their understanding of the Christian life being that of a pilgrim headed home. How do we struggle with the same understanding of our heavenly citizenship?

Challenging Yourself...

As you have your personal devotional time this week, check out these passages that can help you keep a “pilgrim perspective”: 1 Peter 2:9-17; Ephesians 2; Colossians 3:1-17.



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THAT is how You Should Stand Firm

- Chapter 4 begins with Paul summing up chapter 3 as the way to “stand firm in the Lord.” What did you learn in 3 that will help you stand firm?

Blessed are the Peacemakers

- Why does Paul call on the whole congregation to help make peace between two sisters? (4:2-3)
- What does it mean to “agree in the Lord?”

Rejoice in the Lord Always

Rejoice, translated from the Greek word: “χαίρω”*

1. to rejoice, be glad
 2. to rejoice exceedingly
 3. to be well, thrive
 4. in salutations, hail!
 5. at the beginning of letters: to give one greeting, salute
- If the apostle, by inspiration of the Spirit, commands us to rejoice, what does that tell us about...
 - ...the kind of attitude Christians should have?
 - ...the control we do/don't have over emotions?
 - ...how to deal with anxiety?

The Lord is Near

- How did Paul tell the Philippian Christians to treat others? (4:5)

“Gentleness” here is also translated “moderation” in the KJV, and “forbearance” in the RSV. It is from the Greek work “επιεικες” and means, “Not being unduly rigorous, being satisfied with less than one's due.” (Wuest)

- Paul's remark, “The Lord is near.” is a reference to the return of Christ. How and why should an awareness of Christ's imminent return affect our attitude toward others?

Don't Worry. ~~Be Happy.~~ Pray!

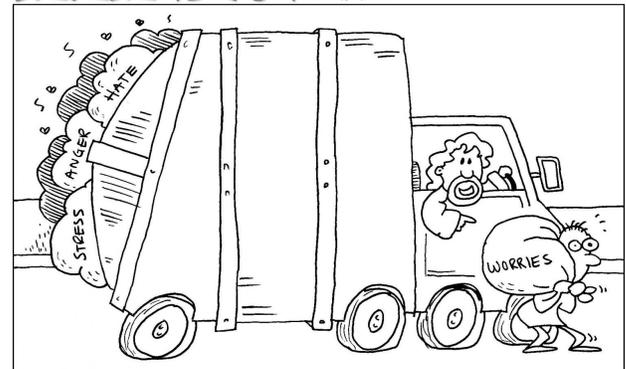
“Anxious” (Gr. μεριμνάω). Not legitimate concern, but self-centered, counter-productive worry.” (NIV Study Bible)

- What did Paul say about anxiety? (4:6-7)
- What does he say is the antidote to a self-centered, worry-filled heart? What is the promise attached to praying instead of worrying?

You are What You Think About

- What does Paul say should be our focus if we are to have a Christ-like worldview and attitude? How does he expect that to change our behavior?
- What are some examples that come to mind of Jesus having such an approach to life, even in situations that would prove challenging to do so?

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