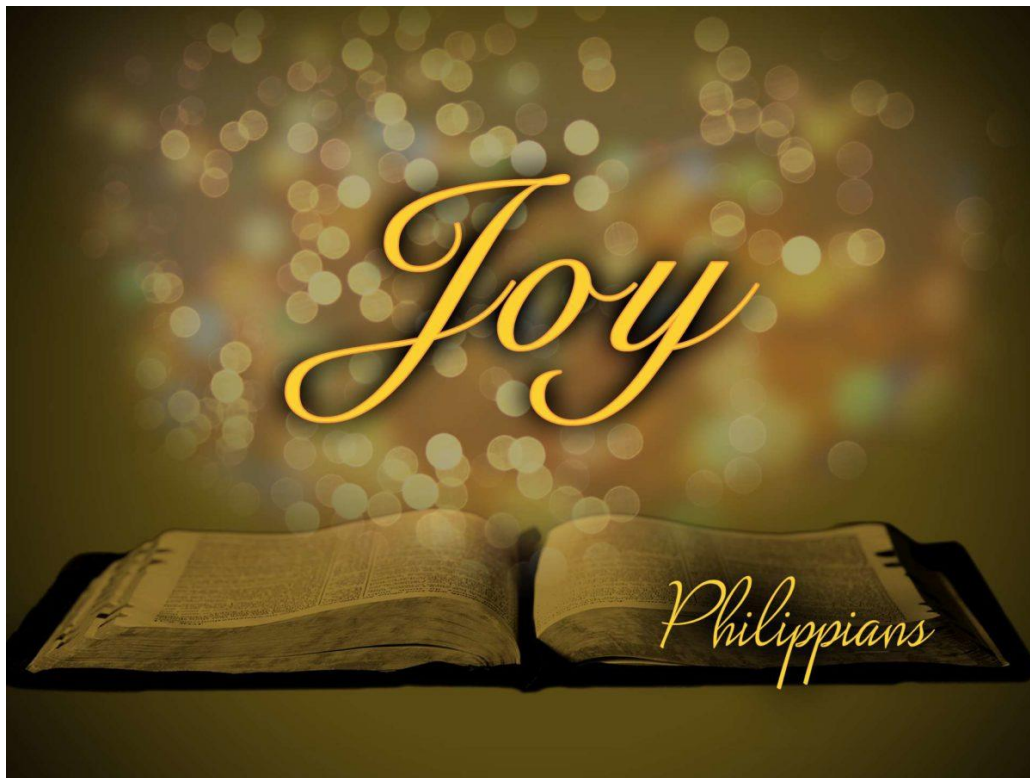


Philippians

Growing in Joy

Four Week Small Group Series on the Book of Philippians



Rejoice in the Lord always, I will say it again: Rejoice! Phil. 4:4 (NIV)





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Cover Photo from: <http://gcofonline.org/tag/philippians-the-joy-of-the-lord/>

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Introduction

A Bible study based on a book of the Bible is a great discipleship tool. This Bible Study has been designed to have two main components each week. We recommend that you take four weeks to complete the study (one session per week), but feel free to adapt as needed.

1. Personal Study at Home
2. Small Group Session (optional)

The Personal study at home allows the participant to reflect on the Bible passage at home and work through personal application questions on their own. Then, the person comes to the small group meeting ready to share what God has already been showing them.

The small group conversations and discussions are useful in diving deeper into the topic and seeing things from a different perspective or helping you see something that you may have missed when reading the chapter on your own.

Doing a Bible study can be very simple. Just follow the template given for each chapter and make sure that each member of your group has a copy of this booklet so they can journal their responses and come to the small group meeting ready to share. This helps the small group time stay focused and gives everyone an opportunity to think through what they would like to share, adding value to the small group time.

If you have any questions about facilitating this Bible Study, give the church office a call. Someone from Cell Ministry would be happy to speak to you.

Session One: Philippians 1

Part One: Personal Bible Study

To do on your own before the small group meeting

1. Prepare Your Heart

- Take a moment to prepare your heart and mind for what God has for you today.

2. Read: Philippians 1 and the Session 1 Study Notes

- Write down 1-3 things that stand out to you and why. You can write down more but highlight 1 for sharing with your small group.

3. Questions to Consider

- Verses 3-8: Who are the people in your life whom you can thank God for and appreciate? Spend some time thanking God for them and praying a prayer of blessing on them.
- Verses 9-26: Nothing tests our beliefs more than suffering. Look back over this passage, summarize the various factors which can transform difficult circumstances into joy. If you are in the midst of a difficult circumstance, how can Christ be exalted in this situation?
- Verse 27-30: Use these verses as a springboard for intercession, praying for these things in your life and in the lives of your family and in the church.
- Write down anything else that God is saying to you, or any other message you think God was trying to convey (correction, direction, encouragement, promise, wisdom, etc.).

4. Obedience/Action Step

- What is one practical step that you can take this week to put this passage into practice in your life?
- What is your plan to follow through on this step? (who will hold you accountable, consider texting your small group for accountability).

5. Repentance

- Ask Jesus if there is any sin you need to confess. Confess as necessary and take the necessary steps towards obedience.

6. Prayer

- Spend some time thanking Jesus for who He is and what He has revealed to you.
- Ask Him if there is anything else He wants to speak to you about.
- Pray and intercede for what He lays on your heart (marriage, kids, ministry, friends, etc.)

7. Optional: Pick a verse(s) from this week's Bible passage and memorize it.

Part Two: Small Group Plan

Do this section with a small group.

1. Open in Prayer

2. Weekly Connect

- Have each person share 1-2 things that they are thankful for from the past week.
- What was a struggle from the past week?

3. Scripture

- Read Phil 1 out loud with your small group

4. Discussion Questions

- Throughout this letter, Paul has confidence in a God who begins and finishes. How is it easy or hard for you to trust God to complete the work He has started in your or others and why?
- Consider how Paul and the Philippians encouraged and supported each other. How can we as a church, a small group and a local body of Christ encourage and support each other?
- What can we learn about prayer from Paul's prayer for the Philippians? How does prayer reveal what is important to a person?
- How do you think Paul's perspective on life and death differs from our culture today?

5. Sharing

- Share something from the study notes and the personal bible study that stood out to you and why.

5. Obedience/Action Step

- As part of the Personal Bible study, you were asked:
 - What is one practical step that you can take this week to put this passage into practice in your life?
 - What is your plan to follow through on this step? (who will hold you accountable, consider texting your table group for accountability).
- Share with your group how this went for you this past week.

6. Prayer

- Share a personal prayer request and pray for each other.
- Pray for churchwide prayer requests as well as our region, province, and nation.

Session Two Philippians 2

Part One: Personal Bible Study

To do on your own before the small group meeting

1. Prepare Your Heart

- Take a moment to prepare your heart and mind for what God has for you today.

2. Read: Philippians 2 and the Session 2 Study Notes

- Write down 1-3 things that stand out to you and why. You can write down more but highlight 1 for sharing with your small group.

3. Questions to Consider

- Verses 1-11: Jesus is the ultimate example of humility and obedience. How does His example of humility and obedience speak to your life circumstances this week and encourage you?
- Verses 12-18: Is there something in your character that God is speaking to you about from these verses? Dialogue with Jesus about it. Ask Him to bring clarity in this area.
- Verses 19-30: This passage gives several beautiful examples of Christian service as displayed in the lives of Timothy, Epaphroditus, Paul, and the Philippians. What can you learn from these people?
- Write down anything else that God is saying to you, or any other message you think God was trying to convey (correction, direction, encouragement, promise, wisdom, etc.).

4. Obedience/Action Step

- What is one practical step that you can take this week to put this passage into practice in your life?
- What is your plan to follow through on this step? (who will hold you accountable, consider texting your small group for accountability).

5. Repentance

- Ask Jesus if there is any sin you need to confess. Confess as necessary and take the necessary steps towards obedience.

6. Prayer

- Spend some time thanking Jesus for who He is and what He has revealed to you.
- Ask Him if there is anything else He wants to speak to you about.
- Pray and intercede for what He lays on your heart (marriage, kids, ministry, friends, etc.)

7. Optional: Pick a verse(s) from this week's Bible passage and memorize it.

Part Two: Small Group Plan

Do this section with a small group.

1. Open in Prayer

2. Weekly Connect

- Have each person share 1-2 things that they are thankful for from the past week.
- What was a struggle from the past week?

3. Scripture

- Read Phil 2 out loud with your small group

4. Discussion Questions

- How does Christ's model of humility motivate you towards humility?
- Has anyone displayed this kind of humble, self-sacrifice for you in your life? If so, what specifically impacted you?
- What does it look like in your life for you to "work out your salvation"?
- What can we learn about leadership and/or mentoring from Paul's relationships with Timothy and Epaphroditus?

5. Sharing

- Share something from the study notes and the personal bible study that stood out to you and why.

6. Obedience/Action Step

- As part of the Personal Bible study, you were asked:
 - What is one practical step that you can take this week to put this passage into practice in your life?
 - What is your plan to follow through on this step? (who will hold you accountable, consider texting your table group for accountability).
- Share with your group how this went for you this past week.

7. Prayer

- Share a personal prayer request and pray for each other.
- Pray for churchwide prayer requests as well as our region, province, and nation.

Session Three: Philippians 3

Part One: Personal Bible Study

To do on your own before the small group meeting

1. Prepare Your Heart

- Take a moment to prepare your heart and mind for what God has for you today.

2. Read: Philippians 3 and the Session 3 Study Notes

- Write down 1-3 things that stand out to you and why. You can write down more but highlight 1 for sharing with your small group.

3. Questions to Consider

- Verses 1-6: Paul lists several of his qualities that would be a reason to put confidence in the flesh. What would a list like that look like in your life? Paul knew that his list of achievements was “garbage compared to knowing Christ”. In prayer, take each thing from your list and give it over to Jesus surrendering it to Him and telling Him that you love and desire Him more.
- Verses 7-11: Everything that Paul had accomplished in life paled in comparison to the worth of being in relationship with Jesus. What steps can you take to prioritize your day to reflect the importance of relationship with Jesus?
- Verses 12-21: Paul mentions “pressing on” or “reaching forward” three times in these verses. What does this mean? What is involved in pressing on? What kind of actions would this look like in your life, for example, your weekly action steps?
- Write down anything else that God is saying to you, or any other message you think God was trying to convey (correction, direction, encouragement, promise, wisdom, etc.).

4. Obedience/Action Step

- What is one practical step that you can take this week to put this passage into practice in your life?
- What is your plan to follow through on this step? (who will hold you accountable, consider texting your small group for accountability).

5. Repentance

- Ask Jesus if there is any sin you need to confess. Confess as necessary and take the necessary steps towards obedience.

6. Prayer

- Spend some time thanking Jesus for who He is and what He has revealed to you.
- Ask Him if there is anything else He wants to speak to you about.
- Pray and intercede for what He lays on your heart (marriage, kids, ministry, friends, etc.)

7. Optional: Pick a verse(s) from this week’s Bible passage and memorize it.

Part Two: Small Group Plan

Do this section with a small group.

1. Open in Prayer

2. Weekly Connect

- Have each person share 1-2 things that they are thankful for from the past week.
- What was a struggle from the past week?

3. Scripture

- Read Phil 3 out loud with your small group

4. Discussion Questions

- What does it look like in today's culture to put confidence in the flesh?
- What does it mean to consider everything a loss that we may gain Christ?
- Why is it important that Paul clarifies that he has not yet reached the goal? Why is it dangerous to think that we have "arrived" in our Christian faith?
- What does it mean that we are citizens of heaven? What does it look like to eagerly await Christ's return?

5. Sharing

- Share something from the study notes and the personal bible study that stood out to you and why.

6. Obedience/Action Step

- As part of the Personal Bible study, you were asked:
 - What is one practical step that you can take this week to put this passage into practice in your life?
 - What is your plan to follow through on this step? (who will hold you accountable, consider texting your table group for accountability).
- Share with your group how this went for you this past week.

7. Prayer

- Share a personal prayer request and pray for each other.
- Pray for churchwide prayer requests as well as our region, province, and nation.

Session Four: Philippians 4

Part One: Personal Bible Study

To do on your own before the small group meeting

1. Prepare Your Heart

- Take a moment to prepare your heart and mind for what God has for you today.

2. Read: Philippians 4 and the Session 4 Study Notes

- Write down 1-3 things that stand out to you and why. You can write down more but highlight 1 for sharing with your small group.

3. Questions to Consider

- Verses 1-9: Paul was living with powerful stressors (he was in prison, facing execution, defending himself against the critics, etc.), yet he seemed strangely at peace. What are some of Paul's secrets of peace?
What things cause stress in your life/relationships? How can you grow in experiencing peace in these situations?
- Verses 10-23: Giving is a privilege of every Christian, no matter how much we have. What opportunities do you have to meet the needs of those around you, including ministry and church financial needs?
- What is the secret to Paul's contentment? How can you apply this secret to your life?
- Write down anything else that God is saying to you, or any other message you think God was trying to convey (correction, direction, encouragement, promise, wisdom, etc.).

4. Obedience/Action Step

- What is one practical step that you can take this week to put this passage into practice in your life?
- What is your plan to follow through on this step? (who will hold you accountable, consider texting your small group for accountability).

5. Repentance

- Ask Jesus if there is any sin you need to confess. Confess as necessary and take the necessary steps towards obedience.

6. Prayer

- Spend some time thanking Jesus for who He is and what He has revealed to you.
- Ask Him if there is anything else He wants to speak to you about.
- Pray and intercede for what He lays on your heart (marriage, kids, ministry, friends, etc.)

7. Optional: Pick a verse(s) from this week's Bible passage and memorize it.

Part Two: Small Group Plan

Do this section with a small group.

1. Open in Prayer

2. Weekly Connect

- Have each person share 1-2 things that they are thankful for from the past week.
- What was a struggle from the past week?

3. Scripture

- Read Phil 3 out loud with your small group

4. Discussion Questions

- What does it mean to rejoice? How can we rejoice always?
- What's so important about not being anxious?
- What does it mean that the peace of God transcends all understanding?
- Why would Paul spend so much time explaining the kinds of things we should think about? Why are our thoughts so important?
- What does it look like to be content in all circumstances? What examples have you seen?
- What does it mean that God will meet all our needs according to the riches of Jesus?

5. Sharing

- Share something from the study notes and the personal bible study that stood out to you and why.

6. Obedience/Action Step

- As part of the Personal Bible study, you were asked:
 - What is one practical step that you can take this week to put this passage into practice in your life?
 - What is your plan to follow through on this step? (who will hold you accountable, consider texting your table group for accountability).
- Share with your group how this went for you this past week.

7. Prayer

- Share a personal prayer request and pray for each other.
- Pray for churchwide prayer requests as well as our region, province, and nation.

Appendix – Study Notes

Study Notes for Philippians Chapter One

Introduction (1:1-11)

- Paul is writing this letter to his close friends, the Christians in Philippi (vs. 1).
- When Paul remembered what all the Philippians did for him, he was extremely thankful (vs. 3). He was naturally grateful to the Philippians, but more so to God who had worked such kindness through the Philippians.
- Paul prayed for the Philippians and he did so with joy (vs. 4). This was a way Paul felt he could repay the Philippians for all they did for him.
- It is remarkable to see that Paul's first reference to his own feelings or frame of mind in this letter is that of joy – though he wrote from prison and a possible soon execution.
- It is a glorious revelation of how life in fellowship with Christ triumphs over adverse circumstances.
- One of the reasons Paul was thankful for the Philippians was because they partnered with him in spreading the gospel through their fellowship and financial support. And they did so from the first day until now (vs. 5).
- Verse 6: *“Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus”*.
- When Paul thought of the beginning of God's work among the Philippians it was natural that he also thought of the day when what work would be complete. He expresses his confidence in God's ability to complete that work.
- Paul's thankfulness, his joy, and his desire to pray for the Philippians was because they stood beside him in his trials and for the gospel, and they received the same grace as he did (vs. 7).
- Paul was a man of great intellect, but he was also a man of great heart, and the Philippian Christians were in his heart (vs. 7). He had deep affection for them (vs. 8).
- The Philippians had a lot of love, and they showed it to Paul. Yet Paul did not hesitate to pray that their love would abound still more and more (vs. 9). It does not matter how much love for others we have; we can still have more!
- Paul yearned for this love to not be “blind”, but to have knowledge and discernment (vs. 9); it was love that could approve the things that are excellent (vs. 10).
- He prayed for them to be filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ (vs. 11).

Paul's Situation in Rome (1:12-26)

- Paul then explains his present circumstances – that his imprisonment has not hindered the gospel in any way (vs. 12). He is answering a concern of the Philippians and wanted them to know that God's blessing and power was still with him. Even though he was in prison he was not out of the will of God, and God's work continued.
- We know that his imprisonment turned out for the advancement of the gospel (vs. 12) because during this time Paul wrote Ephesians, Philippians, and Colossians!

- Sometimes we may not sense God’s purpose for our lives in the moment, but that does not mean that He doesn’t have a purpose for what we are facing.
- The circumstances around Paul’s imprisonment and his character in the midst of this trial made it clear to all observers that he was not just another prisoner, but that he was an emissary of Jesus Christ. This witness led to the conversion of many, even some of the palace guard (vs. 13).
- Paul’s imprisonment gave the Christians around him, who were not imprisoned, greater confidence and boldness (vs. 14). They saw his joy in the midst of such a trial, they saw God taking care of him in such a circumstance, and they saw that God could still use Paul when he was imprisoned.
- Paul knew that some preached because they wanted to surpass him in ministry and to promote him in their own name and place above his (vs. 15a). These people were glad that Paul was imprisoned because they felt that gave them a competitive edge over him in what they considered to be the contest of preaching the gospel.
- He also knew that there were also some with good motives (vs. 15b).
- Those preaching the gospel out of wrong motives preached out of selfish ambition (vs. 17). Ambition isn’t necessarily bad; there is nothing wrong in wanting to be the best we can be for God. But *selfish* ambition is most concerned about a successful *image*, instead of striving for true success before God.
- Verse 18: *“But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice”*.
- Paul’s attitude went like this: “If you preach the true gospel, I don’t care what your motives are. If your motives are bad, God will deal with you but at least the gospel is preached. But if you preach a false gospel, I don’t care how good your motives are. You are dangerous and must stop preaching your false gospel, and good motives don’t excuse your false message.”
- Even in these tough circumstances, Paul is rejoicing (vs. 18b).
- Paul knew that the Lord was in control of all events, even though his imprisonment and impending trial before Caesar Nero made the situation look pretty dark (vs. 19).
- Paul knew the Philippians were praying for him and that his deliverance was connected to the prayers of the Philippian people.
- However, it was not the prayer of the Philippians that would meet Paul’s need. It was the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ that came to Paul through the prayer of the Philippians. Paul’s needs were met by the Spirit of God, but this provision to Paul was brought about by the prayers of the Philippians. Can you see the importance of prayer?!
- Though he was in prison and awaiting trial before Caesar, Paul had the confidence that he was in the center of God’s will.
- Paul lived his life not to preserve and promote himself, but to glorify Jesus Christ. If Jesus should one day decide that Paul could best glorify Him through laying down his life, then Paul would be well pleased by the opportunity (vs.20).
- It is easy for us to dictate to God how He can and cannot glorify Himself in our lives. Paul wisely left all that up to God!
- Verse 21: *“For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.”*
- Paul knew that death was not a defeat to the Christian it is merely a graduation to glory, a net gain for the Christian. His death for the cause of Christ would glorify Jesus, and that was gain! And upon dying he would be in the immediate presence of Jesus which was also gain.

- But if he was to keep on living he wanted to live a fruitful life (vs. 22).
- Paul was torn between the two options (vs. 23). His death would be gain as he could be with Jesus, but his life would be gain as he could continue bearing fruit.
- His love for the Philippians was also part of this thought process, “I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith” (vs. 25).
- Paul knew that others still needed him, that his work was not yet done. So, while allowing for the possibility of his martyrdom, he told the Philippians that he expects to be spared this time (vs 25).
- Paul’s friendship with the Philippians was so close that he knew that they would be rejoicing to see him again (vs. 26).

Exhortations to Unity and Courage (1:27-30)

- Paul wanted the Philippians to work together for the cause of the gospel.
- Verse 27: *“Conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.”*
- The ancient Greek word translated “conduct” means literally, “to live as a citizen.” Paul told the Philippians to be good, patriotic citizens of the kingdom of God. This is a theme he will draw on again in Philippians.
- Paul wanted the Philippians to know they were accountable before him and that he would check up on them. He wanted the Philippian church stayed together as one body, without becoming fragmented and fractionalized.
- Paul wanted their unity to be put to a productive purpose, so that an increasing trust and belief in the good news of Jesus Christ would be promoted among those who already believed and among those who had yet to believe.
- Not being terrified by their adversaries (vs. 28) but rather being bold and courageous.
- Verse 29: *“For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him.”*
- It was granted to the Philippians to believe in Jesus, and in the same way it is their privilege to suffer for His sake. Their present trial did not mean that God had abandoned them. This present difficulty was granted to them, not as punishment, but as a tool in God’s hand.
- Paul empathizes with their struggle (vs. 30). They had the same kind of conflict in Philippi as Paul faced in Rome - the difficulty of walking rightly with Jesus and proclaiming the gospel when persecuted and under attack.
- If the Philippians had Paul’s kind of conflict, they could also have Paul’s kind of joy and fruit in the midst of it. And so can each of us!

References for Chapter One Study Notes

https://www.blueletterbible.org/Comm/guzik_david/StudyGuide2017-Phl/Phl-2.cfm

<https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-4-true-christian-fellowship-philippians-13-8>

<https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-7-what-are-you-living-philippians-119-26>

The Bible Readers Companion by Lawrence O. Richards

Clarke’s Commentary by Adam Clarke

Study Notes for Philippians Chapter Two

Exhortations to Unity and Humility (2:1-11)

- Paul encourages the Philippians to stand strong in the Lord against internal conflicts in the body of Christ (vs. 1-4). He exhorts them to unity, humility, and love among believers.
- They have received Christ's love, His mercy and compassion (vs. 1) and he desires for them to offer the same to the believers in their fellowship (vs 2).
- If they did this, then Paul's joy would be complete as their founding apostle (vs 2).
- The first step to this kind of unity is by doing nothing out of selfish ambition (vs. 3).
- Vain conceit (vs 3) is a barrier to love and unity. Conceit is thinking too highly of one's self, of having an excessive self-interest and self-preoccupation.
- As we put away our selfish ambitions, our conceit, and our tendencies to be high-minded and self-absorbed, we will naturally have a greater concern for the interests and needs of others.

- Paul then looks to Jesus as the ultimate expression of humility in verses 5-11.
- It is all too easy for us to read the following description of Jesus and admire it from a distance.
- These are not attributes to be studied with our minds, rather they are to impact us at a heart level, changing how we live.
- Verse 6: *'Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to His own advantage'*.
- The pre-incarnate existence of Jesus is described – He is the eternal God that always existed. Yet he did not cling to the privileges of Deity. Jesus was equal to the Father, it wasn't something He had to acquire, it was who He was.
- Verse 7: *"Rather, He made Himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness"*.
- When Jesus came down to earth as the God-Man, He made Himself nothing, with no reputation. He was fully God in every way, yet He took upon Himself the likeness and form of a man who was in a low state, not appearing in splendor. His whole life was of poverty and suffering. And the lowest step was dying on the cross, being exposed to public hatred and scorn.
- Verse 8: *"And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross!"*
- When God sits enthroned in heaven's glory, there is no one He obeys. Jesus had to leave heaven's glory and be found in appearance as a man in order to become obedient.
- Jesus is our prime example of humility.
- It was impossible for the Son of God to become man and pay for the sins of the world without this great humiliation. Take a moment and worship Him!!!
- Verse 9: *"Therefore, God exalted Him to the highest place and gave Him the name that is above every name."*
- Jesus is the ultimate example of exaltation after humility. God exalted Jesus! In fact, Jesus is highly exalted! Jesus did not crown Himself, His Father crowned Him.
- In giving Him a name that is above every name it is being declared that Jesus has a character and is a person above all. There is no higher name than Yahweh, and Jesus has that name! Halleluiah!

- Verse 10-11: “*That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*”
- Not only is Jesus exalted by the Father, but the whole world is brought into submission to the Son.
- This conveys absolute totality of all creation recognizing the superiority of Christ.
- The combination of tongues confessing and knees bowing gives evidence that the idea is a complete submission to Jesus, both in word and in action and one that is required of all. Jesus is Lord of all!
- Remember that Paul did not give this description of Jesus simply for the theological education of the Philippians.
- The picture of Jesus given in verses 6-11 shows them how to follow Jesus’ pattern of patient, humble obedience – something Paul will call them to continue in the following verses.

Exhortations to Work Out Our Salvation (2:12-18)

- Paul now exhorts the Philippians to work out their salvation.
- “*Therefore...as you have always obeyed*”. Notice the link between Jesus obedience (vs. 8) and how Paul expects the Philippian people to also obey (vs. 12).
- Working out their salvation does not mean working to earn salvation. This would contradict Paul’s many other teachings on salvation by faith. Rather, Paul is calling them to put forth real effort into their Christian lives.
- There is a sense in which our salvation is complete, in the sense that Jesus has done a complete work *for* us. Still there is also a sense in which our salvation is incomplete, in that it is not yet a complete work *in* us.
- The believer must finish, must carry to conclusion, must apply it to its fullest consequences. This “working out salvation” is a personal thing that each believer must do for themselves.
- In verse 13 Paul gives the reason *why* Christians must *work out their salvation with fear and trembling* – because God is working in them.
- The idea is that since God has done and is doing a work in the Christian, the Christian therefore has a responsibility to work diligently with fear and trembling regarding his own salvation and walk with the Lord. God’s work in us *increases* our responsibility; it doesn’t *lessen* it in any way.
- God’s work in us is not an excuse for our inaction, laziness or lethargy, rather it’s motivation for us.
- Verses 14-16 give us practical ways to obey Paul’s exhortation.
- First of all, to watch out for grumbling and arguing (vs. 14). This non-complaining spirit will show them to be true followers of God. Showing themselves to be blameless and pure (vs. 15).
- In a culture that is crooked and perverse (vs. 15), this sort of attitude will cause them to shine as lights in the world (vs. 15b).
- Paul did not want all his hard work to end fruitlessly. He desired for them to produce good fruit. On the day of Christ, he wanted to see and know that his work was fruitful. This was something he could only be assured of if the Philippians continued to walk with the Lord (vs. 16).
- Paul then uses himself as an example (vs. 17). He uses the illustration of a drink offering alluding to a practice among both Jews and pagans in their sacrifices. They often poured wine or perfume either beside or upon an animal that was sacrificed. This made the sacrifice more precious. Some believe Paul is referring to the possibility that his execution may be immanent. The drink offering referencing his martyrdom.

- Paul’s attitude was that of rejoicing (vs. 17b). He wasn’t being morbid here, asking the Philippians to take joy in something as depressing as his death. Yet he did ask the Philippians to see his death as something that would bring glory to God and rejoice with him (vs. 18).
- Paul’s life was going to be a sacrifice for Jesus Christ, either in life or in death. This was a source of gladness and joy for Paul, and he wants the Philippians to adopt the same attitude.
- Again, we come to the consistent theme of Philippians: *joy*. But this is joy based not on circumstances (quite the opposite, really), but based in the fact of a life totally committed to Jesus Christ.

Introduction of Messenger Timothy (2:19-24)

- Paul then writes about Timothy and his soon anticipated visit.
- He wanted to see Timothy among the Philippians and he expected to be encouraged when he heard how the Philippians were doing (vs. 19).
- When Paul sent Timothy, he sent his best, a man who showed a pastor’s heart and had greater concern for his sheep than for himself (vs. 20).
- Timothy’s loving heart was a rare thing (vs. 21) and he had proven character (vs. 22).
- Paul repeats his desire to come to the Philippians in person, not only to send Timothy to them (vs. 23-24).
- Perhaps Paul was being careful to avoid the accusation, “Paul wants to send Timothy because he really doesn’t want to be here himself.” He clearly told the Philippians that he also wanted to come.

Introduction of Messenger Epaphroditus (2:25-30)

- Paul then writes about Epaphroditus and his coming to the Philippians.
- Paul gave important titles to Epaphroditus such as brother, co-worker, soldier (vs. 25). He was a valued person of great worth to Paul.
- From these verses we learn that Epaphroditus took this letter to the Philippians.
- It seems that Epaphroditus came to Paul from the Philippians as a messenger, carrying a gift of financial support (vs. 25b), and became sick while he was with Paul (vs. 26).
- Epaphroditus was concerned because the Philippians learned of his sickness and worried about him. The sickness was no small thing as he almost died (vs. 27).
- Yet God had mercy on him and he recovered. There is nothing in the text to indicate that this was a miraculous healing, but Paul still saw God’s hand of mercy in Epaphroditus’ recovery.
- The return of Epaphroditus would give them peace of mind (vs. 28) that their valued brother was in good condition.
- Paul was eager to unite the Philippians with their beloved brother Epaphroditus and reminded the Philippians to give him proper recognition and honor when he returned (vs. 29).
- It was for the work of Christ that Epaphroditus came close to death (vs. 30) so he was to be honored. He risked his life to bring Paul the gift from the Philippians and Paul was grateful.

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The Bible Readers Companion by Lawrence O. Richards

Clarke’s Commentary by Adam Clarke

Study Notes for Philippians Chapter Three

A Call to Commitment – not to the flesh (3:1-6)

- Rejoice in the Lord (vs. 1)! This is a fitting theme for the entire letter.
- This abiding joy shows that we really do trust God and that we really believe He is in control.
- The warning about dogs (vs. 2) was a harsh reference to the troublemaking legalists who attempted to deceive the Philippians.
- The reference to mutilation is another harsh reference to the insistence of these Jewish legalists on requiring circumcision for Gentiles who wanted to become Christians. This was all done with the idea that someone must become a Jew first before they could become a Christian.
- These Jewish legalists considered themselves the ones truly circumcised and right with God. But Paul declared that he and his followers were the *true* circumcision (vs. 3).
- Paul knew that he was more qualified to be justified by the keeping of the law than any of his present legalistic opponents were (vs. 4).
 - Paul had many reasons why he might have confidence in the flesh (vs 5-6):
 - Circumcised the eighth day
 - Israelite
 - Tribe of Benjamin
 - Hebrew of the Hebrews
 - A Pharisee
 - Zeal
 - Blameless regarding the law
- In summary, if *anyone* could lay claim to pleasing God by law-keeping and the works of the flesh, it was Paul. He was far more qualified than his legalizing opponents were to make such a claim.
- But Paul rejects all confidence in the flesh (vs. 7).

A Call to Commitment - To Christ (3:7-11)

- Any of the false teachers Paul warned against would be proud to claim Paul's pedigree. Yet Paul made it plain, "these things I now consider loss for Christ" (vs. 7).
- Even though these things were good things, he chose to *regard* them as loss because Paul didn't seek to please God in the energies of the flesh.
- Paul's utter confidence was in his living relationship with Jesus (vs. 8).
- Paul did not only count his religious pedigree as a loss; he counted all things loss in view of the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus.
- It wasn't so much that those things were worthless in themselves but compared to the greatness of the excellence of his relationship with Jesus those external things were like nothing to him.
- Paul puts a *personal relationship with Jesus Christ* at the very center of the Christian's life. He joyfully accepted the loss of all other things for the greatness of this personal relationship.
- This counting loss was not merely an internal spiritual exercise. Paul had indeed suffered the loss of actual things that he might gain Christ.
- This is demonstrated by the place and circumstances under which Paul wrote this letter – a Roman prison.
- Paul counted these things as garbage (vs. 8) means the vilest dross or *refuse* of anything; the worst excrement. The word shows how utterly insignificant and unavailing, in point of salvation, the apostle esteemed everything but Jesus.
- The foundation for Paul's spiritual life was in what Jesus had done for him and not in what he had done, was doing, or would do for Jesus in the future.
- Paul here exposed the great difference between the legalistic relationship stressed by his opponents and his personal connection with Jesus Christ. The difference is between living and trusting in your own righteousness and living and trusting in God's righteousness given through faith in Christ.
- Paul's experience was personal relationship with Jesus (vs. 10-11).

- The simple plea from Paul’s heart was to know Jesus. This was a plea unknown to the legalist, who must necessarily focus on his own performance and status to find some kind of peace with God.
- Paul wanted Jesus. He wanted to know the power of His resurrection – to experience that same power in overcoming sin and experiencing God’s grace, in suffering, and in death.

A Call to Commitment - To Christ’s Purposes (3:12-21)

- Paul wrote from such spiritual maturity and purity that we might expect he believed that he had conquered all spiritual difficulties and saw himself as having arrived at near perfection (vs. 12). Yet he assured us this was not so. There was no perfectionism in Paul.
- Instead, he pressed on, realizing that he had not arrived (vs. 12).
- He looked forward to what was ahead, forgetting what was behind (vs. 13). We often let those things which are behind distract us, whether they be good things or bad things. Looking at what is in the past often keeps us from what God has for us in the future.
- Paul exhorts them to follow his example (vs. 17). We shouldn’t think that Paul was being egotistical here. He knew that he was not a sinless or perfect example, yet he was still a *good* example.
- With great sadness Paul realizes that there are many people who walk in a manner contrary to what he teaches. He regards these people as enemies of the cross (vs. 18).
- These are not just the legalists but also those who celebrate liberty in Christ to the indulgence of their flesh (vs. 19).
- “Their god is their stomach” describes the idolatry of these people. Not that they were necessarily focused on what they eat, but belly here has a broader reference to sensual indulgence in general. They live for the pleasures of the body, mind, and soul.
- “Their glory is in their shame” shows the misplaced priorities of these people. They gloried about things they should have been ashamed about.
- “Their mind is set on earthly things” describes the focus of their life. It was not to please and worship God, but to get along in *this* world.
- Contrast this to the statement, “But our citizenship is in heaven” (vs 20).
- We need to appreciate what this would have meant to the Philippians, who greatly valued their Roman citizenship. Just as the Philippians could consider themselves citizens of Rome and were under Roman laws and customs (even though they were in fact far from Rome) so Christians should consider themselves citizens of heaven.
- As the Philippians would eagerly await a visit from the emperor of Rome, even more Christians should eagerly await the coming of their King – Jesus Christ.
- Our *Savior* can do and will do something that no Caesar can. He will transform our lowly bodies so that we will be like His glorious body (vs. 21).

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Study Notes for Philippians Chapter Four

More Exhortations – To unity (4:1-3)

- Paul begins by exhorting the Philippians to stand firm in the Lord (vs. 1). He writes to them as friends, out of great love and longing. He refers to them as his joy and crown – the Philippians were like his trophy!
- He then refers to two women, Euodia and Syntyche who apparently were the source of some quarrel in the church. Instead of taking sides or trying to solve their problem, Paul simply told them to be of the same mind in the Lord (vs. 2). Whatever the dispute was about they had forgotten that they have a greater common ground in Jesus.
- Paul's true companion was asked to help these women reconcile and come to one mind in the Lord (vs. 3). These women had been part of Paul's work in the gospel yet had a falling out with each other. Paul knew that this needed to be cleared up.
- There were others in Philippi who also helped Paul (such as Clement). They had the greatest honor in the world: to have their names in the Book of Life.

More Exhortations - To virtue (4:4-9)

- Verse 4: "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!"
- Despite the circumstance from which it was written, joy is all over the letter to the Philippians. Paul's joy was not based in a sunny optimism or positive mental attitude as much as it was in the confidence that God was in control. It was really a joy in the Lord.
- Verse 5: "Let your gentleness be evident to all."
- Paul used an interesting Greek word (epieikeia) that is translated gentleness. It means mildness, patience, yieldingness, gentleness, clemency, moderation, unwillingness to litigate or contend. The word describes the heart of a person who will let the Lord fight her battles. It describes a person who is free to let go of her anxieties and all the things that cause her stress because she knows the Lord will take up her cause.
- Verse 6: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God."
- There are several things that the Philippians may have been worried about. So, Paul tells them there is no need to fret and worry about the way things are. The solution is to give the problems over to the only One who can do anything about them. The Philippians are to pray in every situation, bringing their petitions (requests) to God and offering prayers of thanksgiving for what God has already done.
- Verse 7: "And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."
- Paul does not promise that God will do every single request, but he does promise that prayer will change them. When we pray about our problems, and choose to be thankful, God gives us peace.
- Verse 8: "Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things."
- In this verse Paul exhorts us to develop a Christian thought life. A Christian thought life is also integral to a life of joy (vs 4) and peace (vs 6-7) in every situation. Since our thoughts form the basis for our behavior, a godly thought life is also essential for the obedience to which Paul exhorts us in verse 9.

- Paul had the integrity to present himself as an example of all these things to the Philippians (vs. 9). If the Philippians did as Paul had instructed, they would experience the peace of God.

The Philippian Gift - The Recent Gift (4:10-14)

- Paul was grateful for the financial support brought to him from the Philippians by Epaphroditus. They had been concerned for him in the past but lacked the opportunity to help, but recently they had sent aid, and he was thankful (vs. 10).
- Paul reminds the Philippians that his thankfulness for them in regard to their giving wasn't because he was needy (though he was in fact in need), but because it was good for them to be givers (vs. 11, 14).
- Paul's thankfulness was not based on his own need because he was content where he was at – even in his Roman imprisonment, he learned to be content. He reminds them that his contentment was lived both in financial plenty and financial need (vs. 12).
- Verse 13: "I can do all this through him who gives me strength".
- This refers to Paul's ability to be content in all things. To achieve this contentment, he needed the strength of Jesus.
- Speaking about his ability to be content, Paul did not want to give the impression that the Philippians had somehow done something wrong in supporting Paul. So, he tells them that it was good of them to share in his distress (vs. 14).

The Philippian Gift - Earlier Gifts (4:15-19)

- The Philippians were the only ones to support Paul (vs. 15-16). In his church planting endeavors, Paul mostly had to support himself through tentmaking (1 Thess. 2:9).
- Paul wasn't so much interested in the gift on his own behalf, but the giving and the meaning of that giving. Their giving increased the fruit in their account before God (vs. 17b).
- Paul described the gift of the Philippians in terms that remind us of sacrifices in the Old Testament as a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God (vs. 18).
- Paul concludes by declaring a promise to the Philippians regarding their own financial needs in verse 19: "And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus".
- The promise is that God will supply their needs according to His generous supply.

Closing Salutations (4:20-23)

- The letter ends with a brief doxology (vs. 20).
- Paul did not give specific greetings to individuals as he did in other letters, instead he greeted them as a whole and sent greetings from the brothers and sisters (vs. 21).
- There was a special greeting from those who were from Caesar's household (vs. 22). This shows how the Gospel had penetrated into the Emperor's household.
- The final verse (vs. 23), speaks of God's grace. This is a fitting end.

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