

# BETHEL GOSPEL CHAPEL

## THE PRISON EPISTLES

### PHILIPPIANS

#### INTRODUCTION

This is the last of the home Bible study guides on the prison epistles. After a rewarding five week study on the subject of Worship, we now turn to the book of Philippians and seek to learn and respond to its vivid portrayal of what relationships can be when Christians conduct themselves "in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ." (Phil. 1:27)

Philippi was a Roman military city in the province or district of Macedonia (see map accompanying the Colossian study guide). In about 51 A.D., Paul and his fellow workers came to Philippi in obedience to *"A vision Paul had of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, 'come over to Macedonia and help us. After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them."* (Acts 16:9-10)

And so Paul and his companions sailed by sea to Philippi and *"On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find a place of prayer. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. One of those listening was a woman named Lydia who was a worshipper of God. The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message."* (Acts 16:13-14)

In 63 A.D., Epaphroditus returned to Philippi with the letter Paul had written to them. In it, Paul speaks of the relationship between himself and the church in Philippi. After responding to Paul's preaching of the gospel, they involved themselves in a *"partnership in the gospel from the first day until now."* (1:5) The relationship was not only one of work, but also of affection. Paul states, *"God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus."* (1:8)

The unique relationship of the Philippian church's commendation of Paul and the work to which God had called him is seen in 4:15-16. It states: *"Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need."*

Philippians is relevant for us in these days. The character of these believers and the themes which Paul develops will prove to be valuable to us.

Read Philippians through in one sitting prior to the study. With the reading you will gain a general overview of this letter and an insight into the relationship between Paul and the church at Philippi.

## THE PRISON EPISTLES - PHILIPPIANS STUDY 1

Before you begin this study, read Acts 16:12-40 for background information.

READ: Philippians 1:1-11

- 1.a) What is unique about the introduction of this prison epistle?
  - b) What does this information tell us about the church (verses 1-2)?
2. For what things could Paul give thanks for the Philippian believers (verses 3-6)?
3. What was "*the good work*" which God had begun in their lives (verse 6)?
4. Describe the effect which the Philippians had on Paul (verses 7-8).
5. Describe the process by which the good work would be carried on "*to completion*" (verses 9-10).
6. What should be the result of Paul's prayer for the Philippians (verse 11)?

### **RESPONSE**

1. Paul refers to himself and Timothy as "*servants of Christ Jesus.*" What characteristics of your lifestyle show you to be a servant of Christ Jesus?
2. How do you see God "*carrying on to completion*" the good work which He began in you?
3. Describe your "*partnership in the gospel*" with your church.
4. In view of verse 10, what today are you "*able to discern*" as best?

## THE PRISON EPISTLES - PHILIPPIANS STUDY 2

### READ: Philippians 1:12-30

1. How have Paul's circumstances "*served to advance the gospel*" (verses 12-14)?
2. Describe the opposing motivations for preaching Christ, and Paul's response (verses 15-18).
3. To what deliverance is Paul referring, and how will this deliverance be secured (verses 19-20)?
4. Paul explains himself as being in a dilemma (verses 21-24).
  - a) List the factors that put him in the dilemma.
  - b) List the reasons for the choice he makes.
5. What does he see the results of his choice to be (verses 25-26)?
6. What is involved in "*conducting yourself in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ*" (verses 27-30)?

### **RESPONSE**

1. How do your difficult circumstances (1:12-14) affect those in close quarters with you?
2. How can you rejoice in improperly motivated preaching?
3. What encouragement or benefit do you derive from verses 21-26?
4. In your church, how do you "stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel"?

## THE PRISON EPISTLES - PHILIPPIANS STUDY 3

READ: Philippians 2:1-11

1. Explain what is involved (verse 1) in our relationship with God in these four phrases:

- a) encouragement from being united with Christ
- b) comfort from His love
- c) fellowship with the Spirit
- d) tenderness and compassion

2.a) What change in relationships is made from verse 1 to verse 2?

- b) What effect do these relationships have on Paul?

3.a) List the attitudes/actions which Paul calls for (verses 2-4).

- b) List the attitudes/actions which prevent us from "*being like minded.*"

4. Our greatest example of humility (the basis for obeying, verses 2-4) is Christ Jesus. Describe the steps involved in his humiliation (verses 6-8).

5. To where did God exalt Jesus Christ and why (verse 9)?

6.a) What is "*the name that is above every name*"?

- b) What will this result in (verses 10-11)?

### **RESPONSE**

1. Review question 1 of this study. Choose one phrase and describe how God is working in that area in your life.

2. In what ways do you presently "*consider others better than yourself*"?

3. How does the humiliation of Christ (verses 6-8) affect you personally?
4. What motivation in your relationship with others do you receive from this passage of study (verse 11)?

## THE PRISON EPISTLES - PHILIPPIANS STUDY 4

READ: Philippians 2:12-30

1. In the responsibility to "*work out your salvation*", what are the activities of God and of the believer (verses 12-13)?
2. What does it mean to work out your salvation "*with fear and trembling*" (verse 12)?
3. What are the characteristics of "*children of God*" as found in verses 14-16a?
4. What is Paul's response when the children of God behave in this way (verses 16b-18)?
5. What do you learn about Timothy from verses 19-24?
6. Who was Epaphroditus? Describe his involvement with Paul and with the Philippians (verses 25-30)?

### **RESPONSE**

1. How can you be confident that "*it is God who works in you to will and to act according to His good purpose*"?
2. How is it possible to "*do everything without complaining or arguing in a crooked and depraved generation*"?
3. What do you appreciate most about Timothy? Why?
4. With whom are you fellow workers, and in what area(s)?

THE PRISON EPISTLES - PHILIPPIANS  
STUDY 5

READ: Philippians 3:1-11

1. How does Paul enable the Philippian believers to "*rejoice in the Lord*" (verses 1-2)?
2. The Judaizers (people who believe that circumcision and keeping of the law were necessary for salvation) had been in contact with the Philippians. What does Paul say to counter their issues (verse 3)?
3. List Paul's "*merits*" upon which he could have confidence in the flesh (verses 4-6).
4. What is Paul's new attitude toward those merits in which he had had confidence (verses 7-8)?
5. With no confidence in the flesh, what does Paul gain, (verses 9-11)?

**RESPONSE**

1. How has Scripture been a safeguard to you recently?
2. What are some way in which people today put "confidence in the flesh"?
3. What have you "considered loss for the sake of Christ"?
4. In what areas of your life are you challenged by Paul s aspirations/ determinations as found in verses 10-11?

## THE PRISON EPISTLES - PHILIPPIANS STUDY 6

NOTE: This study is closely linked to the content of 3:1-11. Re-read that section before going on to the study at hand.

READ: Philippians 3:12 4:1

1. Paul understands that he does not yet know Christ in all His fulness. List what Paul states as not having, and his corresponding attitudes and actions (verses 12-14).
2. What is "*the prize*" for which God has called Paul heavenward (verse 14)?
3. How does Paul instruct those who "*are mature*" and who "*think differently*" (verses 15-16)?
4. In contrast to "*the pattern we gave you*", Paul speaks of "enemies of the cross." How does he describe them (verses 17-19)?
5. What truths concerning the future does Paul now use to instruct the Philippians (verses 20-21)?
6. From this study, how has Paul shown his "*dear friends*" to stand firm in the Lord (4:1)?

### **RESPONSE**

1. How are you able to "*forget what is behind*"?
2. Paul shows much determination to win the prize. In your own words, rewrite verse 14 with yourself as the subject.
3. What are some points about which believers:
  - a) can think differently?
  - b) must think similarly?
4. In view of 4:1, how would you describe your relationship with the believers at your church?

THE PRISON EPISTLES - PHILIPPIANS  
STUDY 7

READ: Philippians 4:2-9

1. In verses 2-3, Paul speaks of some women in the Philippian church. List everything you learn about these women from Paul in these two verses.

2. What does it mean to "*rejoice in the Lord*" (verse 4)?

3.a) To whom are you to be gentle?

b) For what single reason (verse 5)?

4. How are you not to be "*anxious about anything*" (verse 6)?

5. What is the effect of "*the peace of God*" (verse 7)?

6. With God guarding your heart and mind, what does Paul instruct you to do now (verses 8-9)?

**RESPONSE**

1. Describe the work which the women do at your church.

2. Have you experienced "*the peace of God*" recently? What was accomplished in your life as a result of His peace?

3. In view of verses 8-9, what do you think about and practice in your church?

## THE PRISON EPISTLES - PHILIPPIANS STUDY 8

READ: Philippians 4:10-23

1. What effect did the Philippians renewed concern have on Paul (verses 10-13)?
  
- 2.a) What is the secret of being content?
  
- b) Why is contentment important in a believer's life, (verses 12-13)?
  
3. Re-write verses 14-16 from the Philippians point of view.
  
4. How does Paul view the gifts sent to him (verses 17-18)?
  
5. What does the Philippians sacrificial giving further result in (verses 19-20)?
  
6. What final purpose(s) does Paul's letter to the Philippians serve (verses 21-23)?

### **RESPONSE**

1. Can you say that you "*have learned to be content in any and every circumstance*"? If not, what are the stumbling blocks?
  
2. In what ways are you challenged by the faithful, ample and sacrificial giving of the Philippians?
  
3. How does God meet all your needs?
  
4. To whom does your church send greetings and gifts?