

NT Reading Plan 2020

Living Hope Fellowship
Philippians 1-4

Imprisonment

Paul writes this letter from prison, wrongly incarcerated because of his gospel ministry. This right here should cause us to read this letter intently, asking ourselves how Paul views his circumstance unjust as it is.

1. Who is Paul more concerned about than himself? Who is Paul MOST concerned about in this letter?

Partnership in the Gospel

This letter is all about the joy that comes from genuine partnership in the gospel, where Christians concern themselves with the needs of others, commit to maturing in knowing and applying the gospel which only serves to unify the church in doctrine, build lasting relationships around fellowship, witness the gospel to unbelievers, foster participation in missionary endeavors, and brings glory to God through Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Partnering in the advance of the gospel looks like:

(1:3-11) joyfully praying and thanking God for the ministry of other Christians

(1:29) suffering for Christ

(1:12-18) which in Paul's case, meant imprisonment

(1:19-26) being willing to endure hardship and laying down preferences so that others may be strengthened in the gospel

(1:27-30) applying the gospel message to your life in community with others who share the same goal

(2:1-11) humbly serving one another and looking out for others' interests while following Christ's example

(2:12-18) working out practical implications of the gospel in your own life as a witness to unbelievers

(2:19-30) sending out gospel ministers who care for the needs of believers

(3:1-21) rejecting anti-gospel messages from false teachers as well as any confidence in one's own works, accomplishments, or status

(4:2-9) allowing the gospel to shape each one's thinking in the church so we think the same way about ministry and labor together with a common purpose

(4:14-20) giving financially to support gospel ministers

2. Have you ever had an issue with someone in the church? How does Paul's emphasis on partnership shape the way you might think differently about that person?

3. Paul urges two Christians to "agree in the Lord" (4:2). What are you doing to get on the same page in doctrine and service with others in the church?

Christ

Jesus Christ is referred to at least 62 times in this epistle in 104 verses (counting pronouns and titles). I think Paul found Jesus to be a really big deal. You can't read this epistle without reading how important is, more so than everything else combined (1:8).

4. Looking at only a few verses as examples, what has the Christian been given in Christ in (1:29) _____ & _____? (2:5) _____? (3:12) _____?

Doxology

Paul can't help but praise God (that's what a doxology is) multiple times as he writes this letter from his prison cell. His prayer that the Philippians would grow in love, knowledge, discernment, and righteousness in Christ was to result in "the glory and praise of God" (1:3-11). Paul's meditation on the humiliation of Christ at the cross, dying as the servant of God and resulting in Christ's exaltation and universal recognition as Lord will bring "glory to God the Father" (2:1-11). After thanking the Philippians for the generous support of his missionary endeavors, Paul begins closing his letter confident that "my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus." Such a thought of partnership in the gospel and Christ's glory advancing worldwide evokes yet more praise. "To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen" (4:19-20).

5. Who is the focus of each of these three doxologies? Don't just say God. Who in the Trinity?

Joy

The first thing many people think about Philippians is joy and rejoicing. No doubt, these are key words that recur through each chapter (1:4, 18, 25; 2:2, 17, 18, 28, 29; 3:1; 4:1, 4, 10).

6. But where does joy come from according to Paul in this letter? Joy is not a prime-product, joy is a by-product of something. What give Paul this great joy and reasons to rejoice?

Confidence in the Flesh?

It's most likely that the "dogs...the evildoers" of 3:2 were Judaizers who insisted that men be circumcised to be saved. That's a clear addition to the gospel of salvation by faith alone, not works. Paul sarcastically countered this false teaching with reasons he could boast about his own works, accomplishments, or status. After giving us a short biography of his outwardly impressive life, he rejects all of it as "loss" and "rubbish" (the Greek word Paul uses is much stronger)! The only boast Paul could make was not in his flesh but in Christ whose worth surpasses everything else combined (3:8).

7. Do you ever find yourself thinking you are better than others because of _____? Paul rejected all of that. Is there anything you have done that you must reject and put Christ in its place?

Day of Christ

The gospel not only looks back to what Christ has accomplished in his finished work on the cross (the past), the gospel applies to how we live in the present (1:12) as we anticipate the second coming of Christ in the future (1:6, 10; 2:16).

8. Does the reality of Christ's second coming stir you to live more godly in this present age?