

Introduction to Philippians, letter of joy (used 16 times)

The prosperous, diverse Roman colony and city of Philippi was strategically located in the Macedonian region of modern day Greece, about 12 miles inland from the port city Neapolis of the Aegean Sea with a large population of Romans and Greeks. It was on the *Via Egnatia*, an ancient “interstate” for traffic and trade by sea and land between Europe and Asia. Acts 16 tells of Paul’s vision and call to Macedonia on his ‘second missionary journey’. Paul, Silas, Timothy, Luke are welcomed to Philippi by business woman, Lydia, and other women by the river. The church grew with a very diverse group – racially, socially, economically, politically ...- including the Roman jailer and his household, the slave girl delivered from an evil spirit,...whom the Spirit called as faithful followers of Jesus.

This new church at Philippi supports Paul as an apostle, missionary and church planter: financially, prayerfully, and in presence. Paul suffered greatly when he was in Philippi and now writes this letter to them while in prison again, likely in Rome. They send one of their own, Epaphroditus, to visit (2:25ff). Paul sent this letter to thank them for their generosity, to encourage them in the midst of suffering/persecutions and anxieties, and to exhort them. Both the church and Paul, are experiencing similar situations – imprisonment of a kind. The people in Philippi are imprisoned in their own way of thinking/mindset and are not having the humble, *same* mind, the mind of Christ. Paul pleads with them concerning the most important mission: the proclamation of the gospel in word and in their lives. He is continuing this mission from prison. They should be humble, finding common ground in Christ with a unity of mind/attitude and spirit so they too can continue to proclaim and embody the gospel.

Philippians 2:1-11 NRSV

Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion,² then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.³ Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves,⁴ not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

⁵ In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset(attitude) as Christ Jesus: ⁶ Who, being in very nature^[a] God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; ⁷ rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature^[b] of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death— even death on a cross!

⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name,¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth,¹¹ and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

QUESTIONS FOR REFLECTION: See pages 1 & 2

1. What do you hear the Spirit saying to *you* in this passage? Why?
2. What do Christ’s love, humility and self-emptying look like? What does that mean for how we are to view, relate/interact with self & others?

3. The phrase translated “mind of Christ”, (also found in Rom 12:1,2 & Eph.4:23-24) is key and encompasses a mind-set, outlook, attitude, filter, ways of thinking, assuming, interpreting...* Describe it.

4. If you as a person, if your disciple community, were to LIVE as Christ, with the mindset of Christ in this passage, “in humility value others above yourselves, ⁴not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others”, what might that look like with those who are struggling, who are on the margins, who are vulnerable, who are black, brown, Native American? Be specific.

What might be 1-2 things you/we need to unlearn/stop doing?

What might be 1-2 things you/we need to learn, be, or do?

5. PRAY: Paul reminds us in Ephesians 6 to stand firm wearing the whole armor of God and to PRAY.

After *all* in group have an opportunity to **share** about the passage, each person shares 1 personal request for **prayer**. Pray for one another briefly before group time ends. Who will watch the clock?

**Contextual Intelligence: Unlocking the Ancient Secret to Mission on the Front Lines*, Leonard Sweet & Michael Beck Ch. 10. & *Reframation: Seeing God, People and Mission through Reenchanted Frames*, Alan Hirsch & Mark Nelson

Word –Share-Prayer Philippians 2:12-18 Yellowstone Presbytery Sat. March 6, 2021

Refresh: Background and Phil 2:1-11

Philippians 2:12-18

¹² Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.

¹⁴ Do everything without grumbling or arguing, ¹⁵ so that you may become blameless and pure, “children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.”^[a] Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky ¹⁶ as you hold firmly to the word of life. And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor in vain. ¹⁷ But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. ¹⁸ So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.

1. In this passage, what is being “lifted up” to you? What is the Holy Spirit saying to you?

2. What do you notice in verses 12 & 13?

3. Verse 15 says to *become* blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a crooked and depraved generation in which you shine like stars in the universe. Why is this so important? Especially in today’s culture with many skeptical or with a negative experience with Christians and “church”?

a. How can we cooperate with his work and will in this *becoming* process? See 1-11 also,

b. What are ways we can, as one body in Christ, in unity, shine like stars? In our relationships? In our character? In our actions, service, advocacy? Refer back to Phil 2:1-11 and question #4 above on Friday’s sheet.

5. PRAY: Paul reminds us in Ephesians 6 to stand firm wearing the whole armor of God and to PRAY. After *all* in group have an opportunity to **share** about the passage, each person shares 1 personal request for **prayer**. Pray for one another briefly before group time ends. Who will watch the clock?