

Many of you have heard of the Air Force study that concluded that within 72 hours of a lecture, the students have forgotten 90% of what they heard. That is why our Sunday morning Bible study is reviewing the sermon from the previous week. That is why the message today is a review of this inspiring letter to the Philippian church. We want to retain and practice the eternal truths we found in it.

We saw that the glue that held the church together was their common love for Jesus and that includes His body, your fellow believers. (Ephesians 5:30) Paul had founded this church in a town of 10,000 when a vision sent him to Macedonia. (Acts 16:9) He met a group of women worshiping by the river and after sharing Christ with them, Lydia became the first believer. (Acts 16:14) Then after the miraculous jail shaking, the Philippian jailor was converted with his whole house. (Acts 16:34) The church that was formed partnered with Paul in his ministry by sending financial support to him via the hands of Epaphroditus.

The first golden nugget we came across was the promise in 1:6 that God will complete the work he has begun in us. *⁶ And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ.* 1:6 (ESV) The letter holds in tension the dual reality that we are already citizens of heaven, and yet the work in us is not complete. Everyone that has ever had a conflict with a fellow believer should say, "Amen!" But our hope is in this promise that we will be complete. If God can complete the work in me, then He can do it in every believer, because I need as much work as anyone! Part of the joy of heaven is that the work in everyone there will be completed. Everyone will be Christ like. (1Corinthians 1:8)

Then Paul shared his prayer for them. *⁹ And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, ¹⁰ so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, ¹¹ filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.* 1:9-11 (ESV) His first request is for an abounding increase in their love, the glue that held the church together. He doesn't say whether that love is for God or for man, but he doesn't need to. Love for God results in love for one another. Without saying which, he implied both.

Knowledge of God and His word refer to how we practice our love for God. We can't love God unless we know from His word, who He is, and what He is really about. The more we know Him, the more we will love Him. (1John 4:11) The more we love Him, the more we will love those made in His image even though that image is not yet restored. His love in us compels us to love one another.

Commented [Paul1]: Ephesians 5:30 (ESV)
³⁰ because we are members of his body.

Commented [Paul2]: Acts 16:9 (ESV)
⁹ And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us. E

Commented [Paul3]: Acts 16:14 (ESV)
¹⁴ One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.

Commented [Paul4]: Acts 16:34 (ESV)
³⁴ Then he brought them up into his house and set food before them. And he rejoiced along with his entire household that he had believed in God.

Commented [Paul5]: 1 Corinthians 1:8 (ESV)
⁸ who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Commented [Paul6]: 1 John 4:11 (ESV)
¹¹ Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

He wanted their love to abound with knowledge and discernment so they would choose what was excellent in God's eyes. Love that comes with knowledge and discernment turns us away from what is evil and selfish and to what is pure and blameless. The fruit of righteousness brings glory to God. God is about the work of restoring His image in us, finishing that work He started. We often get wrapped up in working *for* God when God's priority is working on us. (Romans 12:1-2)

The first message from Philippians challenged us to become a family of God that partners together to know Jesus and be changed by His word. We need to abound in love with all knowledge and discernment as much or more than the Philippians.

We saw Paul's great example that, while chained to Roman soldier and with others preaching Christ in the streets to get Paul in deeper trouble, Paul was grateful that the Kingdom of God was advancing. (1:18) Instead of viewing his situation as a detriment, he saw God using it to proclaim the Gospel to the Palace Guard and embolden the church of Rome to share Christ with others. He saw his situation from God's perspective.

He had a hard time deciding whether he wanted to be sentenced to death or remain alive to serve the Lord. That brings us to one of our favorite verses. *²¹ For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.* His conclusion was that through their prayers he would remain because he still needed to minister to them. (1:24) His call from God was not completed. Whether he lived or died, he just wanted his life to glorify God. (1:20) **If to us to live is Christ, then we will eagerly expect to glorify God in our body,** come what may. If Jesus is our very life, how can that mean anything but fruitful labor for us?

Paul closed that first chapter with an exhortation for them to stand firm in their faith and not be frightened by the opposition. We should be fearless *²⁹ For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake,* This isn't a favorite verse of very many people, but it is one of my favorites. It tells us that suffering for Christ is a gift, just like the gift of believing. We will suffer in this life, regardless of the path we choose. The path of a believer includes suffering for being committed to Jesus. It sometimes means the loss of friends and the distancing of family members. It means we share in one another's burdens to a deeper extent than the world. We care because Christ in us cares, and so we weep with those that weep. (Romans 12:15) **In some places in the world it means physical pain of persecution. We should suffer with them in prayer. (Hebrews 13:3) The gift of belief and the gift of suffering for Christ's sake are inseparable.**

At the end of that message, we held hands around the sanctuary and declared the words from this passage, **"By the grace of God, I will live as a citizen of heaven, worthy**

Commented [Paul7]: Romans 12:1-2 (ESV)

¹ I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

² Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

Commented [Paul8]: Philippians 1:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice,

Commented [Paul9]: Philippians 1:24 (ESV)

²⁴ But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account.

Commented [Paul10]: Philippians 1:20 (ESV)

²⁰ as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death.

Commented [Paul11]: Romans 12:15 (ESV)

¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep.

Commented [Paul12]: Hebrews 13:2-3 (ESV)

² Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

³ Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them, and those who are mistreated, since you also are in the body.

of Jesus, standing firm in one spirit, of one conviction, striving side by side for the sake of the Gospel, not being frightened, receiving the gracious gifts of believing and suffering, engaged in the conflict. So help me God!"

In chapter two Paul exhorts us to ² *complete his (my) joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.* ³ *Do nothing from rivalry or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.* 2:2-3 (ESV) He was asking them to have the mind of Christ. It is a call to humility. (1Peter 5:6) The contention in the church would end if they would count others more significant than themselves. That is a miracle of grace. **The true church of Jesus will have diversity in non-essentials, unity in essentials, and in all things love.**

Pride is so subtle and destructive. (Proverbs 16:18) We are so quick to think, "But I *do* know better and am more mature!" Paul is telling us that if you are mature, go down low. Be humble. Listen. Learn. Look for the gift in others. Don't demand to be heard, rather demand that your flesh listen to and respect others out of the love of Christ.

He followed this plea for humility with one of the most important hymns in the New Testament. It was the example of Jesus' suffering and the reward for obedience to the Father. It was a demonstration of the verse, God exalts the humble. (Luke 14:11) Jesus emptied Himself and became a servant, completely surrendered to the will of His Father, obedient even to death on a cross. That is why God highly exalted Him and gave Him a name that is above every other, Lord. That is the name of God, the Tetragrammaton (YHWH), the eternal God of Israel. (John 17:11) He shares the name of the Father which means He shares the attributes of God. That is why every knee will bow and every tongue confess that He is Lord to the glory of God the Father. (Isaiah 45:22-23)

He follows that hymn with an exhortation for us to do the same. ¹² *Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,* ¹³ *for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.* 2:12-13 (ESV) Obey! What God has revealed and worked into your spirit, work out into your everyday life. Live in humility! Live in love. Prefer one another. Be of one mind.

It is an impossible goal for us, but God is working in you to will to do it, and to work for His good pleasure. This is as tough as suffering for His sake. When no one understands, when you smile and know you know better, but in obedience you silently submit, God smiles with you. Winning can be losing. (Deuteronomy 12:8) Insisting on your way or on conveying your mind may be the worst thing for others and you. **Do you really believe God exalts the humble?**

Commented [Paul13]: 1 Peter 5:6 (ESV)

⁶ Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you,

Commented [Paul14]: Proverbs 16:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall.

Commented [Paul15]: Luke 14:11 (ESV)

¹¹ For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted. E

Commented [Paul16]: John 17:11 (ESV)

¹¹ And I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, which you have given me, that they may be one, even as we are one.

Commented [Paul17]: Isaiah 45:22-23 (ESV)

²² "Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other.

²³ By myself I have sworn; from my mouth has gone out in righteousness a word that shall not return: "To me every knee shall bow, every tongue shall swear allegiance."

Commented [Paul18]: Deuteronomy 12:8 (ESV)

⁸ "You shall not do according to all that we are doing here today, everyone doing whatever is right in his own eyes,

It was at this point in the series that I confessed I didn't expect what I should expect from you. I should expect that you will go over the last message and apply it daily. I should expect you will preview the next portion of Scripture and come with questions and expectation. I'd love to see you come to the Sunday morning Bible study having read the cross-references, ready to share. I expect that now because I know God is working in you. I know you've seen how applicable these passages have been right when God ordains them to meet a need in your life.

Several of you have asked why I always preach to you personally. That just means you are open to what the Spirit is saying to you today. (Revelation 2:29) **Let's be diligent to let the passage each week be a part of our lives. Have you taken up this challenge?**

We talked about Timothy and Epaphroditus' great examples. Epaphroditus risked his life to get the gift to Paul, and Timothy was said to have a genuine interest in the Philippians like no one else. (2:20) **What an example of genuinely living with God's heart beating in your own.**

In chapter 3 we read of Paul's great religious heritage and training, yet he gave it all up. ***7 But whatever gain I had, I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 8 Indeed, I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ.*** 3:7-8 (ESV) These verses are perhaps some of the most clear on the contrast between religion and relationship. Paul had religion. He compared it to excrement. This is when we learned the meaning of *skubala*. Whatever gets in the way of your relationship with Jesus, you need to consider as *skubala*. Paul said that he gave up everything to gain Christ. It's not just knowing Him, it's gaining Him like a bride gains a husband. It's finding Mr. Right, your Prince Charming, your everything. Sorry men. I know it's hard to relate. That's one reason the church has more women than men. That's the best illustration and Paul said so in Ephesians 5:32.

Men, if you are having a hard time with that concept, try thinking of the perfect Father, the one who always has time for you. He not only finds your strengths and teaches you how to apply them. He is at every game cheering for you. He corrects your failures only to encourage you to be all you can be. He is the perfect example. He tells you He loves you and that you make Him proud. He loves your Mom (the church) and treats her like a princess. He's a man's man! (Psalm 24:8) **You feel sorry for the other guys that they don't have a Father like you! Can anything come between you and your awesome Dad? Anything that does is *skubala*. Does that help?**

Now watch the humility with which Paul follows that great thought. ***12 Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because***

Commented [Paul19]: Revelation 2:29 (ESV)

²⁹ He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Commented [Paul20]: Philippians 2:20 (ESV)

²⁰ For I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare.

Commented [Paul21]: Ephesians 5:32 (ESV)

³² This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church.

Commented [Paul22]: Psalm 24:8 (ESV)

⁸ Who is this King of glory? The LORD, strong and mighty, the LORD, mighty in battle!

Christ Jesus has made me his own. ¹³ *Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead,* ¹⁴ *I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.* 3:12-14 (ESV) Paul wanted to wrap both arms around this heart cry of gaining Christ. He strained forward like a runner to break the finish line tape. He had one motto that was behind every action. Forget about the past! Strain forward to the upward call of God in Christ. That's all that mattered. We were challenged to do the same, to be 100% in this life for all that Christ has done for and in us. We're headed to heaven. (Hebrews 12:23)

²⁰ *But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,* ²¹ *who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body, by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.* 3:20-21 (ESV) We're going home. We have the same dilemma the Apostle had. Going home is much better than hanging out here, but we have work to do. But when that day comes, the old caterpillars that we are will be transformed into the amazing butterflies of God's design and we will ever be with the Lord. (1Corinthians 15:51-52)

I challenged you to memorize 4:4-8. How many of you made the effort or are still working on it? ⁴ *Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice.* ⁵ *Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand;* ⁶ *do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God.* ⁷ *And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.* ⁸ *Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things.* 4:4-8 (ESV)

What an excellent guide for daily living. If we will set these boundaries on our thought life, we'll find the Christian life to be much easier. Give your burdens to the Lord. Let His peace permeate your heart and mind. Think on the good things, the things Paul has shared in this letter like our relationship with Christ and one another, the reward for humility, the transformation of our nature and one day of our body as well. Think about your situations from God's heavenly perspective and give thanks!

Then we come to those last two well-known Scriptures that we found to be defined by their context. ¹³ *I can do all things through him who strengthens me.* 4:13 (ESV) We discovered that "all things" relates to our circumstances in life, whether in poverty or riches, we can be content in Christ. He is the One that fills the void in our heart.

Commented [Paul23]: Hebrews 12:23 (ESV)

²³ and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect,

Commented [Paul24]: 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 (ESV)

⁵¹ Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed,

⁵² in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.

Material things will never fill a spiritual void. The secret of contentment is being filled with Christ Jesus.

Finally, *¹⁹ And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.* 4:19 (ESV) If you are generous to partner in others' ministries, the Lord will see your great need for Jesus is met in you. You will know Him more deeply. Your necessities will be provided, the basic necessities of food and clothing for the body, and the great necessity of Jesus for the soul. What a letter! What promises! What practical guidance! May the Lord work these truths deep into our spirits. Amen!