

THE CHURCH THAT MADE PAUL HAPPY

BIBLE TEXT : Philippians 1:1-7, 27-30; 2:1-30

LESSON 405 Junior Course

MEMORY VERSE: "Be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous" (I Peter 3:8).

BIBLE TEXT in King James Version

Philippians 1:1-7

1 Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:
2 Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and *from* the Lord Jesus Christ.
3 I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,
4 Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy,
5 For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now;
6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform *it* until the day of Jesus Christ:
7 Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace.

Philippians 1:27-30

27 Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;
28 And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.
29 For unto you it is given in the

Bible References:

Notes:

Missionary to the Gentiles

The Apostle Paul was a missionary to the Gentiles. He was a Jew himself, but God had given him a special call to go preach to the "other sheep." The call of the Gospel is to everyone: Whosoever will may come and take the water of life freely. God wants all men everywhere to hear the Gospel story so they can be saved if they choose.

One night on Paul's second missionary journey he had a vision. A man of Macedonia stood and called to him: "Come over into Macedonia, and help us" (Acts 16:9). Paul knew it was a message from God, and he and Silas set out at once for the chief city of Macedonia, which was Philippi.

Their manner of contact with the people was to visit first a Jewish synagogue on the Sabbath Day and try to explain to them that the Messiah, for whom they had been looking, had come. He was Jesus Christ. There did not seem to be many Jews in Philippi, but on the Sabbath Day Paul and Silas found a group of women, who had gathered on a river bank to offer their prayers to God. Among them was Lydia, a business-woman who worshiped God. Her heart was open to listen to the message that Paul was preaching, a sermon about Jesus. She believed that Jesus was the Son of God, and received all the teachings of Paul. She was willing to be baptised as a Christian, even though she would have to bear persecution.

Soon after that, Paul and Silas were beaten and cast into prison in Philippi because they preached about Jesus. With their backs bleeding and their feet fast in the stocks, God sent an earthquake to shake the prison and set them free. Through this miracle the jailer and his family were saved. These two groups of converts were the beginning of the church at Philippi.

Happy Memories

The Apostle Paul had very happy memories of the Christians at Philippi. He said, "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you" (Philippians 1:3). It was a pleasure to preach to people who would accept the doctrines of Christ. The very thought of those people was a blessing to him, and had been since he first met them.

Paul could have fellowship with the Philippian church because the congregation agreed on what qualifications a true Christian must have. Their hearts had responded to Paul's preaching, and they were obedient to it, even when he was not present with them.

The Scripture tells us: "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief" (Hebrews 13:17). We can all be a blessing to those who are our ministers, those who have led us to Christ, if we live according to the Word of God, yielding our will to the will of God. And that makes us happy, too.

Persecution

behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;

30 Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear *to be* in me.

Philippians 2:1-30

1 If *there be* therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies,

2 Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind.

3 Let nothing *be done* through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.

4 Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.

5 Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:

6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:

10 That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of *things* in heaven, and *things* in earth, and *things* under the earth;

11 And *that* every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

12 Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and

Paul had served Jesus a long time, and he knew that there was a reward awaiting him in Heaven. He had suffered much persecution for the Gospel, but it had never made him feel like turning back. Even now that he was in prison again he could say, "Rejoice in the Lord alway." He loved Jesus so much that he would have been happy to go to Heaven right away. He was willing, however, to stay to help others if that was the will of God.

Our Conversation

In Paul's instructions to the Philippian church, he told them to be careful that what they talked about would glorify Jesus. People who listened to their conversation should be able to tell that they were Christians. Speaking about the things of God cheers us along life's pathway. And God notices, too. In Malachi we read: "They that feared the LORD spake often one to another: and the LORD hearkened, and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the LORD, and that thought upon his name" (Malachi 3:16).

Is your conversation such that you would not be ashamed to have Jesus listen to it? He knows everything you say and do. Words that have been said can never be unsaid, even if we say we are sorry. So we should be very careful to say only things that are becoming to a Christian. If our heart is holy we will not be saying the wrong thing. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh" (Matthew 12:34).

The Mind of Christ

When we are Christians we are Christlike, and do the things that please Him. Paul went so far as to say, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 2:5). He explained what the mind of Christ is. Jesus was so great in Heaven that He did not feel that it was boasting to say He was equal with God. Yet He was willing to humble Himself, leave His reputation, come to earth in the form of a servant, and go so far as to be willing to die at the hands of sinful men in order to be a blessing to mankind. That was the mind of Christ -- how He thought.

None of us would dare to consider ourselves equal with God. All have sinned and deserve to go to hell as a punishment for those sins. If it had not been that Jesus died for our sins none of us could be saved. We have nothing of which to boast. We have no way of saving ourselves without Jesus. Anything we have, any right to Heaven, which we have gained, is ours only because Jesus died to pay the price for our redemption. If Jesus, who came from Glory, was willing to submit Himself to death, even the death of the cross, how much more should we be willing to die in the service of the Lord. Would we be willing to do as Jesus did?

Sometimes it is harder to live a consistent Christian life in the face of persecution than it would be to die. Some, who might in a burst of zeal and enthusiasm be willing to give themselves as martyrs for the faith, lose that zeal and steadfast trust in the Lord through day-by-day trials, the cares of this life, or a desire for riches. It will be only those who keep the faith unto the end who will receive the crown of life.

Every Knee Shall Bow

Jesus paid the price for our redemption; therefore God highly exalted Him. All the hosts of Heaven bow before Him. The day is coming in every person's life when he, too, will have to honour the Son of God, and bow to Him. We who love Jesus bow to Him every day -- and in our hearts we bow to Him continually. But those who refuse to bow to Jesus now will be forced to bow in the judgement, and to acknowledge that He is the Christ. The

trembling.

13 For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of *his* good pleasure.

14 Do all things without murmurings and disputings:

15 That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;

16 Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain.

17 Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all.

18 For the same cause also do ye joy, and rejoice with me.

19 But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you, that I also may be of good comfort, when I know your state.

20 For I have no man likeminded, who will naturally care for your state.

21 For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.

22 But ye know the proof of him, that, as a son with the father, he hath served with me in the gospel.

23 Him therefore I hope to send presently, so soon as I shall see how it will go with me.

24 But I trust in the Lord that I also myself shall come shortly.

25 Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, and companion in labour, and fellowsoldier, but your messenger, and he that ministered to my wants.

26 For he longed after you all, and was full of heaviness, because that ye had heard that he had been sick.

27 For indeed he was sick nigh unto death: but God had mercy on

One whom they ridiculed, whose name they may have used in blasphemy, or may only have neglected, will be acknowledged as King of kings and Lord of lords. Even kings and dictators will have to bow to Him. "Every knee" shall bow.

Happy Through Obedience

"If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: but if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword" (Isaiah 1:19, 20). The Philippians were enjoying the blessings of obedience and Paul wanted them to continue to have the mind of Christ. Even if we cannot understand some of the rules that are imposed upon us, God has promised us a blessing if we obey. Jesus said: "I seek not mine own will, but the will of the Father which hath sent me" (John 5:30). Another time He said: "I do always those things that please him" (John 8:29). Can we say that we always do the things that please God? Are we obedient to those who have the rule over us? If we are, we have a right to the blessings of God.

Lights in this World

When Jesus was on earth He said, "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12); but He was going to go to Heaven and He gave this commission: "Ye are the light of the world" (Matthew 5:14). The business of a light is to shine.

**"Jesus bids us shine, with a clear, pure light,
Like a little candle burning in the night;
In this world of darkness we must shine,
You in your small corner, and I in mine."**

Are you shining for Jesus? The true Christian is as noticeable among sinners as a light is in the darkness.

Peaceable

One of the things that marks a Christian is that he is peaceable. Paul said: "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory" (Philippians 2:3). Do not do your work in the church to be seen of men, to show off your ability and talent. The testimony we give in the church should glorify God and not attract attention to anything we have done. Songs that are sung should bring a blessing to the listener, conviction upon the sinner, and then it will count in Heaven and bless the one who sings. Those who play musical instruments in the service of God should be concerned about whether their music is touching the hearts of the listeners and not care about which chair they occupy or if they are getting the honour they feel they deserve. A definition of a humble person is one who does not think of himself. He wants his life to be a blessing to others.

Willing Workers

Deep in Paul's heart he could rejoice evermore, but he still had grieves and burdens to bear, also. One was that there were so few people who were willing to give themselves wholly to work for the Lord. He said they cared more about their own things than the things of God. Paul wrote almost two thousand years ago, but he describes human nature and the problems among Christians as though he had lived today. Very few people will answer the call of God so completely that they give up their own way of living, their desire for the things of this life.

We rejoice that there are many in our church who will take time out to leave their comfortable homes to go to a street meeting, to drive for miles to visit the sick in hospitals, or prisoners in jail. Others are faithful to help the poor, to share their meagre possessions with those who have less. Many times those who do not have much themselves are the most generous to give to others. Jesus notices, and has said, "Whosoever shall

him; and not on him only, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.

28 I sent him therefore the more carefully, that, when ye see him again, ye may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful.

29 Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness; and hold such in reputation:

30 Because for the work of Christ he was nigh unto death, not regarding his life, to supply your lack of service toward me.

give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward" (Matthew 10:42).

There were some faithful men upon whom Paul could depend in all things. One was Epaphroditus, who had given all his strength to serve God; and Paul was sending him to visit Philippi. Another was Timothy. Paul loved Timothy as his own son. He was also to visit the Philippians. And then Paul had hope that he himself would soon be released from prison so he could go to be a help to that congregation. We know he was a great blessing to them, because he was willing to give himself wholly to help.

Paul thought of the time he would meet the members of the Philippian congregation in Heaven. He would rejoice because his labours had not been in vain. They would be some of the sheaves, which he could lay at the Master's feet.

QUESTIONS

1. Who were the Philippians to whom Paul wrote in this Epistle?
2. When had Paul first met them? Who were the first converts?
3. Why was Paul happy whenever he thought about the Philippians?
4. What did Paul say about our conversation?
5. Paul said: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus." What was the mind of Christ Jesus?
6. How can we be lights in this world?
7. If people do not bow before Jesus now, when will they have to bow?
8. Who were Paul's faithful helpers?
9. What should be our purpose in working for Jesus?
10. Where was Paul when he wrote this Epistle?