

GOING DEEPER STUDY NOTES (FOR JUNE 13, 2021)

For Community Groups or Personal Study

Throughout June and July we are studying Paul's letter to the church in Philippi. Philippi was an important Roman colony north of the Aegean sea between Athens and Istanbul.

What sets this letter apart is Paul's obvious affection for his friends in this Christian community. In this letter Paul pours out his heart, his faith, his prayers, his priorities.

In the opening chapter Paul debates whether it would be better to live or to die. Chapter 2 contains what may have been one of the first and greatest hymns of the early church. The third chapter reminds us of the value of Jesus above anything else one might have or hope for. The final chapter speaks of a contentment rooted in God that remains unshakable regardless of the circumstances we are in.

In this morning's section of the letter (chapter 1:12-30) Paul debated whether it would be better for him to live or to die. This was no morbid musing filled with self-doubt and despair. This was instead a beautiful and hopeful public discussion about Paul's view of his present and future life.

As he wrote this letter Paul was in prison because he was a Jesus follower. He knew his death was approaching, likely sooner rather than later. What would Paul do with the life God had given him and who would he trust when his life comes to an end? These are good and necessary questions for us too.

IN CHRIST: COURAGE SECTIONS OF PHILIPPIANS 1:12 - 30

¹¹ I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, ¹³ so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. ¹⁴ And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear ... (verse 15 to end of verse 18 omitted here)
Yes, and I will rejoice, ¹⁹ for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, 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. ²¹ For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. ²² If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. ²³ I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. ²⁴ But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. ²⁵ Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith, ²⁶ so that in

me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again.

²⁷ Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ ... (omitted here are verses 28-30)

Philippi was the site of a decisive military victory for Rome. It was also a popular place for Roman soldiers to retire and settle. Paul and those with him arrived in Philippi unexpectedly. They were heading in a completely different direction until God made it clear that Philippi was their destination (read Acts 16:6-15). And the Christian community in Philippi grew.

WHAT DOES IT SAY?

1. Where was Paul when he wrote this letter? (see verse 13)
2. How had Paul's situation "advanced" the gospel?
3. Re-read the entire passage, including the verses omitted in what is printed above. How could some preach about Jesus out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, hoping to cause Paul harm? (verse 17). What was Paul's view on this?
4. Why was Paul convinced he would "remain and continue"?

WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

5. What might help a Christian be "bold" enough to live for Jesus and talk to others about Him? What helps you?
6. What did Paul mean when he wrote, "my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better"?
7. What would a life "worthy of the gospel of Christ" look like?

WHAT IS GOD SAYING TO YOU?

8. How has God been present, and even at work in and around you, during hard and painful circumstances you've faced?
9. We are not to seek to end our life by human means (God does not want that). As you think of your life beyond this life what are you looking forward to most?
10. Is your life, "worthy of the gospel of Christ"? Discuss

Notes: _____

Spend time in silence, praying (even if just for a minute or two). Prayer is simply a conversation with God. Be honest. If you don't know how or what to pray admit that and ask God to help you pray. Ask God to give you a confident hope in your eternal future. Ask Him to help you depend more on Him. Pray for your Christian friends and your church right now. Ask God to help you live your life for Him. He will help us (you) because He loves us (you).