

Philippians Overview

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[0 : 0 0] So we're going to start this evening a new series in the book of Philippians. It's a short break from the book of Acts, which we'll hopefully return to later. But there is an important theme at the centre of the book of Philippians, which thinking and praying about where we're up to as a church, talking to others, I think is really, really important for us. And so my plan this evening is to give you an overview of the whole letter. And then in weeks to come, I'll just work our way through it with you. So I'm going to begin by reading the whole book. Now, Alvina told me yesterday that I read like a, what is it, a freight train. That was it. That was her words. And so I'm going to endeavour not to do it like that. I'm going to hopefully read it slow enough so that you can follow, but fast enough so that we're not still here tomorrow morning reading it. And I just want you, you're not going to understand every word as I read it, but let's just try and absorb what the themes are. And then I'm going to show you four big themes or big observations from the letter.

So I want to show you, and they're on your handout, I want to show you how Paul loved the Philippian church, that there's a particular kind of suffering that they're facing, a certain kind of danger for the church, and also that at the centre of the letter is one big instruction for them. So let me read it to you, and you'll follow along in your Bible so you can point out my mistakes as I make them.

Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all God's holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons, grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

It's right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart, and whether I'm in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus. And this is my prayer, that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God. Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel.

As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I'm in chains for Christ. And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear. It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. The latter do so out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing they can stir up trouble for me while I'm in chains.

[3 : 10] But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this, I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice. For I know that through your prayers and God's provision of the spirit of Jesus Christ, what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance. I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now, as always, Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For, to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

If I'm to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I don't know. I am torn between the two. I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far, but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. Convinced of this, I know that I will remain. And I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, so that through my being with you again, your boasting in Christ Jesus will abound on account of me. Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.

Then whether I come to see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel, without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved. And that by God, for it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him. Since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have. 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, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and one mind. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, rather in humility, value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests, but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus, who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage. Rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness, and being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross. Therefore, God exalted him to the highest place, and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

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, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according, sorry, in order to fulfill his good purpose. Do everything without grumbling or arguing so that you may become blameless and pure, children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation. Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky as you hold firmly to the word of life. Then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labour in vain.

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. So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.

[6 : 49] I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. I have no one else like him who will show genuine concern for your welfare, for everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. But you know that Timothy has proved himself because as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel. I hope therefore to send him as soon as I see how things go with me. And I am confident in the Lord that I myself will come soon. But I think it's necessary to send back to you Epaphroditus, my brother, co-worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger whom you sent to take care of my needs. For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard he was ill. Indeed he was ill and almost died. But God had mercy on him and not only on him but also on me to spare me sorrow upon sorrow. Therefore I am the more eager to send him so that when you see him again you may be glad and may have less anxiety.

So then welcome him in the Lord with great joy and honour people like him because he almost died for the work of Christ. He risked his life to make up for the help that you yourselves could not give me.

Further my brothers and sisters rejoice in the Lord. It's no trouble for me to write the same things to you again and it's a safeguard for you. Watch out for those dogs, those evildoers, those mutilators of the flesh. For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus and who put no confidence in the flesh. Though I myself have reasons for such confidence. Someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh. I have more.

circumcised on the eighth day of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, in regard to the law, a Pharisee. As for zeal, persecuting the church. As for righteousness based on the law, faultless. But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage that I may gain Christ and be found in him. Not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law but that which is through faith in Christ. The righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. I want to know Christ.

Yes. To know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings. Becoming like him in his death. And so somehow attaining to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I've already obtained all this. Or have already arrived at my goal. But I press on to take hold of that which for Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do. Forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead. I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. All of us then who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently that too God will make clear to you. Only let us live up to what we have already attained. Join together in following my example brothers and sisters. And just as you have us as a model keep your eyes on those who live as we do.

[10 : 02] For as often as I've told you before and now tell you again even with tears many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction. Their God is their stomach. Their glory is in their shame.

Their mind is set on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a saviour from there. The Lord Jesus Christ who by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body. Therefore my brothers and sisters you whom I love and long for my joy and my crown stand firm in the Lord in this way.

Dear friends, I plead with Iodia. I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. Yes and I ask you my true companion help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers whose names are in the book of life.

Rejoice in the Lord always. I'll say it again. Rejoice. Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything but in every situation by prayer and petition with thanksgiving present your request to God and the peace of God which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Finally brothers and sisters whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable, if anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think about such things. Whatever you've learned or received or heard from me or seen in me, put it into practice and the God of peace will be with you. I rejoice greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed you were concerned but you had no opportunity to show it.

I'm not saying this because I'm in need for I've learned to be content whatever the circumstance. I know what it is to be in need. I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation whether well-fed or hungry, living in plenty or in want.

[11 : 59] I can do all this through him who gives me strength. Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. Moreover as you Philippians know in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel when I set out from Macedonia not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving except you only.

For even when I was in Thessalonica you sent me aid more than once when I was in need. Not that I desire your gifts. What I desire is that more be credited to your account. I've received full payment. I have more than enough. I'm amply supplied now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus. To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen. Greet all God's people in Christ Jesus. The brothers and sisters who are with me send greetings. All God's people here send you greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar's household.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Amen. There are several just brilliant hallelujah moments aren't there in the book of Philippians and I hope it was helpful to you to see where they come in the whole letter. But I just want to draw your attention fairly briefly. I'm not going to keep you all night to four things and there are opportunity as well for questions at the end. So please do be storing those up as we go through. The first thing I want you to notice is that Paul loved the Philippian church. I hope that was obvious to you as I read it.

Especially when you compare Philippians to some of Paul's other letters like say Galatians or two Corinthians or one Corinthians. The letter is outstandingly positive all the way through, isn't it?

If you look at the opening verses there in verses three and four, notice all the all's and every's and always. Every time in verse three that he remembers them, he is thankful for them. Do you have friends like that? Every time you think of them, you're thankful for them. Not every person we know is like that, are they? But for Paul, the Philippian church was like that. So in all his prayers for all of them, he is always full of joy. So as Paul is in prison, he remembers and prays for the Philippian church. He's smiling at his memory of them with joyful thanks. They are dear friends.

[14 : 20] It comes out later in the letter too when you discover that the letter really is a sort of a thank you letter. It's a pretty poor thank you letter in comparison to some of the thank you letters you might encourage your children or grandchildren to write. But it is a thank you letter because they have given him a gift through Epaphroditus. But then he tells them he didn't really need it. And that actually it was to their gain that they gave it anyway. But Paul, probably in Rome, certainly in prison, is dependent on the financial generosity of others in order to live. And in chapter four, verse 14, you find that the Philippian church are unique in sharing with him, partnering with him and sending help for his needs or sharing with him in his troubles. And according to verse 16 of chapter four, it's not the first time they've done it. It's remarkable, isn't it?

Here is a church that is sincere in their love for Paul and Paul is sincere in his love for them. Now, we don't have time to unpack all the detail of this, but Paul's love for the Philippian church is of a particular kind as well. So notice that the love that he has for the church in Philippi is a costly love.

In chapter one, you find that he says that it's more important for him to serve the church in Philippi than it is even for him to have relief from his suffering. What does he say? Verse 24 of chapter one, it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.

Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith. Paul longs to be with the Lord and relieved of his suffering, suffering, but actually he is convinced and loves to be with the Philippian church.

And so he is prepared to persevere. His love for the Philippian church is costing him dearly. Then at the end of chapter two, we find that finding out about them and their progress in the Christian life is worth sending his best man, Timothy, at significant risk to find out news about him.

[16 : 13] So the Philippian church are loved by Paul and loved at a great cost to himself and to them. The second observation is that there is a particular kind of suffering.

Now, if you're drifting off in the warmth, you're going to have to put your brains in gear because this is a little more complicated, but I think is important. There's an intriguing line at the end of chapter one about the situation that the church finds itself in.

So having exhorted the church to live in a way which is worthy of the gospel of Christ, we'll talk about that a bit more in a moment. He goes on to talk about opponents in verse 28 before saying in verse 29, for it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him.

That's not an unusual message, is it? Everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will suffer. Yeah, that's in 2 Timothy. Obviously, the theme of suffering throughout the scriptures. But here, there's a particular kind of suffering.

So verse 30, Also to suffer for him, since you are going through the same struggle that you saw I had and now here that I still have.

[17 : 25] This is a very specific kind of suffering that they watched Paul suffer with while he was with them in Philippi. And now that Paul still has it, they also have it as well.

So to uncover what that is, we need to jump back to the book of Acts and see how the Philippian mission unfolds there. So turn back in your Bibles to Acts chapter 16, to Acts chapter 16, and we will look at it together.

Acts chapter 16, page 1112. If you look down at verse 12, you'll notice that Luke decides to give us a bit of background information on Philippi.

So from there, we travel to Philippi, a Roman colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia. And we stayed there several days. It's unusual for Luke to include that kind of detail.

The only other place he does it for is, interestingly enough, Paul's birthplace in Tarsus, which combined with Luke starting to use the word we here for his mission might mean that Luke himself was from Philippi.

[18 : 31] But we don't know. That's just speculation. Really, the thing seems to be that in order to understand what's going on in Philippi, you need to understand that Philippi is a proud Roman city, a leading city of the district, a colony of Rome.

What happens next, you can read the rest of Acts 16 in your own time, is that the mission team go down to the river on the Sabbath to meet with a group of people who are praying there. Seems that there's no synagogue in Philippi, and presumably not many Jews.

So the God-fearing Jewish-leaning Gentiles would meet on the Sabbath by the river, perhaps to go through some ritual washing. Anyway, there they meet Lydia, who is a rich businesswoman who sells posh clothes to royalty, and she is converted.

Then a fortune teller gets converted, and then a jailer also gets converted. But in the midst of all that, you're told about the persecution that Paul and Silas endure. So look down at verse 16, and let me read these few verses to you.

Once, when we were going to the place of prayer, we were met by a female slave who had a spirit by which she predicted the future. She earned a great deal of money for owners by fortune-telling.

[19 : 43] She followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved. She kept this up for many days. Finally, Paul became so annoyed that he turned around and said to the spirit, In the name of Jesus Christ, I command you to come out of her.

At that moment, the spirit left her. When our owners realized that their hope of making money was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to face the authorities.

They brought them before the magistrates and said, There it is, this is key. These men are Jews and are throwing our city into an uproar by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practice.

You notice the problem. Here's the conflict. They are telling Paul that his preaching is advocating customs that are unlawful for Romans to accept.

It's interesting, isn't it? They're not saying, listen, Paul is preaching a false message. Jesus is a myth. He didn't really rise from the dead. No, it's the idea that being a Christian, following the message that Paul is preaching, is contrary to Roman culture.

[20 : 53] If you follow Paul like a Christian, you can no longer be a proud citizen of Philippi. If you're going to be a Christian, you're going to cause us trouble in our city.

If you're going to be a Christian, you're not going to be a very good Philippian. It's really interesting, isn't it? Their customs are unlawful for us proud city of Philippi, Roman colony, citizens to practice.

Now, I think that's massively significant in a number of ways. Firstly, it's significant because it makes the letter to the Philippians massively contemporary, isn't it?

You could say the same, couldn't you, for life in 21st century Britain. What are people's big concerns with Christianity? Aren't people's big concerns with you being a Christian that you will be a bad citizen?

So if you're going to live the faithful Christian life, aren't you going to be a dangerous citizen? Shouldn't we limit the church, make sure that there's no conversion therapy going on? Should we keep a tight rein on what street preachers say?

[21 : 50] Should we make sure that the HR department is really on top of Christianity in our workplace to make sure that they're not saying anything that shouldn't be said? Particularly if you're a doctor or a teacher or a nurse.

Keep your Christianity to yourself because if you live your Christian life openly here, it will make you a bad doctor or a bad teacher or a bad nurse or a bad citizen. That's what's going on in Philippi.

But it also explains, if you come back to the letter to the Philippians, it also explains why the letter is so obsessed, if you like, with citizenship. Not of the Roman Empire, but of heaven.

So chapter 3, verse 20, what does Paul say? But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words, I may be jumping about a bit so you can ask me questions on this.

But Paul's antidote to the specific kind of suffering that the Philippians are facing, that he had when he was there, that they're now facing. His antidote to it is not to downplay the conflict between Christian culture and Roman culture, but rather to re-emphasize that trusting in Christ gives the Christian a whole different identity, a whole different citizenship.

[23 : 02] This is, if I can summarize, this is massive pastoral wisdom. Paul notices that they are being accused of being disloyal Philippian Roman citizens.

What does he do? He doesn't actually answer the problem. He transcends the problem with a bigger truth, a greater reality. He says, listen, you are citizens of heaven. Your citizenship is not, you're not a proud Philippian.

You belong to Christ. You're his. That is pastoral wisdom, isn't it? Not resolving every problem, but transcending problems with a bigger truth and a greater reality. That's what the gospel does all the time, isn't it?

In the ways that we're suffering and struggling, it transcends it with a greater truth and a greater reality. Thirdly, very much linked to that, we find they're a faithful church facing a hidden danger.

There's a theme of faithfulness, isn't there, that comes through over and over again, linked to the thankfulness that we've already looked at. But the Philippian church, unlike any other church, had stood with Paul.

[24 : 04] So he calls them partners in the gospel, chapter 1, verse 5. Share us with me in grace, chapter 1, verse 7. So here you've got a church that's from sort of inauspicious beginnings, that's thriving, it's outstripping other churches in the New Testament in gospel partnership and faithfulness.

But there's a problem. There's a hidden danger, if you like. It's rearing its head all the way through the letter, and then it gets tackled head on in chapter 4, verse 2, when he speaks to Euodia and Syntyche.

And it's the problem of disunity. But it's not any old disunity. You can be more specific than that. You're given more detail, aren't you? It's a disunity rooted in envy and selfish ambition.

Let me just wring some of these off. Chapter 1, verse 17, he points out that the motive standing behind some preachers is a motive of envy and rivalry, isn't it? They're promoting themselves.

It's the backdrop to chapter 2, verse 3, where the church are told to do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. He says that because they are doing things from selfish ambition and conceit and are considering themselves better than others.

[25 : 14] It's there in Paul's mission team when in chapter 2, verse 21, he points out to the Philippians that his mission team, his team of helpers, all of them, except for Timothy, are mostly concerned with their own interests and not the interests of Christ.

That's remarkable, isn't it? It's obvious again, but more extreme, when he says in chapter 3, verse 19, there are people whose God is their belly.

I don't think he's talking about food there, but about a self-filling, selfish ambition. Thinking about the context, it's easy to see how this might have worked.

Was it perhaps that proud Roman citizens converted to Christ, starting to be frowned upon by their friends, they lose their status in the world, so they're simply trying to swap that out for status in the church?

I might not be able to be the mayor anymore. I might not be able to be an influential teacher or lecturer or doctor, but I could be a leader in the church. I could get ahead while Paul is out of prison, make a name for myself.

[26 : 20] And the New Testament is full of warnings for this kind of behavior in the church. Let me just read this to you. You don't need to turn to it. I think it might be on your handout anyway. James chapter 3. James writes this, Who is wise and understanding among you?

Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in humility that comes from wisdom. But if you harbor bitter envy and selfish ambition in your hearts, do not boast about it or deny the truth.

Such wisdom does not come down from heaven, but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic. Where you have envy and selfish ambition, there you find disorder and every evil practice. That's the danger facing the Philippian church.

Alec Matea writes this in his commentary on the book of Philippians. Again, this is on your handout. Paul does not share the details with us, and therefore it's safer to raise questions than to make assertions.

The single fact is that new life and new divisions appear side by side in the Roman church. Can we be wide of the mark in asking if Paul is not here giving an illustration in order to teach a principle?

[27 : 23] We look back to Paul's Rome. We look around today's church. We do not see, do we not see over and over again that when renewal comes, disunity comes.

We could think of many churches touched today by spiritual renewal, only to be at once devitalized by splits, parties and sessions. Can there be doubt that disunity is primary weapon against the effectiveness of the church?

Now, we're going to come and think about that in weeks to come. We have loads of time to spend on it tonight. We'll run down all the applications. But needless to say, there are lots of implications of this for our church. Disunity rooted in envy is a disease not so much of a declining church.

When church is struggling and declining, there isn't much to be envious about. Who wants to be a leader in the church when the church is really struggling? But when church starts to move forwards and grow and be revitalized and be refreshed by the Spirit of God, that opens the door for envy and rivalry and competition against one another.

As people become converted and the church starts to change and develop, the temptation to pride, positioning and disunity opens up.

[28 : 44] This is super challenging for us, isn't it, as a church? This is the sort of stuff that time and again, I'm stopping at my desk and I'm praying through this. Especially again in preparing Philippians.

Lord, help me to do nothing out of selfish ambition. Empty me of myself that you may fill me with your Spirit. May I work for your glory and not mine. May I not be proud.

Doing things for my own glory and not for yours. And we all need to be thinking like that and praying like that, don't we? Okay. Final thing then. The final central instruction.

One central instruction. I think there really is basically one go do this in the letter of Philippians. Laila, were you going to ask a question or were you just stretching? No, that's fine.

Careful as you stretch. It's like being at an auction. You scratch your head, you'll buy something you don't want. Okay. One central instruction. Hopefully, you can't fail to notice with the letter to the church in Philippi that it is centered around this hymn in chapter two.

[29 : 47] If you want to be a Greek nerd, you can find out that Paul in the letter is using a particular Greek word for mind. It comes a number of times. It comes more in the letter here than it comes in any other New Testament book.

It's there over and over again. It doesn't mean so much to think. It means more like a sort of mindset. Phronin is the Greek word. It's a controlling truth, the big reality, the mindset.

And there's a flurry of that word in the buildup to chapter two, verse five, when Paul is telling us that we should have this mind amongst us, or this mindset, this way of thinking, this controlling truth.

What is it? Well, it is the controlling truth, the mindset of the Lord Jesus Christ. The mindset that would give up the glories of heaven for the filth of a Roman cross.

We are to think like one who would do that. The mindset that would willingly give itself up so that others might be lifted up. It's the mindset that lays down its life for the salvation of another.

[30 : 46] Ultimately, it's the mindset that qualifies Jesus as the eternal king of God's people, as the father exalts the son and gives him the name at which every knee must bow. Verse nine of chapter two.

This is the opposite of envy and rivalry that's threatening the church, isn't it? And what exactly is it? Well, here it is in a sentence, which I borrowed this sentence from the pastor of another church probably about 20 years ago, and it stuck in my mind, so it must be a useful summary, even though it's not particularly natty.

It's this, self-sacrificial service for the eternal well-being of others to the glory of God. That's the kind of love. That's Christ here, isn't it?

That's the big instruction. Love one another with a self-sacrificial service or the eternal well-being of others to the glory of God. It's the giving up of one's own rights, privileges, pride, ambitions, not just for the good of others.

Notice that. It's not just for their good. It's for their eternal well-being. Jesus doesn't die on the cross and give himself up for you so that you can live a charmed life, get the job that you want, the money that you want, the house that you want.

[31 : 59] No, he dies on the cross for your eternal good, your eternal well-being, that you might be rescued from your sin for eternal glory. And it's not for their glory either, is it?

It is to the glory of God. God is glorified. God is exalted by this giving of ourselves for the eternal well-being of others. It's how the church is unified as we lay down our own rights for the rights of others, that they might be raised up.

Paul is doing this in prison even, rejoicing that others are preaching, even when he knows their motives are suspect. Or when in chapter 3 he considers everything a loss compared to knowing Christ.

It's what motivates him to strain forward at the end of chapter 3. It's this self-sacrificial service for the eternal well-being of others to the glory of God that motivates Epaphroditus to almost lose his life, to take money from Philippi to Rome to give to Paul so that he may have what he needs.

So here's the big take-home of the book. If you're going to live the Christian life with joy, if with Paul we're going to be able to say, do you know what, for me to live is Christ, to die is gain, if we're going to be able to say that, then our lives have to be about self-sacrificial service for the eternal well-being of others to the glory of God.

[33 : 15] That's what it's about. And where are you going to get that? How are you going to love like that? I can't give you that as an instruction, right? Go away and try really hard to sacrifice yourself for the eternal well-being of others to the glory of God.

Go and do that. That's an impossible ask, isn't it? But it's not self-generated. Self-generated motives are envy and selfish ambition. This is Holy Spirit generated, isn't it?

This is the mindset of Christ. This is Christ living in us and working through us. Christ at work so that we may lay down ourselves for the eternal well-being of others to the glory of God.

And that is what Philippians is all about. Questions, comments, observations. I'll give you a minute and then we'll pray together.

Yes, okay.

[34 : 29] That's a good question. So for those of you on Zoom, is Philippians addressed primarily to the church or to individual Christians? So it is primarily to the church, but the church is made up of individual Christians.

Isn't it? The quality of our corporate church life is dependent upon our individual commitment to live for Christ Jesus, isn't it? See, and we've said this before, haven't we?

I remember preaching this a year ago, but the most important way you can serve the life of our church together is by making sure you're growing as a Christian individually, isn't it?

But then it's a sort of feedback loop, isn't it? Because I can't grow as an individual Christian without engaging with others, can I? I can't self-sacrificially love for the eternal well-being of others if I'm not around others.

Yeah. No, I need the church in order to live the Christian life. Yeah. Yeah. That's a great question. Thanks, Lola. Yeah.

[35 : 29] Yeah. When you sit down in the morning and you read your Bible and pray, you can think, I'm serving the church right now.

Yeah. Because I'm not, I mean, you can be praying for the church, but you're praying that the Lord will help you with this kind of stuff. And you're serving on me.

Yeah. Yeah. Any other questions or comments? Come on, Lola.

It's all right. It's fine. Okay. Right.

Right. Yeah. So to be, yeah, but I guess, so you would have said that the central instruction in Philippians was about being a citizen of heaven and not a citizen in this world.

[36 : 39] Yes. But the expression of that citizenship of heaven is my membership of a local church where I'm loving others for their eternal well-being at cost to myself. Yeah.

Yeah. So, yeah, go on. And it's still the mindset. Mm. I just want to say thank you very much. Right.

So I don't know if they think it's a wonderful attitude and the mindset that we need to have. Because if we're modelling, I can use the word wrongly, but normally, if we're modelling quite so far, we're taught to be like that part.

Yeah. Mm. It is having that mindset of community. Yeah. It's having a mindset of saying, you know, self-sacrificial living, which is hard.

Yeah. Yeah. And so, and it is being a citizen of heaven because that's what Jesus has done to us and that's what our father is.

[37 : 48] Yeah. So it's, you know, from the news all around that, but I found what you said was very helpful. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. That's really helpful.

I, I, someone illustrated like this. I, I'll screw up the illustration. So, but basically saying, if you, if your job is, is to, is to give out, I think, I'm trying to think what he's, what was his illustration?

It was like, it was Maltesers or something he was giving out. It was a wedding talk, isn't it? So he gave out, if your job is to give out Maltesers, you've got like a little store of five bags of Maltesers and your job is to give out Maltesers to other, to other people.

This is your, this is your service, right? You're always looking back in your bowl and thinking, well, I actually got very many here to give out, right? But, and that, that feels like great sacrificial service, doesn't it?

But actually what's the dynamic in Philippians is that behind you giving out these bags of Maltesers is the Lord Jesus Christ pouring them in to you. And so that actually, of course, that the fuel for our sacrificial service for others is the fact that at the center of our Christian lives is the fact that the Lord Jesus at great cost to himself has served us in the way that we really need.

[38 : 59] So he is pouring into us and we're just, we're just pouring out. Yeah. Yeah. So we will never be empty. Yeah. Yeah.

Great. Shall I pray? And then we'll sing as we please. Heavenly Father, we can't look at a book like this without rejoicing in all that Christ has done for us.

We want to say with the Apostle Paul that whatever was to our gain, we now consider loss for the sake of knowing Christ Jesus. We'd willingly lose all things, consider everything as garbage that we may gain Christ, being found in him, not with the righteousness of our own that comes through the good things that we do, but that which comes through faith in Jesus Christ alone.

Oh Lord, we want to be like this, not only individually, but also as a church. We want to know Christ, the power of his resurrection, participation even in his sufferings, so that we may attain to the resurrection from the dead and on that day, be full of joy.

Lord, we know that we've not already obtained this, so we press on, forgetting what is behind, straining to what is ahead. Press on to the prize, the goal for which Christ has called us heavenwards.

[40 : 30] Lord, help us, we ask. Be merciful to us, we pray. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen.