

Thanks, But Look Out!

Philippians^Colossians Overviews

(preached Pine Grove 5/29/16; Sunday PM)

Introduction

Henry Ironside was a well known preacher in the early to mid 1900s.

One day, he was sitting down at a restaurant, and another gentleman asked if he could join him...

Ironside agreed and the man sat down.

Ironside then proceeded to bow his head and thank God for his meal quietly.

When Ironside finished and raised his man, the man asked...

"Do you have a headache?" Ironside replied, "No, I don't."

The other man then asked, "Well, is there something wrong with your food?" Ironside replied, "No, I was simply thanking God as I always do before I eat."

The man said, "Oh, you're one of those, are you? Well, I want you to know I never give thanks. I earn my money

by the sweat of my brow and I don't have to give thanks to anybody when I eat. I just start right in!"

Ironside said, "Yes, you're just like my dog. That's what he does too!"

In many ways, we live in a thankless culture surrounded by people who celebrate thanksgiving but don't believe in God to whom all thanks should go...

Many in the church are also just as thankless, feeling that they deserve all they have since they have worked for it by the sweat of their brow...

However, the apostle Paul was not one those kind of people.

Paul was filled with thanksgiving in his life, and that thanksgiving is often best seen in the book of Philippians...

Though Paul also teaches in the book, which we will see, he also spent a great deal of time being thankful in this letter as well...

So, let's continue our overview of each book of the Bible tonight by focusing our attention on the book of Philippians...

To understand the book of Philippians, we first must set the stage for it..

As always, let's take a look at our map to find out about the city of Philippi...

Philippi was city in the region of the world known as Macedonia in the first century AD.

This would be modern day Greece; you see Greece in the news today.

It has been in financial trouble for some time now, and it is also the country where many Syrians are coming to trying to escape ISIS.

In Paul's day, this region would have been known as Macedonia, and Paul would have come by boat here as well and landed at the port city of Neapolis...

Let me show you a close up map of this area...

Neapolis would have been here and Philippi would have been just north of it...

Philippi was an old city but a popular one because it was surrounding by numerous fresh water springs..

And there were also gold mines around the city...

The Romans controlled it, but a few Jews lived in Philippi when Paul arrived there...

Now, Paul's custom was to go the synagogue to preach the gospel and then try to establish a church from any who were converted from Judaism..

However, in Philippi, there were not enough Jewish for a synagogue, Paul went to a group of women there who were prayer warriors..

The group was led by a woman named Lydia, who sold purple cloth...

Paul preached the gospel to her, and she was saved.

However, as the gospel began to spread to others, a slave girl came to oppose Paul..

She was demon-possessed, and she made a living as a fortune teller...

Paul cast the demon out of her to avoid further arguments, but her bosses did not like that...

No demon meant no business and no money for them, so they threw Paul and his friend Silas in jail...

However, God sent an earthquake to break down the bars of the jail, and Paul walked out...

The leaders of Philippi begged him to leave them alone, and Paul did.

But he left some of his men behind to establish the church there at Philippi...

Here are some pictures today of what is left of the ancient city of Philippi...

And then here are some picture of the modern port city of Kavalla, which was the port city of Neapolis in Paul's day.

Though Paul left after a fairly short stay in Philippi, the Lord grew the church there...

And what is incredible about the church there is that she never forgot what Paul had done for her in coming to that city...

And the Philippian Christians, even though they were very poor, sent money to Paul again and again to support him in his travels...

So much so that when Paul came back on his third missionary journey trying to find financial help for the church at Jersuallem,.....

They tried to give but Paul refused their offering, saying that they had done enough...

However, the Philippians continued to give to support Paul and his work of spreading the gospel..

And when Paul was sent to prison in Rome, the Philippians reached out to him again to see if he any needs but also to send a collection as well...

So, they sent a man named Epaphroditus, who came to Paul under house arrest in Rome with a collection for him and some questions for him as well...

Paul received their gift, and before he sent Epaphroditus back to Philippi, he sat down and wrote a thank you letter to the church there as well as answered the questions they sent to him...

This letter which was written in or around 60 became known as the book of Philippians, which not only blessed the Philippian church but blesses us tonight...

Now, the tone of the letter is really a tone of thankfulness but also warning for the Philippians...

They had supported Paul and they had used their money for gospel purposes, so Paul was very thankful...

However, false teachers were creeping into the church there as well, so Paul is also going to use this opportunity to warn them as well..

In the middle of that thank you letter and warning letter, Paul is going to sprinkle in some good instruction from the Lord as well..

So, let's take a brief look at the overview of Philippians to get us going tonight...

I have divided it into 4 sections for us to consider tonight..

We will see...

- I. Paul's Circumstances (1:1-26)
- II. Paul's Instruction (1:27-2:30)
- III. Paul's Warning (3:1-4:1)
- IV. Paul's Thanksgiving (4:2-23)

Let's begin in chapter 1 with....

I. Paul's Circumstances (1:1-26)

Like most letters that Paul wrote, he begins this letter with a note of thanksgiving and a prayer for the church at Philippi...

The note of verses 7-10

7 [d]For it is only right for me to feel this way about you all, because I have you in my heart, since both in my [e]imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers of grace with me. 8 For God is my witness, how I long for you all with the [f]affection of Christ Jesus. 9 And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, 10 so that you may [g]approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless [h]until the day of Christ; 11 having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

Though Paul had probably only been with the church at Philippi a short while, his love for them was deep.

They had been his gospel partners by being a financial help to Paul wherever he went with the gospel..

Therefore according to verse 8, Paul had a deep affection for them..

So, he offers a prayer for them, and it would be my prayer for Pine Grove...

First, that your love abound..

Then, that your knowledge grows...

And finally, that your discernment increases..

Discernment is simply the ability to choose between what is pleasing to God and what isn't..

As Paul puts it, biblical discernment allows to know what is excellent in the sight of God...

And if may mont my soapbox for a minute, the church lacks discernment so much these days...

Take any believer into a Christian book store and few can identify which books are biblical and which books aren't...

And the reason for no discernment is lack of the knowledge of God and His word...

And it just isn't confined to which books to buy...

Christians can't even tell you what advice is biblical and what advice isn't...

I see Christians liking things on Facebook and endorsing people on social media as good preachers, and some of them are clearly false teachers...

I pray for the church around the world and for this church to grow in discernment..

And that was Paul's prayer for the Philippians...

Then in verses 12-26, Paul simply lays out his circumstances for the Philippians..

Paul has found trouble at every turn in his ministry, but when he writes about it to tell the Philippians of what was going on in his life...

He isn't try to make them feel sorry for him...

Instead he tells them that his troubles serve a greater purpose...

Look at verse 12...

12 Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel, 13 so that my [i]imprisonment in the

cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole [j]praetorian guard and to everyone else,

Whats the 5 second lesson for us?

When you see how your troubles can spread the gospel, it causes you to get your eyes off your circumstances and onto your purpose in the world, which is to bring God glory in all things...

Paul didn't care what was happening to him, he was only pleased that the message of salvation was going forward through his personal struggles...

This is a sum of Paul's outlook on life....

Send me to prison if that means I can share the gospel with the guards and the other prisoners...

Yet, that is how Paul always keep his circumstances in focus...

And when view life like that, you can find joy in every situation under the sun...

So we leave Paul's circumstances and move to Paul's instruction...

II. Paul's Instruction (1:27-2:30)

Since Paul is thankful for the Philippians and because he has a deep love for them, he has to give them instruction...

And let me make a side note here...

The culture in which we live says, "I don't want to correct people because they may take it the wrong way. So I will keep my mouth shut."

And the reason people feel that way is because so many people in our day are unteachable...

They perceive instruction as an insult to their intelligence...

My encouragement to you is this....

Be a teacher of the things of God to others..

That doesn't mean you have to be a Sunday school teacher or preacher, but find opportunities to share loving instruction with people around you...

If they reject it, that's their problem; but have a heart so filled with love (not pride) that can't help but teach others about the Lord...

But on top of being a teacher, be teachable...

The word is already full of "know-it-alls," so please don't add to the total...

Be willing to receive biblical instruction and not only receive it, be willing to adopt it if necessary..

Paul taught the Philippians because he loved them, and the Philippians listened because they loved Paul...

His teaching in this second section of the letter is real simple...

In verses 27-30 of chapter 1, he tells the church at Philippi to live boldly in their culture..

Stand on the truth and stand firm...

Then in chapter 2, verses 1-11, he tells the Philippians to live humbly...

Verses 3-4 of chapter 2 really summarize the instruction well...

3 Do nothing [c]from [d]selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; 4 do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

And then to finish of this instruction in humility, Paul remind the church that the greatest example of humility was the Lord Jesus Christ....

Who left the comfort and worship of heaven to come to earth to be mistreated and insulted....

To simply secure the salvation of those who hated him...

Likewise, we must put on humility if we are to be like our Lord...

The final instruction in this section of Philippians is found in verses 12-17....

Live boldly, live humbly, and finally live blamelessly...

Paul's final instruction is best seen in verses 14-15 of chapter 2....

14 Do all things without grumbling or disputing; 15 so that you will [i]prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you [j]appear as [k]lights in the world,

If the church and Christians needed any counsel today, it is found in verse 14....

Because grumbling and complaining are not only everywhere in the world, they are everywhere in the church...

And according to this verse, a great hindrance to you being a light in the world is an attitude of grumbling and complaining...

And why is that?

Because every grumble and every complaint tells the world that you are not completely satisfied as a Christian...

I want you to see how much you work against the gospel when you complain...

The gospel message says this...

Your sin has separated you from God, but Christ has come to forgive that sin on the cross, secure your salvation and give you abundant life on this earth...

And that is what you tell people...

Come Christ. He will give you joy like nothing else in this world...

And then you tell them that and you start complaining about all your problems...

Do you see the mixed message?

You say Jesus has given you peace, but all you do is grumble and complain...

If you want to be a true light in the middle of a dark world, repent of your grumbling and complaining and find joy in all situations in life....

As chapter 2 ends, we move from Paul's instruction to Paul's warning...

III. Paul's Warning (3:1-4:1)

In chapter 3, Paul sets out to warn the Philippians of the false teacher that were among them...

Let me read verses 2-3....

2 Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the [a]false circumcision; 3 for we are the true [b]circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh,

Most likely, Epaphroditus brought word to Paul of some trouble in the church...

And the trouble in the church were men who were called Judaizers...

Paul called them dogs in verse 2, but Judaizers were false teachers in the early church that told Christians that weren't saved unless they lived under Jewish law.

We have met these false teachers before...

They were teaching their false truths to the Galatian churches..

And now they had come to Philippi stressing the need for works to go along with faith in Christ...

And so Paul writes in verse 3 that true Christians are those who put no confidence in the flesh....

We don't rely on words like circumcision or keeping Jewish festivals or the Sabbath to save us, we trust in Christ alone and his perfect work to save us...

And in one of greatest descriptions of what happens at salvation, Paul writes this in Phil 3:7-9....

7 But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 8 More than that, I count all things to be loss [c]in view of the surpassing value of [d]knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, [e]for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, 9 and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith

Paul's point is this....

If anyone could have been saved by good works and keeping the law, it was me...

I did it all as a good Jewish boy, but when I came to know Christ, all those good works and deeds were trashed...

I don't care to hold on to one good work of my flesh...

I hold on to Christ...

On top of that, I didn't gain one ounce of righteousness before God with all my good works...

All the righteousness that I have and need did not come by keeping the rules and doing good works, it came from faith alone in Jesus Christ..

And the point of this section is this...

Stay away from false teachers who are trying to tie the need for good works on your back...

They are dogs who must be avoided because their teaching is not the true gospel..

It is a false gospel that insults Jesus Christ because it teaches that what he accomplished in his life, death, and resurrection wasn't enough...

And if you didn't already know, this view of Christianity is still alive and well today..

There are still tons of false teachers who call themselves Christians who teach that the gospel is Jesus plus your good works....

They aren't called Judaizers today...

We know them as Mormons and Jehovah's Witnesses and Roman Catholics...

And there are even churches like us that put good works on the same level as the finished work of Christ...

We must constantly guard ourselves from people who stress works over faith because they are always trying to weasel their way into churches...

Now, let me give you a glance to this before you leave here tonight and say to yourself....

“Preacher said we don't need any good works. Let's go out and find some sin tonight.”

You don't need good works to be saved, but good works always follow those who are truly saved...

My faith was established before I ever did a good work, but I know my faith is real by the good works that followed my faith and repentance....

Now let's leave Paul's warning of chapter 3 and finish with Paul's thanksgiving in chapter 4..

IV. Paul's Thanksgiving (4:2-23)

In the final chapter of this letter, Paul resumes a few final instructions, a word of thanks and then a closing...

It is interesting to note verses 2-3. Paul deals with a dispute between two ladies in the Philippian church..

Euodia and Syntyche were their names, but we have no idea what their claims were...

We just know that Paul told them live in harmony in the Lord.

Paul then throws in a few more God-given commands to believers in verses 4-9....

Let me read this...

***4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!
5 Let your gentle spirit be known to all men. The Lord is [c]near. 6 Be anxious for nothing, 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 [d]comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

8 Finally, brethren, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is [e]lovely, whatever is of good repute, if there is any excellence and if anything worthy of praise, [f]dwell on these things. 9 The things you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

There are two simple instructions here for us to see...

Rejoice over what God provides and resist being anxious over what you have left or don't have at all.

And then as we saw a few weeks ago, believers are to fill their minds with things that are pure, lovely, true and praiseworthy.

The Philippians were not a wealthy group of people.

They lived paycheck to paycheck, and it was always tempting to not trust the Lord's provision...

So, first Paul says, don't be anxious about tomorrow but be thankful for what the Lord has provided today...

And then he adds the command to think on heavenly things...

And these two instructions go hand in hand...

It is easy to get anxious about needs in your life, but the way to control that anxiety is not to dwell on it but to fill your mind with the truth of who God is...

Then on the heels of that, Paul goes in verses 10-20 to talk about his own situation...

Paul had times in his life when he was tempted to be anxious about the Lord's provision...

He had times in his life when he had plenty...

But what Paul had learned through it all is found in verses 11-13.....

11 Not that I speak [g]from want, for I have learned to be [h]content in whatever circumstances I am. 12 I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. 13 I can do all things [i]through Him who strengthens me.

Most Christians take verse 13 as a promise to be do anything if they do it in Christ....

You often see athletes using this when they score a TD or hit a home run....

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me..

But Paul isn't talking about accomplishing great feats through Christ....

He is talking about how to be content in every situation in life...

He finds his content through Christ who gives him strength to endure, not to accomplish....

Paul then ends the letter with a note of thanks for all the church at Philippi had done for him...

He even thanks them for the gift that Epaphroditus had brought him before he ends with a nice closing...

Conclusion

So, what can we take from Paul's letter to the Philippians...

I would offer these 3 application to you tonight...

#1 - Be grateful to those who bless you.

#2 - Be generous to those who spread the gospel.

#3 - Be prayerful and protective of those believers who are closest you.

#4 - Be content with whatever provision the Lord has given you.

Paul loves the Philippians and he told them that over and over.

Paul appreciated the Philippians generosity to share with him whatever they could to support his ministry.

Paul cared for the Philippians so much that he taught them and warned them of going astray...

Paul trusted the Lord so much that he understood that his contentment was not based on what he had but who he knew..

May we be people like that in 2016...

May we love and protect those in the church and give generously to those who are working to spread the gospel in the world....

Let us pray.