

Place: Lurgan Baptist 1:3:2016

A JOURNEY THROUGH THE BIBLE

Reading: Philippians 1:1-11

51. THE BOOK OF PHILIPPIANS

They were momentous days when Columbus set sail from Spain, or when Vasco Da Gama discovered the sea route to the West Indies, or when the Mayflower came to America in 1620 yet those were of little significance compared to the gospel coming to Europe for the very first time. Tell me, are you not glad that the gospel came to Europe in and around A.D. 52 ? You see, it was Spirit guided ministers with a vision of the glorious Christ and perishing humanity who invaded Europe with the gospel. You see at times the Holy Spirit says No: Paul knocked on a number of doors Asia and Bithynia but all stayed shut. It was a series of dead ends. What strange and startling words are these “*forbidden of the Holy Ghost*,” (16:6) “*But the Spirit suffered them not*.” (16:7) Then there are times the Holy Spirit says Go: Do you recall that the vision of the Man of Macedonia is given to Paul ? “*Come over into Macedonia and help us*.” (Acts 16:9) Macedonia was across the Aegean Sea on the mainland of Greece.

How did Paul respond ? “*Immediately we endeavoured to go into Macedonia assuredly gathering that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel unto them*.” (Acts 16:10) Thus on Paul’s second missionary journey the gospel

comes to Philippi and a church is established. Now if you look at (1:1) you’ll notice that we are told a lot about this letter and the church at Philippi. Notice,

1. WHOM IT IS FROM ?

“*Paul and Timotheus the servants of Jesus Christ*,” (1:1) Now that sets the whole tone of this letter for this is essentially a letter from a friend to his friends. Paul is writing to the church at Philippi primarily to thank them. You this letter springs from two things he received from Philippi. The first was Financial Support: For on hearing of his imprisonment in Rome they sent a love offering to him by the hands of Epaphroditus, so Philippians was written as a “*thank you*,” letter for financial support. (4:10-20) But there was Physical Support: and perhaps the second was even more welcome than the first. You see, Epaphroditus was not only the bearer of this gift of money, *he was in a real way the gift himself*. For Epaphroditus was to stay in Rome and be Paul’s personal servant and attendant. Paul says he was “*your messenger and he that ministered to my wants*.”

That’s an interesting word for it refers to Temple or Priestly service. (Ex 29:30 Num 16:9 Heb 10:11) As if the things this man did for Paul were of a spiritual nature because done also for the Lord. (Matt 25:40) Epaphroditus was a blessing to Paul. He stood with Paul in his prison experiences and ministered to his needs. Some churches are great in their financial support but they are lacking in their physical support. When this church calls a new pastor are you going to stand by him ? Will

you be a burden or a blessing to him ? Are you devoted to helping the servants of God ? Now it was while Epaphroditus was ministering to Paul that he took ill and nearly died. But God spared his life. So Paul decided that the best thing to do was to send Epaphroditus back to Philippi with this letter to the Philippians to thank the church for their gift. 1.

2. WHO IT IS TO ?

Can you see Where they are ? “ *At Philippi.* ” (1:1) In Paul’s day Philippi was a large and prosperous city due to its location on a major east-west trade route called the Ignatian Way. It received its name in 356 B.C. from Philip of Macedonia the father of Alexander the Great. And Philippi was a Roman colony. (Acts 16:12) That meant that it was “ *a Rome away from Rome.* ” You see, the Emperor organized “ *colonies,* ” by ordering Roman citizens especially retired military people to live in selected areas so there would be strong pro-Roman cities in these strategic areas. Though living on foreign soil, the citizens were expected to be loyal to Rome, to obey the laws of Rome, and to give honour to the Roman Emperor. In return they were given certain political privileges, one of which was exemption from taxes. So Philippi was a little piece of Rome in the midst of Greek culture. My all the vice and sin that was found in Rome, was here in Philippi.

Can you see What they are ? *They are saints, bishops and deacons.* Is this not the distinctive nature of a local church ? Is this not what constitutes a local church ?

It is comprised of saints, people just like you and me. The word saints (*hagios*) means “ *holy or separated ones.* ” They have not been canonized by Rome, but they are cleansed by blood. These are the *Philippian Saints*. Do you see the Philippian *Shepherds* ? “ *With the bishops.* ” (1:1) The word translated “ *bishops,* ” here is (*episkopos*) is translated “ *overseers,* ” in (Acts 20:28) where it has direct reference to shepherding. You see, in apostolic times each local church in healthy condition had a number of bishops, that is elders, responsible for the spiritual welfare of the group as is evident in the plural “ *bishops,* ” in (1:1)

Do you see the Philippian *Servants* ? “ *And deacons,* ” the word translated “ *deacons,* ” (*diakonos*) occurs 22 times in Paul’s epistles and refers to a servant especially as seen in action. Now do you see what a properly constituted church consists of ? “ *Saints, bishops and deacons.* ” Saints worship as believer-priests, offering spiritual sacrifices. Bishops rule and teach. Deacons serve, and all have their place in the local church for “ *God is not the author of confusion, but of peace as in all the churches of the saints.* ” (1 Cor 14:33)

3. WHAT IT IS ABOUT ?

Well, it’s a letter written by Paul in prison in Rome to the church at Philippi (Acts 28:30) to thank them for their liberality and to urge some in the church to lay aside animosity and live in peace one with another. You know, Philippians is Paul’s sweetheart church. This church was quite free from the many errors that brought about most of

Paul's other letters. J. B. Hewitt says, "*the epistle to the Philippians is the sweetest work Paul ever wrote and has been aptly called 'the 23rd Psalm of the New Testament.'*"

There are three keywords in this epistle. The first word is "*Christ*," found in various forms some seventy times.

Paul teaches us much about Christ in this wonderful letter.

Christ is our Life (Ch 1) Christ is our Example (Ch 2)

Christ is our Goal (Ch 3) Christ is our Strength (Ch 4)

Now another word that Paul uses often is the word "*joy*," found eighteen times, and the third is the word "*mind*," found twelve times. Warren Wiersbe says we "*can summarize the theme of the book as 'the Christ-like mind that brings joy.'*" In each chapter Paul describes the kind of mind Christians must have if they are to enjoy Christ's peace and joy. Certainly our thoughts have a great influence on our lives and wrong thinking leads to wrong living.

In (Ch 1) Paul talks about the Steadfast Mind: in (Ch 2) he talks about the Selfless Mind: in (Ch 3) he speaks of the Spiritual Mind and in (Ch 4) he concludes with the Serene Mind. "*The Christ-like Mind that brings joy.*" During the Second World War Paul Schneider was a pastor of a church in Berlin. He was imprisoned by Hitler because of his preaching against Fascism. As a result he never saw his wife and two year old boy again. Despite beatings and torture and finally execution the letters that he wrote from the Dachau concentration camp to his wife were full of joy. Again and again he wrote, "*I'm so happy*," and "*I'm so grateful to the Lord.*" He lived for Christ and therefore had nothing to lose. Here was Paul also deprived of his freedom. He was under

house arrest and chained to a Roman soldier 24/7. Times were tough. He was a prisoner facing possible execution. His back was to the wall. And yet when he picked up his quill and wrote on the parchment, he penned a letter that resonates with joy. How was Paul able to do this ? Because he had the Christ-like mind. Notice then that Paul speaks here of,

(1) THE STEADFAST MIND CH 1

I mean his circumstances were anything but joyful. He was arrested illegally, taken to Rome and was now awaiting trial. There was division among the believers there and some were trying to matters worse for the apostle. How was Paul to have joy in the midst of such circumstances ? He had the "*steadfast mind*," for he was unwavering in his concern for Christ and the gospel. Do you know how many times he mentions the gospel ? Five times. (1:5, 7, 12,17, 27) Do you know how many times he mentions Christ ? Seventeen times. Paul looked upon his circumstances as sent by God (1:13) for the purpose of exalting Christ. (1:20) My if Paul had been doubleminded he would have complained because life was so hard, but then he had the steadfast mind. You see, this mindset is concerned with,

(a) THE FELLOWSHIP OF THE GOSPEL: 1-1-11

Do you see it in (1:5) ? Now what does that word "*fellowship*," mean ? Is fellowship going with some Christians to the rugby match, the football match or the cricket match ? Is it fellowship when we stay behind and

have tea in the hall ? The word “ *fellowship*, ” is the Greek word *koinonia*. It spoke of a covenant between two people. In ancient times it spoke of a marriage contract. The idea is that of a working partnership. It is an agreement between two parties who are committed to a common task. Paul is happy because these believers in Philippi share in the fellowship of the gospel. You see, they were in *Paul Thoughts*: (1:3) He was thankful for them. You can feel the depth of his affection as he says, “ *I thank my God upon every remembrance of you.* ” (1:3) I have wondered what people think when they think about you and me ? Does our lives drive them to the Lord in gratitude ? Moreover, when was the last time that you gave thanks to God for those who have been a blessing to you ? They were in *Paul's Prayers*: Paul always took time to pray for people. And this prayer of Paul for these believers is a prayer for growth. (1:9-11) He's praying that they might be full, faithful and fruitful. Is this not what fellowship is all about ? They were in *Paul's Efforts*: “ *For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now,* ” (1:5) Remember fellowship is an agreement between two parties who are committed to a common task.

Do you know what the common task is ? “ *The defense and confirmation of the gospel.* ” (1:7) For approximately ten years these believers had been Paul's partners in the gospel. They had left him know, “ *we are with you Paul, all the way you can count on us.* ” A pastor in a small town went down to the train station every day and watched the train come roaring through. One of his deacons asked him why he followed the same ritual every day. Do you know

what he said ? “ *That's the only thing in this town I don't have to push.* ” My Paul didn't have to push the Philippians. They had initiative. They were committed partners to the common task of proclaiming the gospel. My can the servants of God count on you ? To stand by them, to pray for them, to encourage them in the things of God ? Do you know what it is to “ *strengthen their hand in God* ? ” (1 Sam 23:16)

(b) ***THE FURTHERANCE OF THE GOSPEL:*** ***1:12-26***

Do you see it in (1:12) ? Do you see how Paul describes the sufferings he has been through ? He calls those trying events “ *the things which have happened unto me.* ” Well, what happened to Paul ? Well, he was falsely accused (Acts 21:28) then he was illegally arrested (Acts 24:27) then he was nearly shipwrecked (Acts 27:44) and now he is chained daily to a Roman soldier (Acts 28:16) Were there soldiers chained to his wrists ? They were not guards but souls for whom Christ had died. Were his enemies causing trouble by their selfish preaching ? So what ? They are preaching Christ. Were his friends worried about him and praying for him ? Fine, this will exalt Christ. Was there a possibility that he might die ? Then Christ will be magnified by life or death. What a man.

My this is the steadfast mind, putting Christ and the gospel ahead of everything else. You see, the steadfast minded Christian does not allow circumstances to overcome him, rather he turns those circumstances into opportunities to magnify Christ and win the lost. Most

folk have heard have of Charles Spurgeon, the famous British preacher but few know of his wife Susannah. Early in their married life Mrs. Spurgeon became an invalid. What could she do ? She could encourage her husband and pray for the work. But God gave her a burden to share her husband's books with pastors who were unable to purchase them. This burden soon led to the founding of the “ *Book Fund*,” and this “ *Book Fund*,” provided thousands of pastors with tools for their work. All this was supervised by Mrs. Spurgeon from her home. Is this what you do ? Do you allow your adversity to become an advantage ? Your difficulty to become a door ? Your negative to become a positive ?

(c) *THE FAITH OF THE GOSPEL: 1:27-30*

Do you see it in (1:27) ? My we are sons in the family, enjoying the fellowship of the gospel, we are servants in the vineyard sharing in the furtherance of the gospel, but we are soldiers in the battlefield defending the faith of the gospel. Now what is “ *the faith of the gospel* ?” It's the Christian faith as revealed by God and recorded in the Scripture. Jude calls it “ *the faith which was once delivered unto the saints*,” (Jude 3) My Satan is out to defeat the church and Christians need to have the steadfast mind to face him and “ *fight the good fight of faith*.” How can we do this ? By walking consistently: by working cooperatively, and by warring courageously. My are you prepared to stand up and be counted ? Do you have the steadfast mind ?

(2) THE SELFLESS MIND CH 2

For in (Ch 2) Paul deals with the problem of disunity that threatened the church at Philippi. There was a squabble going on between two sisters in the church, a squabble that was souring the whole life of the fellowship. Paul does not actually come out and name them until (Ch 4) but he evidently has them in mind here. Strife and vainglory. Perhaps the church was already taking sides on the issue. So Paul takes as his theme “ *the mind of Christ*,” and shows us that show a mind spells death to squabbling, party spirit and conceit. Stride and vainglory. Those two words were threatening to spoil the whole assembly at Philippi. D.L. Moody used to say “ *Strife is knocking someone else down, vainglory is setting oneself up*.” Circumstances may cause us to lose our joy (Ch 1) but people can also bring trials that rob us of joy. How often do you lose your peace or joy because of what folk say or do ? “ *I love mankind*,” said a famous actor “ *its people I can't stand*.” So the best remedy for those trials is the *Selfless Mind*, the humble mind that seeks only to honour the Lord. So Paul brings us here to,

(a) *THE PERFECT EXAMPLE: 2:1-11*

Do you what he says in (2:5) “ *Your attitude should be the same as that of Jesus Christ*.” We have now before us one of the most magnificent Christological statements in the New Testament. And Paul is using it to teach the great lesson of humility which underlines all unity. Christ was humble we should be humble. Andrew Murray said “ *the humble person is not one who thinks meanly of himself. He simply does not think of himself at all*.” He is like the Lord Jesus who did not consider His equality with God as

something to be held onto but He humbled Himself. You see, Christ is an example par excellence of a totally unselfish outlook. What did Christ do ? He came from heaven to earth in the greatest stoop of all time. What's the usual reaction of that little child when you go to take their Christmas toys from them ? They usually cry, " *Mine, mine.*" But the Lord Jesus did not say " *Mine,*" rather He said " *others.*" (2:4) Lucifer said " *I will,*" (Is 14:12) But Christ said " *Thy will.*" That was the humility of Jesus Christ. That says Paul is the mind of Christ. I wonder in our disagreements do we reflect the mind of Christ ? Or do you hold onto your so called " *rights,*" instead of putting others first ? Dr. Harry Ironside used to tell a story that took place when he was only nine or ten years of age. His mother took him to a church business meeting and the meeting erupted into a quarrel between two men.

One of them stood and pounded the desk saying, " *All I want is my rights.*" Sitting nearby was an old Scotsman somewhat hard of hearing who cupped his hand behind his ear and said, " *Aye, brother what's that you say ? What do you want ?*" The angry gentlemen replied, " *I just said that I want my rights that's all.*" The old Scot snorted, " *Your rights, brother. Well, I say if you had your rights you'd be in hell. The Lord Jesus did not come to get His rights, He came to get His wrongs. And He got'em.*" The fellow who had been bickering stood transfixed for a moment, then abruptly sat down and sat down and said, " *You're right settle it anyway you like.*" My the conflict was settled when the combatants were challenged to take on the mind of Christ, the attitude of One who

never demanded His rights but who humbled Himself. Here is the Christians Model, the believers example, the saints pattern. Let me ask you are you in Christ ? Well, are you like Christ ? Do you have His attitude ? Do you have the mind of Christ ? You see, this selfless mind is seen in (a) but also in,

(b) THE PERSONAL EXAMPLES: 2:12-30

Mark Twain once quipped " *Few things are harder to put up with than the annoyance of a good example.*" But don't good examples help us work harder and reach higher. Here we see the selfless mind in the example of Paul (2:12-18) the example of Timothy (2:19-24) and the example of Epaphroditus (2:25-30) **In Paul we see that the selfless mind lives for eternity not for time.** In Old Testament times when a person brought an animal sacrifice to God, he also brought wine to be poured out as an accompanying libation. Paul saw his converts as consecrated believers who had presented themselves to God as a living sacrifice. As a holocaust to God they were being consumed on the altar of sacrifice and service. (Num 15:4-12) And upon that burnt offering Paul was pouring out as a libation, the wine of his own life's blood, which he anticipated would flow in martyrdom. What a man, a man who does not live for time but eternity.

Are you such a person ? Is your eye on the rapture (the day of Christ) and the rewards at the bema judgment ? **In Timothy we see that the selfless mind lives for God not for man.** Do you see what Paul says about Timothy ? (2:210-21) Do you see that word " *likeminded* ?"

(2:20) its made up of two words “ *equal*,” and “ *soul*.” Paul was saying “ *I have no man with a soul equal to Timothy’s.*” There were many believers in Rome but Timothy was in a class all by himself. Living for God not man. **Then in Epaphroditus we see the selfless mind lives for others not self.** David Jeremiah says of him, “ *He was a messenger boy for the gospel a servant of the Lord. Not task was to menial for him to do, no assignment was too little for him to accept, no risk was too great for him to take. He would have been as comfortable with a towel and basin.*” Now let me ask, do you have the mind of Christ ? The selfless mind, the mind that does not think of oneself at all ?

(3) THE SPIRITUAL MIND CH 3

Now don’t miss Paul’s argument here. In (Ch 1) he tells us that *circumstances* can rob us of joy that’s why we need the *Steadfast Mind*. In (Ch 2) he tells us that *people* can rob us of joy that’s why we need the *Selfless Mind*. Now he is telling us that *things* can rob us of joy, that’s why we need the *Spiritual mind*. (3:19) Did you ever notice how many times the word “ *things*,” appears in this chapter ? Isn’t it so easy to get wrapped in “ *things*,” ? That’s why we need the spiritual mind that thinks God’s thoughts and is directed toward God’s goals. Now in this chapter Paul speaks about those things which he valued before conversion and then he speaks about the person he values since conversion. So he talks about,

(a) THE CHRISTIAN’S PAST: 3:1-11

Paul was religious before he was saved but his religion could not save him. He had to lose his religion in order to find eternal life. Did you notice that he begins this chapter with a warning ? You see, here again we are face to face with the Jewish Judaizers, the wolves who were entering the flock and seeking to distort the gospel. Adding circumcision, to the plan of salvation. You see, when Paul was writing about these Judaizers he was not speaking from some ivory tower. He personally knew the futility of trying to obtain salvation by means of good works. He says in effect, “ *I know what I am speaking about, I’m not looking at this from the outside, indeed I’m going to prove to you that I had more reason to have confidence in the flesh than they had.*” So Paul speaks here about his Proud Religion: (3:5) his Personal Record: (3:6) his Precise Reckoning: (3:7) and his Perfect Righteousness: this is not the works righteousness that we read of in (3:6) but the faith righteousness we read of in (3:9) My it’s one thing to be religious enough to get into the synagogue but it’s quite another thing to be righteous enough to get into heaven.

But when Saul of Tarsus trusted Christ, he lost his own self-righteousness and gained the righteousness of Christ. The technical word for this is “ *imputation*,”

(Rom 4:1-8) and it means to “ *to put to one’s account.*” What happened was this. Sin was transferred from Paul’s account, and righteousness was transferred to Paul’s account. Do you know what that did ? That made right in the sight of God. What about you ? Have you by faith received the Saviour ? Has His righteousness been put to your account ? (a)

(b) THE CHRISTIAN'S PRESENT: 3:12-16

The past has to do with our salvation, the present has to do with our sanctification. When He became a Christian, it was not the end for Paul, but the beginning. He had met the Lord Jesus on the Damascus Road, now he wants to know Him. Do you see what he says ? “ *That I might know Him*,” (3:10) Paul wants to go deeper with the Lord. I wonder have you this desire ? Do you recall that Moses was characterized by a desire to know God ? He says, “ *Now therefore I pray thee if I have found grace in Thy sight show me now Thy way, that I may know Thee.*” (Ex 33:13) David was marked by a desire to know God. He testifies to this in (Ps 42) when he says, “ *As the hart panteth after the water brooks so panteth my soul after thee, O God. My soul thirsteth for God for the living God.*” (Ps 42:1-2) Moses, David, Paul. Three names but one goal. A burning desire to know the Lord. Paul wants to know the *person of Christ*: (3:10) he wants to know the *power of Christ*: (3:10) and he wants to know the *passion of Christ*. (3:10)

Paul is pounding down the track striving for perfection. He is giving his best. He cries “ *This one thing I do.*” Do you know the problem with too many of us ? We live divided lives. We get ambitious for “ *things*,” we start minding “ *earthly things*.” (3:19) But not Paul. He says “ *I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.*” My prize day is coming for all of us. Are you looking forward to it ? On that day will you hear the Master's “ *well done ?*” (a) (b) But do you see here,

(c) THE CHRISTIAN'S FUTURE: 3:17-21

You see, nothing will keep our minds spiritual more than looking for the coming of Christ. “ *What a day that will be when my Jesus I shall see.*” The sad thing is this. Not all who sing it will share in it. For did you notice that Paul is weeping here ? Why ? Because he is heart-broken over the way some professing Christians are living, people who mind “ *earthly things*.” (3:19) Now whether these people were corrupt Judaizers or Greek teachers who taught that in Christianity all law gone and they could live as they please is of little significance. They posed as friends but practiced as foes. In sharp contrast to these *false brethren* Paul speaks of *faithful brethren* when he says “ *For our conversation is in heaven from whence also we look for the Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ*,” (3:20-21) What a blessed future the citizen of heaven has. “ *We shall be like Him.*” This “ *vile body*,” this body of humiliation will be changed to be like His glorious body.

From the time He emerged from the *Womb*, the Lord Jesus had a perfect body, free from any taint of sin, free from any disease or deformity. From the time He emerged from the *Tomb*, the Lord Jesus had a glorified body. It could appear or disappear, it could come and go untrammelled by space, matter or time. Do you recall the body of His Transfiguration splendour, the body of His Resurrection wonder, the body of His Ascension beauty, what glory. And my body is to be something, somehow like that. Amazing. No more aching brows, no more swollen limbs, no more bad backs, no more dim eyes.

“ His glorious body.” John says, *“ We know that when he shall appear we shall be like him.”* (1 Jn 3:2) I heard the story of a country yokel and his son went to the big city for the first time. They had never been off the farm before and were amazed at the things they saw. They were standing in the lobby of a downtown hotel when they saw this old lady with a walking aid stepping into the elevator. The door closed and in a few minutes the door opened again and out stepped this beautiful girl. The farmer turned to his son and said *“ Son wait right here, I’m going home to get your Mama and run her through that thing.”* My one of these days we are going to be changed. We will be given a real body, a redeemed body and a recognizable body. (1) (2) (3)

(4) THE SERENE MIND CH 4

I wonder do you lose your joy because of worry ? The Greek word for worry is a combination of two words (merimna) the first means *“ to divide,”* and the second means *“ mind.”* Worry is a divided mind. But here in this closing chapter Paul gives us a four-fold remedy for worry.

(a) THE PRESENCE OF GOD: 4:1-5

“ The Lord is at hand,” Or as the Old Quaker translation puts it, *“ the Lord is at your elbow.”* Two women in the church Euodias and Syntche were at loggerheads and Paul encouraged them to put things right. Will you remember this ? Worry often comes when we don’t make things right with people. (Matt 18:15-17)

(b) THE PEACE OF GOD: 4:6-9

“ Peace with God,” is the result of faith in Christ. (Rom 5:1) *“ The peace of God,”* (4:7) comes when the Christian practices right praying (4:6) right thinking (4:8) and right living. (4:9)

(c) THE POWER OF GOD: 4:10-13

Do you see (4:13) ? J.B. Phillips *“ I am ready for anything through the strength of the One who lives in me.”* In (Ch 2) we discover that the Lord works in us, here we discover that the Lord works through us.

(d) THE PROVISION OF GOD: 4:14-23

It’s as if Paul is saying *“ You have met my need and God is going to meet your need, you gave me out of your poverty but God will supply your needs out of His glorious riches, you have filled full another’s need, God will fill full your need.”* (2 Cor 9:8) Do you recall the theme of the book ? The Christ-like mind that brings joy. Joy is not happiness. Happiness depends on what happens, joy is independent of changing circumstances. Happiness comes to us from without, joy wells up from within. *“ Joy is the flag flying high in the castle of my heart, for the King is in residence there.”* My are you a rejoicing Christian ? Is your ministry a joyful ministry ? It is if you have (1) (2) (3) (4) The very mind of Christ. *“ May the mind of Christ my Saviour live in me from day to day, By his love and power controlling, all I do and all I say.”*

