



Looking Inwards (15 mins)
Caring For Each Other

Reflecting on your life at the moment, is there anything you would like to share with other members of your home group which you feel is appropriate (this is an opportunity to share, not something you have to do, however, 'It's the sharing that enables the caring!') for:

Thanksgiving?

Prayer?

Encouragement?

Support in any way?



Looking Outwards (15 mins)
Concern For Others

Is there anything concerning someone in your: family; circle of friends; neighbours or church, which you would like to share (please be sure not pass on anything that is confidential or which you think the person concerned would not wish to be shared) for:

Thanksgiving?

Prayer?

Encouragement?

Support in any way?

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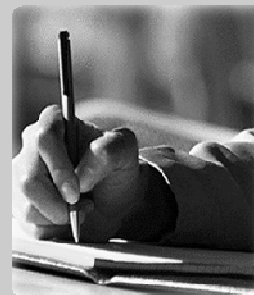


A Season Of Celebration
HG142 Strength In Suffering

Philippians 1:12-30

Home Group Study Notes

21 May 2017 - Revd Christine Williams



PLEASE COMPLETE AS MUCH AS YOU CAN ON THIS WORKSHEET IN PREPARATION BEFORE THE MEETING!

Don't forget to take your Bible to Home Group with you, along with any previous notes and other resources which might be helpful for your discussions.



Welcome (10 mins)
Ice Breaker

As we welcome back former church member, Revd Christine Williams to Emmanuel, what memories do you have of Christine's ministry amongst us? If you weren't a member of Emmanuel during that time, what have you picked up from others?



Looking Upwards (10 mins)
Worship

In your time of worship, you may want to sing Songs of Praise; listen to a Worship CD, as well as using Meditations; Bible Readings; Prayers ...



A Season Of Celebration
HG142 **Strength In Suffering**

Philippians 1:12-30

Home Group Sermon Notes

21 May 2017 - Revd Christine Williams

What are your ambitions in life? We all have them. We all want to have a good life. All over the world people want a home, a place of safety, freedom and comfort, health and wealth, friends and family. Some people look for status and a good job. What are your ambitions? What do you really, really want? Do you think that Paul who wrote this letter to the Philippians was radically different to the people of Billericay?

When Saul, who became Paul, set out on his journey to Damascus he had no idea where it would lead him. Meeting the risen Lord Jesus totally changed his life. He discovered in a shocking instant that he had been wrong all his life. The followers of Jesus were right. He *had* been resurrected. He *had* been the Messiah all along. All Paul had ever been taught; all he had ever known in his Jewish faith was turned upside down by that encounter with the risen Lord Jesus. He found that he needed to give up those false ambitions. His travelling around meant that he had to take risks. He was shipwrecked, beaten, and abandoned by his friends. He lived a very unsafe life. Every day was risky. He didn't know where he might next be able to sleep in safety. *Why* was he prepared to do this? *Why* would a good Jew abandon his life as a Pharisee? *Why* would he contaminate himself by mixing with Gentiles? *Why* travel across the Mediterranean Sea at a time of year when it was risky? *Why* live a life that was unsafe and give up so much?

From that moment on the Damascus road all his ambitions in life were changed into one ambition. To follow Jesus. God's call on Paul's life was not just to become a believer in Jesus but he was also given a specific job to do. If Jesus was the messiah and if he had been resurrected then it meant that the news was not just for the Jewish people but for all the nations across the world.

4. Paul was in a life and death situation because of his preaching of the Gospel. Why does he not worry about whether he lives or dies? (19-26)

5. How can we live our lives in a manner worthy of the gospel? Is there anything that prevents us living like that? (27-30)

6. Are you currently facing a difficult situation? How can trust in Christ make a difference for you? (12-30)



Is there anything you most want to put into practice as a result of this study?



Looking Upwards (40 mins) Bible Study

Read the text for this study, and any references given, then answer the following questions. You may find it helpful to listen to the sermon and/or read through the sermon notes as you do so. Discuss some, or all, your answers with your Home Group and, remember, these questions are only a guide to start your discussions.

1. People have given their lives for all sorts of things like God, country, family, ideals, friends and love. What/who would you be prepared to die for?

2. Why is Paul content with being in prison? (12-14)

3. Do motives matter? Does it matter what our motives are when we speak up for Jesus? (15-18)

They must all be told. He wanted to share the good news of the resurrection and the salvation that Jesus brought. He was prepared to go wherever the Lord Jesus led. Everything he had ever known was put aside because he had found the one thing, the 'pearl of great price' that Jesus talked about. God loved him and Jesus had died to save him. Paul never got over his love for Jesus.

And so we come to read Philippians 1. We find 12-14, that Paul had not only lost his status, travelled among Gentiles, and faced a lot of physical risks but he has now lost his freedom. He was in prison. We get a glimpse of how Paul's thinking is so very different from our own way of thinking. If we were in prison we might write a letter saying, 'I hope to get out of this prison soon. It's a real shame I'm stuck here. I wish I could be with you instead. This is a real waste of time when I could be doing important things for God.' But Paul doesn't think like that at all. He is positive. After all the prison warders are equally as stuck in prison as he is. So Paul says, 'Hallelujah. I have all the time in the world to share God's love and grace with these people who would never hear about him otherwise. I have a captive audience. Some of them have really listened.' He was able to write that it was known throughout the imperial guard that he was in prison because of his trust in Jesus Christ. Paul was a happy man. He had a new mission field. He was not just an optimistic person whose glass was *half* full. Paul's glass was full.

Paul had already lost everything. Soon he might lose his life. When you have nothing, you have nothing to lose. Some of you will remember not so long ago Canon Andrew White, 'the vicar of Baghdad' came to Emmanuel. We were here for that. Since then I have been getting his Facebook posts. Here is one that I saved recently.

'So despite the terrible persecution of much of the church today in Iraq and the Middle East the wonderful news is that G-d is not dead. He is alive and doing the greatest things ever. Resurrections, healing and angels are part of daily life. We in the western world just do not know of the real majesty, glory and presence of Jesus. STRANGELY IT WAS IN PERSECUTION WE SAW THE GREATEST GLORY. '

Nothing stopped Paul from speaking out words of truth. He was upheld by the Holy Spirit. He was expecting to go before an earthly judge one day and he intended to say what God told him to say in that court room, because one day he would face a heavenly judge who would vindicate him. So he asked for the Holy Spirit to help him and for the people to pray for him, v19, so that he would be able to speak the truth about Jesus even in the face of danger.

Do you remember how Paul first met these people in Philippi and he and Silas were thrown into jail there for causing a riot? The jailor became a Christian and he would have been among those Paul was writing to. Maybe he was earnestly praying for a new deliverance, another earthquake, for Paul. It's so much easier to pray for a miracle when you have seen it happen before. But Paul is not convinced there is an earthly deliverance for him this time. He may have to face execution rather than release.

Then we get this little debate from Paul. 'I don't know which would be better. If I live that would be great and if I die that would be even better. I really don't know. If I live then I have work to do for Jesus and I can come and visit you, but if I die then I will be with him which just about trumps everything else.' It's difficult call for Paul.

Paul Harcourt has written a book called 'Growing in circles'. Here is a quote from him.

'When God calls us to be his sons and daughters, it means not only is he restoring us in relationship, but he is also commissioning us to be part of his plan of salvation for others. We join his family, we start to take on the family likeness... and we get involved in the family business. We find a fresh and fulfilling purpose in revealing him to others. I once heard an American preacher describe it in a particularly memorable way. He said, 'the best thing you can do for a Christian is to baptize them and shoot them.'
I think what he meant was, once someone is a Christian and is secure in that relationship, the best thing they could ever experience is life with the father in glory. Think of it. What could be better than life with God in his perfect heaven? Yet we're still down here

in this broken world. Why would a loving father make us stay any longer than we have to in a world marred by sin, evil and pain? The only answer is that there must be work for us to do here.' 'Dying would mean to be with Christ which is far better, but remaining alive means more opportunity for ministry which would be better for others. While we are here on earth, we have a purpose in God's plans for others. As Craig Groeschel puts it, 'if you aren't dead you aren't done'.

So, if Paul was facing death what he really needed to know was that the Christians of Philippi were taking on the family likeness and getting on with the family business. The next generation of leaders needed to be in place. V 27 He wanted to check with them that they were growing more like Christ and that they were good witnesses, standing firm together in the Spirit despite the opposition. 'Don't compromise, don't let the enemy win, and don't become weak and woolly because they have intimidated you'. Jesus is your Lord and the time has come to take a stand and be loyal to him. The Christians at Philippi knew that they too might be brought to trial and death for their faith. Were they ready for it? Would we be ready for it? I am so grateful that Paul was in prison unable to go to Philippi himself to tell them his message in person because instead he had to write this letter. Let us take it as a message for us.

Are we where God wants us to be and doing what he asks of us? Have you answered the call of Jesus on your life? Have you ever felt God nudge you but then you rejected that nudge? Put it right now and get moving. It's never too late. If you're not dead you're not done!

Emmanuel Text for 2017

If my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

2 Chronicles 7:14