



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?

emmanuelchurchbillericay

P 01277 632120 E emmanueloffice@billericaychurches.org
W www.emmanuel-church.info T @EmmanuelCM12



A Season Of Celebration
HG146 Confidence In Jesus

Philippians 3:1-11

Home Group Study Notes

25 June 2017 - Revd Paul A. Carr



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

On this 25th Anniversary Celebration of our church building, what does Emmanuel mean to you?



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 ...



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Home Group Sermon Notes

25 June 2017 - Revd Paul A. Carr

Introduction

As we read the New Testament we discover that spiritual assessment is a very important part of the Christian life. One of the underlying themes of Paul's letter to the Philippians is a spiritual health check. That's not a bad thing to do on this 25th Anniversary. So as we look closer at this passage, we might well ask ourselves, both individually and collectively, how healthy are we? Are we still growing in spiritual maturity? Are we still making progress? Are we holding fast to the truths we've been taught?

1. A Gentle Reminder

Paul is checking up on the Philippians several years after planting the church, and he writes: "... *It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you.*" It's worth remembering that Paul's reminder to the Philippian church of the truths of the Gospel is a sign of his love for them and his concern for their wellbeing.

Paul's told them these things before but it's no trouble for him to repeat himself - just like any preacher! But he also says that's it's a safeguard or them that he does say the same things. In many ways, every church should be a 'same things' church.' Yes, we change our approach to mission and ministry as I mentioned earlier, as indeed we must as society changes, but the message never changes. We hold fast to the same truths of the Gospel 'in season and out of season' 2 Tim 4:2

2. Who Let The Dogs Out?

Paul explains his concerns for their wellbeing in vs2: "*Watch out for those dogs, those evildoers.*" For those dog lovers amongst us, I'm sure you realise that Paul wasn't referring to cute domestic pets, but rather dogs that run wild in packs and are dangerous. Paul viewed false teachers like wild dogs who were intent in causing damage anyway they could.

I wonder how many of you remember that song 'Who let the dogs out?' by the Baha Men? And whilst that may be a light hearted fun song it was no laughing matter in Philippi because the answer to 'Who let the dogs out?' is simply: the evil one. So why is Paul getting all hot under the collar? Because those false teachers were saying that belief in Jesus is not enough. They put their *confidence in the flesh*. They were teaching that you need Jesus PLUS something else.

4. How would you explain to a non-Christian your faith and confidence in Jesus for your salvation?

5. The Apostle Paul hungered to know Jesus and the power of his resurrection, vs10. He was willing to do whatever it took to know Jesus more fully - even to suffer for his faith. What are you doing in your life to grow in your knowledge of Jesus and the power of his resurrection?

6. Rector Paul asked the questions: How healthy are we? Are we still growing in spiritual maturity? Are we still making progress? Are we holding fast to the truths we've been taught? What would your answer be to these questions?



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. In vs1, the Apostle Paul writes: "... *It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again ...*" Rector Paul said we are to be a 'same things' church. What truths about the Christian faith do you never tire of hearing?

2. There will always be false teachers, vs2, who say that Jesus failed in his mission. What false teaching upsets you and how might you respond? Are there questions you feel unable to answer? If so, what might they be?

3. Before the Apostle Paul followed Jesus, he hid behind some amazing and 'impeccable credentials' vs4-6. What are some of the credentials people have today that may give them a false sense of security about gaining entry into heaven?

And whenever Jesus PLUS is around it spells danger. Because it says that Jesus only is not enough for our salvation and that we must do something extra to be a really top notch Christian. So how does Paul respond? He goes on to tell them about himself.

3. Impeccable Credentials

If ever anyone had the credentials to get into heaven by their own good deeds, it was Paul. He fulfilled all the necessary criteria which he outlines in vs4-6: "*If anyone else thinks he has 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 legalistic righteousness, faultless.*"

Now that's quite an impressive list. Paul was born into a Jewish family in the tribe of Benjamin and circumcised on the eighth day just like the law commanded. No doubt his father and grandfather and great grandfather and all the generations before him were good Jews. In fact, they could trace their family history right back to Jacob. He was a strict Pharisee, the sort of man to follow all the laws to the letter. He knew how much to tithe, and he'd never mix his wool and his cotton. Paul was fanatical.

He'd done everything the law required of him! He even persecuted Christians. He had all the badges, he could count all the stripes, he could tick all the boxes. If any human deserved a place in heaven it was Paul. But how does he view all that privilege now?

4. False Confidence

Vs7-9 tells us: "*But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him ...*"

Paul thinks that all those good works and privileges are rubbish. In fact the word is far stronger than that. Paul says literally that all his good deeds are dung or excrement. That is what the word really means - our translations are just too embarrassed to use it. But Paul makes no apologies. He wants us to see how deeply offensive to God false confidence is!

Despite the fact he has an impressive CV Paul makes it clear that his confidence is in Christ alone. Paul tells us:

*Don't put your confidence in a ritual
Don't put your confidence in your nationality
Don't put your confidence in your rank
Don't put your confidence in your tradition
Don't put your confidence in your rule-keeping
Don't put your confidence in your zeal
Don't put your confidence in the law*

False confidence creeps into our Christian lives when we try to impress God with our good deeds. We think he'll love us more if we've done well with our quiet times this week. Well be more precious to him if we've done our bit in the church. The danger in all these things is that our confidence for our salvation comes not from our trusting Jesus but in Jesus PLUS.

5. True Confidence

Paul teaches that if we want to grow in maturity, our true confidence should be in Jesus only. It's not that Paul is not thankful for his background. You only have to look at Romans 9 to see how joyful Paul is for his Jewish heritage. Paul has discovered that the only way he can get right with God, the only way he can receive salvation is to accept what Jesus has done for him. Because compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Jesus as Lord and Saviour, everything else is a pile of dung!

You may have read the post on our website about hymn writer Keith Getty, writer of 'In Christ Alone' amongst many others, being awarded the OBE in the annual Queen's Birthday Honours. He is the first hymn writer to be honoured by the Queen for contemporary Christian music. Getty responded to his award and the nature of the hymns he writes by saying: *"Nominal, shallow Christianity has no future, we must proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord."*

So let me ask you, where is your confidence? It's very likely that there are some who are still trusting in their own goodness to get them to heaven. Paul was the best there was. And yet even he failed. Confidence in our own deeds and accomplishments is as much a danger for us as it was for the Philippians. Perhaps you are a little too proud of your Christian heritage, your upbringing, your tradition, your zeal, your ritual. Perhaps you revel in being connected to this amazing church building.

Did you know ... that the foundation stone to Saint Pauls Cathedral, was laid on 25 June 1675. It's true. When Saint Paul's was being built some of those involved in the planning weren't confident that the structure could support itself. Despite having the most able architect in England at the time in Sir Christopher Wren, the church leaders weren't convinced by Wren's audacious design. And so they insisted that beneath the huge dome in the middle of Saint Paul's should be placed a supporting column. Wren had little choice but to follow their orders, despite his total conviction in the capability of the building structure he had designed to support the dome.

200 years later in the 19th century, when renovation work was taking place, a startling discovery was made concerning the supporting pillar. It was found that the pillar was one centimetre short. It wasn't supporting the dome at all. Wren was right. His original structure was sufficient after all. And so they took it down and opened up the view of dome as the magnificent structure as it was meant to be experienced. In Jesus we have one who is totally sufficient and totally able to deal with our sins. Nothing we can do, whether as non Christians or as Christians can alter that fact. The question is whether we have the confidence to trust him. For the mark of the growing Christian is the ability to see that in Christ we have everything.

And everything else pales into insignificance compared to knowing him. For Paul could say: *"I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus as my Lord."*

Jesus plus nothing equals everything; everything minus Jesus equals nothing.

Conclusion

So, how healthy are we? Are we still growing in spiritual maturity? Are we still making progress? Are we holding fast to the truths we've been taught? Is our confidence in Christ alone?

There's no doubt that all of us have been greatly blessed to belong to, and be a part of, Emmanuel church over the past 25 years. I'm sure we all value the vision and perseverance of previous the Team Rectors, Peter Ashton and Elwin Cockett who, along with the sacrificial giving and service of so many of you, shared the dream to build and complete this fantastic church complex.

For many, Emmanuel was built as a lighthouse on a hill to shine with the love of Jesus - it seems more than a coincidence that we sang 'Shine, Jesus Shine' earlier. But that is our calling.

Emmanuel exists because we believe the love of God touches hearts and changes lives. And each one of you are, and have been, part of this church family because you've experienced the touch of God on your lives and have wanted others to know Jesus for themselves. And, as we build on our confidence in Jesus in the past, rejoice in our confidence in Jesus in the present we look to the future by reaffirming our continued trust and confidence in Jesus - as we will do later.

However, despite our successes I always feel that we haven't even scratched the surface of what it is that God has in store for us. Those words of Jesus in Luke 12:48 always seem relevant for us here: *"To whom much is given, much is expected."* We have been blessed with much and, it seems to me, much is expected of us, too. I, for one, can't wait to see what the Lord has planned for the next 25 yrs.

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