**“NO WORRIES”**

**Philippians 2**

A

ncient Philippi, in today’s northern Greece, was a bustling Roman colony on the major land bridge to Asia. It was home to the affluent and their slaves. Both rich and poor there were transformed by embracing what Jesus did for us on the cross, as introduced to them by Paul, God’s first emissary to Gentiles.

The Scriptures tell us that Jesus came to earth as a Jew to fulfill Old Testament prophecies to the Jewish people and, as Paul explained, also as God’s Gift to the entire world (Genesis 12:1-3; John 1:11-13). The Bible says Christ could return at any time to take His followers, both living and dead, with Him to heaven (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18). Then the Great Tribulation -- seven years when God will unleash His wrath on earth to punish sin. Thousands will trust Jesus as “tribes, peoples and tongues” unite at His throne to praise Him, many of whom had been martyred for not taking “the mark of the beast” (Revelation 6:9-11, 13:16,17).

In AD 62 or so Paul pens this letter while jailed in Rome for teaching that God had come to earth to set all humanity free from sin’s power and penalty. After suffering brutal persecution, Paul has learned to be content in any situation. His detention is his dais from which he informs guards, servants and officials about Jesus. **Let’s read Philippians 2:1-30.**

**The United Way**

**Philippians 2:1-4**

Believers in Philippi are being tormented by Caesar, confused by false teachers who distort Paul’s message, and splintered by a divisive force seeking to destroy their oneness. The apostle commends to his readers the God-given serenity he’s found in suffering. **Let’s read 2 Corinthians 12:2-10.**

Satan, our #1 Enemy, is bent on undermining us with doubts, deceit and disputes, producing selfish pride. Paul’s solution: put others first, relying not on our gritty resolve but on Christ as our Strength.

**DISCUSS: Describe a situation in which you need contentment.**

**Downwardly Mobile**

**Philippians 2:5-11**

Jesus came to earth as fully God and fully man, only to be assailed by religious authorities, lashed with spiked whips, thorns piercing His skull, nailed naked to a cross for you and me.

One day, in the very near future perhaps, *every* soul who ever lived will kneel at Jesus’ feet, admitting that He is the Son of God, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords (John 5:23). Sadly, either deliberately or by delay, most of humanity will have chosen eternal torment. Let’s read Jesus’ words in Matthew 7:13-14, 21-23.

C.S. Lewis opined, “Humility isn’t thinking less of yourself. It’s thinking of yourself less.” When you spend time with our Lord, thanking Him, trusting Him, reading His Love Letter, hanging with His people, knowing that His Spirit is in you, you have His power to think and act like Jesus, desiring to serve and not be served (Romans 8:29). Let’s read Colossians 1:21-22, 3:4.

**DISCUSS: What “rights” is God asking you to surrender?**

**Power Walking**

**Philippians 2:12-18**

When Paul says, “Keep working with fear and trembling to complete your salvation,” he’s not urging us to *earn* our way to heaven. We can’t meet God’s admission requirement of sinless perfection. Fortunately, God is the One who’s “working!” He loved us first, pursues us, gives us faith to trust Him and makes us 100% right with Him (Ephesians 2:8-9, p. 1062; Colossians 2:13-14).

“Work to complete your salvation” means turning over every area of life to Christ. Then His Holy Spirit will free you from worry (Romans 3:22-24; Galatians 5:1). Christ’s Spirit in you not only *motivates* you to do what’s right; He actually *does* the heavy lifting, turning each adversity into an advantage (Romans 8:28)!

Leif Hetland writes, *“How you see yourself … is directly related to how you see God. … When we see our circumstances through Heaven’s eyes, they will never overwhelm us. There is no problem in our life … beyond God’s control.”*

**DISCUSS: Since God has given you all the resources needed to live worry-free, what’s preventing you from using them?**

**“Hide It Under A Bushel? No!”**

**Philippians 2:19-30**

God displays His nature today through the actions of those who love Him. Our relationship with Him is deeply personal but not private.

Timothy and Epaphroditus are unselfish helpers, ready to risk all for God without complaint as exemplars of Christ’s meekness, i.e., “strength under control,” like a spirited stallion under rein.

**DISCUSS: How could your love for Christ be more public?**

### Completing God’s love loop

We reach our highest potential when we fulfill the purpose for which God made us. All other pursuits are worthless. If you’ve never accepted God’s forgiveness, secured for you by Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross, please pray silently with me as I pray aloud. “God, I believe Jesus died in my place for my sin. I humbly receive Your forgiveness for all my sins – past, present and future. Right now I surrender my life to Jesus as my Savior. Thank You, Father. Amen.”

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“NO WORRIES” VERSES FROM PHILIPPIANS

“God, who began this good work in you, will carry it on until it is finished on the Day of Christ Jesus.”  1:6

“Your lives will be filled with the truly good qualities which only Jesus Christ can produce, for the glory and praise of God.” 1:11

“I want you to know that the things that have happened to me have really helped the progress of the gospel.”  1:12

“My deep desire is that I shall never fail in my duty, but that at all times, especially now, I shall be full of courage so that with my whole being I bring honor to Christ whether I live or die. **For what is life? To me, it is Christ.”** 1:20-21

“Don't be afraid of your enemies; always be courageous, and this will prove to them that they will lose and that you will win because it is God who gives you the victory. For you have been given the privilege of serving Christ, not only by believing in Him but also by suffering for Him.” 1:28,29

“Your life in Christ makes you strong, and His love comforts you. You have fellowship with the Spirit and kindness and compassion for one another.” 2:1

“Do nothing from selfish ambition or a cheap desire to boast, but be humble toward one another, always considering others better than you. Look out for one another's interests, not just your own. Have the attitude Christ Jesus had: He always had the nature of God but did not think that by force He should try to remain equal with God. Instead, of His own free will He gave up all He had and took the nature of a servant. He became like a human being and appeared in human likeness. He was humble and walked the path of obedience all the way to His death on the cross.” 2:3-8

“God is always at work in you to make you willing and able to obey Him.” 2:13

“I reckon everything as loss for what is much more valuable, the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. For His sake I have thrown everything away; I consider it as mere refuse so that I may gain Christ and be completely united with Him. I no longer have a righteousness of my own that is gained by obeying the Law. I now have the righteousness that is given through faith in Christ that comes from God, based on faith. All I want is to know Christ and to experience the power of His resurrection, to share in His sufferings and become like Him in His death, in the hope that I myself will be raised from death to life.” 3:8-11

“I do not claim that I have already succeeded or have already become perfect. I keep striving to win the prize for which Christ Jesus has already won me to Himself. Of course, I really do not think that I have already won it; the one thing I do, however, is to forget what is behind me and do my best to reach what is ahead. So I run straight towards the goal in order to win the prize which is God's call through Christ Jesus to the life above.” 3:12-14

“We are citizens of heaven and eagerly wait for our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, to come from heaven. He will change our weak mortal bodies and make them like His own glorious body, using that power by which He is able to bring all things under His rule.” 3:20-21

“Always be joyful in your union with the Lord. Rejoice! Show a gentle attitude toward everyone. The Lord is coming soon.” 4:4-5

**“Don't worry about anything**, but in all your prayers ask God for what you need, always asking Him with a thankful heart. And God's peace which is far beyond human understanding will keep your hearts and minds safe in union with Christ Jesus.” 4:6-7

“Fill your minds with things that are good, that deserve praise, that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely and honorable. Practice what you learned and received from me, both from my words and from my actions. And the God who gives us peace will be with you.” 4:8-9

“I’ve learned to be satisfied with what I have. I know what it is to be in need and what it is to have more than enough. I’ve learned this secret so that anywhere, at any time, I’m content, whether I’m full or hungry, have too much or too little. I have the strength to face all conditions by the power Christ gives me.” 4:11-13

“With all His abundant wealth through Christ Jesus, my God will supply all your needs. To our God and Father be the glory for ever and ever! Amen.” 4:19-20

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PAUL’S PARADOXES in PHILIPPIANS ch. 1

1:3-4 “I thank my God for all the memories I have of you. Every time I pray for all of you, I do it with joy.” ***PARADOX:*** *Despite being under house arrest, Paul abounds in gratitude and exhilaration.*

1:7 “Together we share God’s favor whether I’m in prison or defending and confirming the truth of the Good News.” ***PARADOX:*** *Paul guarded and established the Gospel even while jailed.*

1:12 “I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what happened to me has helped to spread the Good News.” ***PARADOX:*** *His woes have been assets in advancing Christ’s message.*

1:14 “So through my being in prison, the Lord has given most of our brothers and sisters confidence to speak God’s word more boldly and unafraid than ever.” ***PARADOX:*** *Paul’s effectiveness inspired others to preach fearlessly.*

1:18 “Nothing matters except that, in one way or another, people are told the message about Christ, whether with honest or dishonest motives, and I’m happy about that.” ***PARADOX:*** *Paul is joyful to have even his detractors preach the good news about Jesus.*

1:21-24 “For what is life? To me, it is Christ. Death, then, will bring more. … I am pulled in two directions. I want very much to leave this life and be with Christ, which is a far better thing; but for your sake it is much more important that I remain alive.“ ***PARADOX:*** *Paul is equally content to do his worthwhile work on earth, or to die and be forever with God who had dramatically salvaged his life.*

1:28 “Don't be afraid of your enemies; always be courageous, and this will prove to them that they will lose and that you will win, because it is God who gives you the victory.” ***PARADOX:*** *Persevering gallantly while being persecuted will conquer your enemies.*

1:29 “For you have been given the privilege of serving Christ, not only by believing in him but also by suffering for him.” ***PARADOX:*** *Trusting in Christ and suffering for Him are equal blessings.*