

JOS ECCLESIASTICAL PROVINCE

9TH PROVINCIAL COUNCIL

HOSTED BY ANGLICAN DIOCESE OF MAIDUGURI

AT HOLY TRINITY CATHEDRAL MAIDUGURI

14TH TO 17TH JUNE 2007

THEME: "PRESSING TOWARD THE GOAL" (PHIL 3:14)

BIBLE STUDY ON PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER 3

DAY 1

PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS: *BACKGROUND STUDY*

Philippi: A chief city of Macedonia (Acts 16:12), inhabited by Roman citizens (Act 16:21), without enough Jews to have built a Synagogue (Act 16:13).

Founded as Philippi by Philip II of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great in 356BC, as gold miners' quarters.

Fortified as a Roman Colony by Caesar Augustus (Octavian) in 42BC; for Roman war veterans, who fought the famous battle of Philippi.

Located on the Egnatian trans-Balkan express-way connecting the east and west parts of the empire.

Author/Date/Place: St. Paul, in 62AD, from Rome. During the two-year Roman house arrest (Act 28:14-31), in close touch with Caesar's household (Phil 1:13; 4:22). Some have suggested Caesarea or Ephesus as other possible places of writing.

Occasion: The return of Epaphroditus (the Philippian delegate), sent on over 1000 kilometre-long land-and-sea journey to visit Paul in Roman detention with gifts. Epaphroditus' return had been delayed because he fell severely ill on arrival in Rome (Phil 2:25-30), creating much anxiety at home.

Motive: Personal, joyful, appreciation letter for long-standing material and moral support to the Apostle and to his ministry (Phil 4:15-19; cf. 2Cor 11:9). To share his experience of powerful and purposeful victorious Christian living with his Philippian supporters. This he did together with giving them missionary report and pastoral advice.

The Philippian Church: Founded 50AD, by St Paul under divine guidance (Act 16:7-10) with experience of suffering and the demonstration of the power of the Holy Spirit. Smaller and poorer than the Corinthian Church but greater in spirituality and liberality (2Cor 8:1-5; Phil 4:10-20). **See Phil 4:1; 1Cor 3:1-3.**

QUESTION 1: *As Ministers and Church Leaders, what could we learn from St Paul:*
(a) *in the way we relate with the members of our congregation?*

(b) *in the way we seek divine guidance and respond to missionary needs?*

QUESTION 2: *As members of the Church, what could we learn from the Philippian Church about our response to God's Word (Phil 2:12-16) and support towards our ministers and missionary work?*

The Philippians needed no correction but commendation, no admonitions but approval. The Philippians begged Ministers to receive their offerings (Act 16:15; 2Cor 8:4), but Paul needed to remind the Corinthians (2Cor 8:10ff) and instruct the Galatians (Gal 6:6ff) before they gave. Again Paul was confident the Philippians would walk with God unto the end (Phil 1:6); but he needed to encourage the Corinthians to continue their walk with God (2Cor 8:6) and to convince the Galatians to resume their walk with God (Gal 3:1-4; 4:9-11).

QUESTION 3: *Today some believers, congregations and ministers are motivated like the Philippians, others are reluctant like the Corinthians and the rest are backslidden like the Galatians. Where do you think you belong? What must we do to imbibe the Macedonian example (Phil 3:8-16), and obtain the Macedonian blessing? (Phil 4:18-19)*

Summary of the Epistle to the Philippians:

1:1-11 Salutation and Prayers.

1:12-26 Situation Report.

1:27-2:18 Exhortation to Imitate Christ.

2:19-30 Commendation of Timothy and Epaphroditus.

3:1-21 Admonitions against Legalism, Perfectionism and Libertinism.

4:1-23 Sundry Exhortations, Appreciations and Conclusion.

MEMORY VERSE: Philippians Chapter 3 verse 14.

Venerable Dr. I. U. Ibeme.

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PHILIPPIANS CHAPTER 3: *EXPOSITION AND DISCUSSIONS*

Using his exemplary experience as a *mature and victorious* Christian, St Paul exhorted the Philippians to stand firm in the faith of the Apostles and safeguard themselves against three erroneous tendencies that easily befall Christian viz:

1. The mistaken confidence of *ceremonial legalists* (vs. 1-11),
2. The immature complacency of *conceited perfectionists* (vs. 12-16) and
3. The destructive carnality of self-*indulgent libertines* (vs. 17-21).

Ceremonial legalists think they are accepted before God by the rites and formal conditions they fulfil (such as circumcisions, sacraments, anointings, levies, ceremonies, etc) or formal recognition they have secured (such as offices, titles, positions, qualifications, ordinances, etc). These do not really depend on the grace of God through Christ or on moral and spiritual transformation.

Conceited perfectionists think they have arrived or attained God's glory, since they had once surrendered their lives to Christ, are manifesting signs of the power of the Holy Spirit, and have supposedly experienced sanctification. These do not strive to press towards the high calling which they have not yet attained, do not feel the need for confession of sin, but glory and boast in what they have already attained.

Self-indulgent libertines think that since Christ has freed them from the law, they are free to do things as their heart desires or as the situation dictates. These do not accept any suffering, self-denial, regulations or standards, insisting that their personal sense of judgement, personal pleasures and personal choices are the leadings of the Spirit.

QUESTION 1: (a) *What are the dangers inherent in these tendencies against which St Paul admonished the Church? Are there similar trends today?*

(b) *Why do we easily fall into these errors? (3:17; 4:9; cf. 1Cor 14:36)*

Mature and Victorious (battle-winning and crown-winning) Christian life which St Paul always pursued as "**ONE THING**" (v. 13) and wants all to pursue, ensures safeguards against all the above errors. This rather seeks to:

1. Keep the joy of salvation aflame (v. 1).

2. Worship God spiritually rather than ritually (vs. 2-3).
3. Count all attained temporal status and spiritual pedigree as loss and rubbish (vs. 4-8).
4. Remain constantly determined and desirous to know more of Christ's resurrection power, deny self more, suffer more for Christ, and know greater righteousness and purity through greater faith in Christ (vs. 9-11; cf. 1Cor 9:24-27; Heb 12:1-2).
5. Understand that true perfection and maturity do not settle on past perfections but perseveres and stretches forth for the future and further perfections till the goal of full perfection is reached to win the prize of glorious resurrection (vs. 12-17).
6. Pursue eternal and heavenly citizenship (e.g. penitence, purity, etc) rather than earthly and temporal citizenship (e.g. prosperity, pleasures, etc) (vs. 18-21; cf. Col 3:1-4).

QUESTION 2: *What do you learn from Paul's pattern of Christian Living?*

QUESTION 3: *Considering Chapter 3 verse 14, -*

(a) *What exactly is the goal for which Christ has called us? (3:9; cf. Rom 8:29; Gal 2:17 and 4:19; Col 1:27)*

(b) *What is the prize (i.e. victor's crown/wreath) we win for reaching the goal? (3:11-12; cf. Jon 6:39; Rev 2:10-11)*

THE GOAL FOR THE CHURCH (Ephesians 4:11-16; Colossians 1:25-29)

The goal of the Church is to win disciples and present everyone mature in Christ. To meet this goal we must press on aggressively, not only with personal victorious life in Christ but also with the corporate fulfilment of the redemptive gospel mission committed to us.

"The kingdom of God has become aggressively competitive and only the aggressively competitive press to grasp it." Matt 11:12; Lk 16:16.

QUESTION 4: *How must the Church press aggressively towards the goal through:*

1. EVANGELISM; *Proclaiming (i.e. the Kerygma) the **royal glad tidings** (i.e. the Euangelion) that there is **now the blessing of remission of sins (or salvation from sin) for anyone who repents and believes in Jesus as the Christ and risen Lord.** (Lk 24:46-49)?*

2. DISCIPLESHIP: *Teaching the Truth and keeping the Word?*

3. FELLOWSHIP: *Keeping the unity of the Church in love?*

4. WORSHIP: *Testifying to the goodness and greatness of God?*

5. SERVICE: *Salting the earth and lighting the world?*

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