

To Die is Gain

THE PATH TO JOY, A STUDY OF PHILIPPIANS

LESSON 5 (2:12-30)

As one offers a cup of cold water to the thirsty, Paul exhorted the Philippian church to extend their faith to those who surrounded them. But before their testimony for Christ could be effective in their community, they must remove the mindsets that contaminated their cups.

As long as others observed strife and dissention among them, the gospel they presented would be ineffective. But if they chose to *drink in* and *work out* the things Christ sought to instill in them, they would “*shine as lights in the world*” (v.15) and serve as “*fountain(s) of water*” (John 4:14) to a “*crooked and perverse generation*” (2:15).

READ PHILIPPIANS 2:1-18, FOCUSING ON VERSES 12-18.

1. What often occurs when an authority figure is absent? Why?
2. What solution is provided in verse 12?
3. Whose salvation is to be worked out? Why is this important? How is this accomplished?

“In Paul’s day [the phrase ‘*work out*’] was used for ‘working a mine,’ that is, getting out of the mine all the valuable ore possible, or ‘working a field’ so as to get the greatest possible harvest.”ⁱ

4. The phrase also emphasizes putting something into effect *entirely*, so as to be evident and observable. How does living for Christ “partially” affect those around us?

5. How did the actions of some indicate an absence of “*fear and trembling*”? Why is this necessary to maintain healthy relationships?ⁱⁱ

6. Verse 13 speaks of God’s commitment to actively implement His will and ways into the believer’s heart. He provides the desire and motivation, and the ability to carry it out. Describe the relationship between divine enablement and human responsibility.

7. If one complains against God what can be determined? Similarly, what can be deduced if one complains and disputes with another?

8. According to verse 15, what would occur if the dissention stopped?

If it continued, how would the church be consequently affected?

9. Interestingly, the word *harmless* (v. 15, *akeraioi*) means without any mixture of deceit. It is used of wine that is not diluted; metal that has not been weakened. Additionally, the

phrase “*holding fast*” (v.16) means to *hold out*, to *hold forth* the Word of Life. In secular Greek, the phrase is used to offer wine to a guest at a banquet; to extend a cup of water.

If the Philippians extended the gospel to others in their present state, how might the hearers be affected?

10. Why would this type of Christianity cause Paul to feel as if he had exerted all his efforts in vain?

11. Why would the image of Paul’s life, poured out as a drink offering, further stress his exhortation?

KEEP READING, PHILIPPIANS 2:19-24.

12. Why did Paul believe that Timothy was able to aid the Philippians?

13. If Timothy were involved in your church community, how might he serve?

14. Why are “Timothys” rare? (vv.20-22)

15. How can you follow in his example?

READ PHILIPPIANS 2, VERSES 25-30.

16. How might Epaphroditus' soon return have been viewed negatively?

17. What titles did Paul use to describe Epaphroditus in verse 25? Why are these significant?

18. What was Epaphroditus willing to do so that Paul was helped and the gospel was shared?

19. What caused him to "*come close to death*" (v.30)?

ⁱ Wiersbe, W. (2001). *The Bible Exposition Commentary, New Testament* (Vol. 2, p. 77). Colorado Springs: Cook Communications.)

ⁱⁱ "Personal salvation brings with it responsibilities which Paul related to Christians' obedience. The responsibility was to live in accord with their salvation, letting the implications of their relationship with Christ transform their social relationships. Paul really meant, in the first place, that they were to act like Christians." (Melick, R. R. (1991). *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon* (Vol. 32, p. 110). Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers.)