

## Lesson 10: The Epistle to the Philippians

### Background to the Epistle of Philippians

In Acts, Luke writes about Paul's missionary journeys to cities where he established churches, like Philippi, Corinth, and Ephesus. The end of Acts does not end our knowledge of these early churches. Much of the New Testament is a collection of letters Paul wrote to his beloved converts. Some, like the letter to the Philippians, were written from prison. Philippi in Macedonia was the location of the first branch in Europe. Here Paul met some of his most faithful supporters—Lydia, the Greek woman who opened her home to him, and the prison guard who joined the church when God sent an earthquake to open the prison doors. Paul developed a deep affection for the Philippian saints, who in turn sent him “love gifts” of money and support. Epaphroditus was sent from Philippi to Rome to support Paul in prison. The Epistle to the Philippians was dictated to him and then carried on his return trip to Philippi.

### READ Philippians 1:1-11 A LOVE LETTER

1. Paul describes himself and Timothy as “servants of Jesus Christ.” This word in Greek is “slave” (*doulos*) or one in permanent servitude to another and under their command. Why do you think Paul identified himself like that?

2. a. How are *we* under obligation to live our lives as “servants” or “slaves” of Jesus Christ, and why?

3. Verses 9, 10, and 11 are Paul's prayer for the Saints in Philippi. List three things that he prays for them.

b. Do you think that our prayers for loved ones can change circumstances in their lives? Explain your answer.

4. a. According to verse 11—where do the fruits of righteousness come from and for what purpose?

b. What is one way that a life filled with the fruits of righteousness brings praise and glory to God?

### Read Philippians 1:12-30 THE FURTHERANCE OF THE GOSPEL

5. Paul lists some ways that his imprisonment has actually furthered the spreading of the gospel. Give examples, citing verses. You may use the words of the scripture or your own words.

6. PERSONAL: Romans 8:28 promises that “all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are... called according to his purpose.” Can you think of something “bad” in your life that worked in the end for your good?
7. a. In verse 19, Paul says that his current situation as a prisoner of Rome will “turn to [his] salvation” through what two things?
- b. How often do we need to draw upon “the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ”?
- c. What things keep us from taking full advantage of this “supply”?
8. Why does Paul have mixed feelings about whether he will be killed? Cite verses.
9. In verses 27 and 28 Paul pleads for the members of the Philippi Branch to demonstrate two attitudes or traits. What are they? (The word translated “conversation” in the King James Bible means *conduct*.)
10. What evidence could you give from Chapter 1 that Paul’s motivation in life was always the same thing: “the furtherance of the gospel”? Cite verses.

**READ Philippians 2: 1-11 BE OF ONE-MIND**

11. a. What do you think Philippians 2:3-4 means?
- b. Why is it important to control our natural human tendencies to criticize those who do things differently than we do?
12. Verses 5-11 are a famous scriptural passage extolling the role and attributes of Jesus Christ. a. List several things about Jesus Christ mentioned in these verses.

b. What does the Father do in response to these qualities in His Son?

c. Paul gives the example of Jesus' voluntary humility as an object lesson to the Philippians. It illustrates the principal that "whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted." (Luke 14:11) What is a way that an LDS woman could "exalt herself"?

### **Read Philippians 2: 12-25 JOY IN WORKING FOR GOD**

13. Read verses 12 & 13. One could say, "Paul—make up your mind! Do we "work out our own salvation" or does "God work in us both to do and to will"? How can it be both?" Let's try to figure out what Paul was actually thinking.

a. How does God work in us?

b. How does God's work "in us", then get "worked out" by us in our own lives?

c. Why do you think that Paul says we should do our part of the work "in fear and trembling"?

14. The word "joy" or "rejoice" is found 5 times in 2:16-18. See also 1:18, 25-26; 3:1 and 4: 4. All this written from prison. How is it possible to find joy in the midst of suffering or adversity?

### **Read Philippians 3 PAUL PRESSES FOR THE PRIZE IN CHRIST**

NOTE: Paul here explains how carefully he kept the Mosaic Law and trusted that this blameless law-keeping would be counted as his righteousness before God. After his conversion Paul realized that this righteousness, which he calls "his own righteousness," was not enough. Now he has what he calls the "righteousness which is of God by faith." To understand Paul one must understand this new kind of righteousness "by faith."

15. List three reasons that Paul had to be confident of his righteousness in the flesh.

16. Our own righteousness consists in what we can do out of our human resources. "The righteousness which is through the faith of Christ" (vs.9) is based upon the merits of another, namely, Jesus Christ. The word "merit" never occurs in the Bible but occurs 7 times in the Book of Mormon and once in Doctrine & Covenants. a. Look up one of these references and explain what it means.

b. Paul says in 2 Corinthians 5:21: “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” Describe the exchange that was made on our behalf through the atonement, explaining what exactly we are given that enables us to be “righteous” through faith in Christ.

c. When we receive the Holy Ghost, which then enables us to do some good thing, we have essentially used Christ’s righteousness as our own. Who then should get the glory or credit for the good thing that was done? Explain.

17. CHALLENGE QUESTION: In verses 12 and 15 Paul apparently uses the same word: *perfect*. In fact, however, in the original Greek, he used two different words. In verse 12 it is *teleioo*: “a finished product, completed.” In verse 15 it is *teleios*: “mature, ripened or seasoned.” What is Paul trying to say?

#### **Read Philippians Chapter 4 WORDS OF WISDOM**

18. “Be careful (full of care) for nothing” in verse 6 means “don’t *worry* about anything.” Two opposing methods for handling problems are presented in verse 6. What advantage does Paul say comes from using **prayer** rather than **worry**? Cite verse.

19. Philippians 4:4 reads like a command. Do you think we can choose to obey this admonition no matter what our circumstances? How?

20. What are some things you have learned about Paul’s life from the study of Acts that you think would enable him to “be content, in whatsoever state [he was]”? (v. 11)

21. PERSONAL QUESTION: Can you share a time when the promise in verse 13 gave you hope and courage to go on?

22. How could verse 19 help you as you pray?