



BIBLE IN A YEAR 2020



Summary

Philippians is an absolute peach of a letter! Written from prison, most likely in Rome, it has been referred to as the 'letter of joy' because that is one of its key themes and the strong bond of affection and friendship between Paul and the people he's writing to shines through.

This church in Philippi, a city in eastern Macedonia, was founded by Paul and his little team on their second epic journey in the region. He visited them twice more on his third journey, so he must have liked them!

Unlike many of Paul's letters, Philippians was not written primarily to respond to church problems or conflicts. He does touch briefly on three minor issues at Philippi (discouragement, disunity and the threat of disloyalty), but he is mostly writing to thank them for some financial help they have sent, to assure them that God has a purpose in his imprisonment, and to urge them to press on to know Jesus more and more themselves.

Dan Green

Saturday June 20

Every day we're reading or listening to part of the Bible together and sharing thoughts with you. Today it's Dan Green:

What did I like about today's reading?

Let's be honest, what's not to love about Philippians?! This little book is so full of affection and appreciation, and I reckon it must be one of the sections of Scripture that has the highest density of quotable / tweetable verses in it.

The thing that stands out to me most though is the way that Paul seems to be so content and joyful, despite the fact that he's been languishing in jail for years and probably has little hope for a 'positive outcome' (check out the last few chapters of Acts to understand his circumstances better). The concept of rejoicing or joy appears sixteen times in four chapters here, culminating in the challenge to 'Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!' (4v4).

That may seem counter-intuitive when things are difficult, but Paul seems to have discovered something that could help all of us, especially at a time that is difficult for many. He has faced excruciating poverty, personal attacks, shipwrecks and more in his life, and yet was able to declare 'I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation' (4v13). Wow! That sounds like a secret that we could all learn from right now.

What did it show me about Father God, Jesus or the Holy Spirit?

Paul's contentment and joy is a reminder to me that Jesus is enough for me. The secret to his joy was in focussing all of his attention and energy on knowing Christ and obeying him. It's easy to gloss over mind-blowing statements like 'For me to live is Christ and to die is gain' (1v21). Or how about this one: '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.' (3v8,9). In other words, Paul has experienced Jesus to be so real, so faithful and so good to him, that everything else has become secondary to him.

What am I going to do differently as a result?

I feel like I know in my head, and at certain moments in my life have known in my heart, that Jesus is enough for me. The challenge is to not forget it, and to allow it to sink deep enough into me that it becomes how I live. I know that there are some helpful practices, some 'life-giving habits' that can move me in that direction, but today I want to start by simply asking God to make me hungry for him again. I'm going to meditate on the verse where Paul says 'I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings' (3v10). I'm going to ask God to show me areas of my life where I'm not really hungry for more, give Him permission to speak to me about those, and ask Him for more of the joy that Paul experienced.

Who am I going to share this with?

I'm going to get in touch with an old friend called Levi, who I feel embodies this 'content and joyful in all circumstances' attitude as well as anyone else I know. He's also someone who has a real hunger for more of God in his life, so I'm hoping that in speaking to him some of those things will rub off on me!