

PHILIPPIANS STUDY GUIDE



Cairnhill Methodist Church

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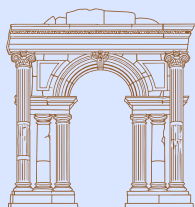
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Philippians 4
Discussion

Word from our Pastor-In-Charge

One of my favourite verses in the Bible is found in the book of Philippians. "-that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus"

(Philippians 1:6b). The Apostle Paul tells us God's good work in us is ongoing and unending until its completion. While God does His work in us, we have our part to 'be of the same mind, having the same love toward one another, being one in spirit and of one mind' (Philippians 2:2). In appealing for unity in this letter, Paul recognizes some in the church might not be seeing eye to eye on certain issues. As we reach the final chapter, Paul did mention the names of two sisters: Euodia and Syntyche, urging them to talk through their differences with the help of others ((Philippians 4:2-3).



As we live life together, the views we hold will not always be the same. At times, our opinion of things will differ. Paul in Philippians however is not calling us to pursue uniformity. He wants us to treat one other with kindness despite our differences and to ground our relationships in a profound sense of our shared identity as followers of Christ.

Our Bishop Dr Gordon Wong will kickstart our Philippians book study on our church's 26th Anniversary Celebration Service. My prayer for us is that we will put into practice whatever God the Holy Spirit is saying to us through the servants of Christ, and that 'whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable – if anything is excellent or praiseworthy – think about such things' (Philippians 4:8).

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.

- Ps William

Author, Date, and Recipients

Saul (that is his Aramaic name, also known as Paul in Greek) of Tarsus was a Jew brought up by Gamaliel in the ways of the Pharisees (Acts 22:3).

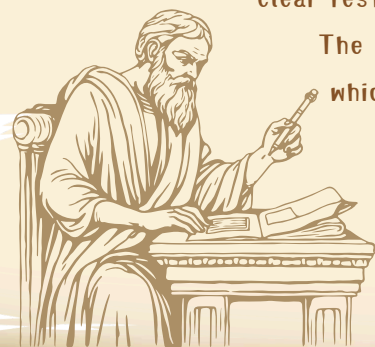
His religious zeal as a Pharisee led him to do all that were within his means to prevent the propagation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ - including the execution of Christians (Acts 6:8-8:1; 22:20). It was in this backdrop that the Lord Jesus Christ revealed Himself to Paul on the way to Damascus (Acts 9:1-19).

After Paul's encounter with the Risen Lord Jesus Christ, he turned his life over completely to Christ - preaching and teaching the Gospel of Christ to all, especially the Gentiles.

The Church in Philippi as addressed here in Philippians is a clear testimony of Paul's ministry to the Gentiles.

The Church in Philippi was the first church in which Paul established in Europe (Acts 16).

It is estimated that Paul had written Philippians whilst imprisoned (as revealed by the internal evidences) somewhere from A.D. 57 to early A.D. 62.



ntroduction to the Epistle to the Philippians



This letter to the Philippians written by the Apostle Paul is lined with joyful thanksgiving. It is by no means lacking however in its exhortations and serious theological weight to encourage, challenge, and spur Christians onwards to the full maturity of the Christian faith in Jesus Christ.

As opposed to other letters written by Paul in response to crises (cf. Galatians and Colossians), the letter to the Philippians stands as Paul's outpouring of thankfulness and joy from the heart to a community so supportive and receptive towards the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The Epistle to the Philippians is for us today, a yardstick for what faithful church life looks like, how we as Christians may continue in faith and fight the good fight, and how we as the Church may grow to full maturity in Christlikeness.

“ 3 I thank my God in all
my remembrance of you,
4 always in every prayer of mine for
you all making my prayer with joy,
5 because of your partnership in
the gospel from the first day until
now. 6 And I am sure of this, that
he who began a good work in you
will bring it to completion at the
day of Jesus Christ.

Philippians 1:3-6 ”

Epistle to the Philippians

SERMON NOTES

Epistle to the Philippians

Read Philippians 1

01 What are the things that bring about thanksgiving in your life?

02 How often do you pray because of the joy you experience?

03 What are some opportunities you have to advance the Gospel in your life?

04 How do you understand what Paul describes as 'death as a gain', in your faith?

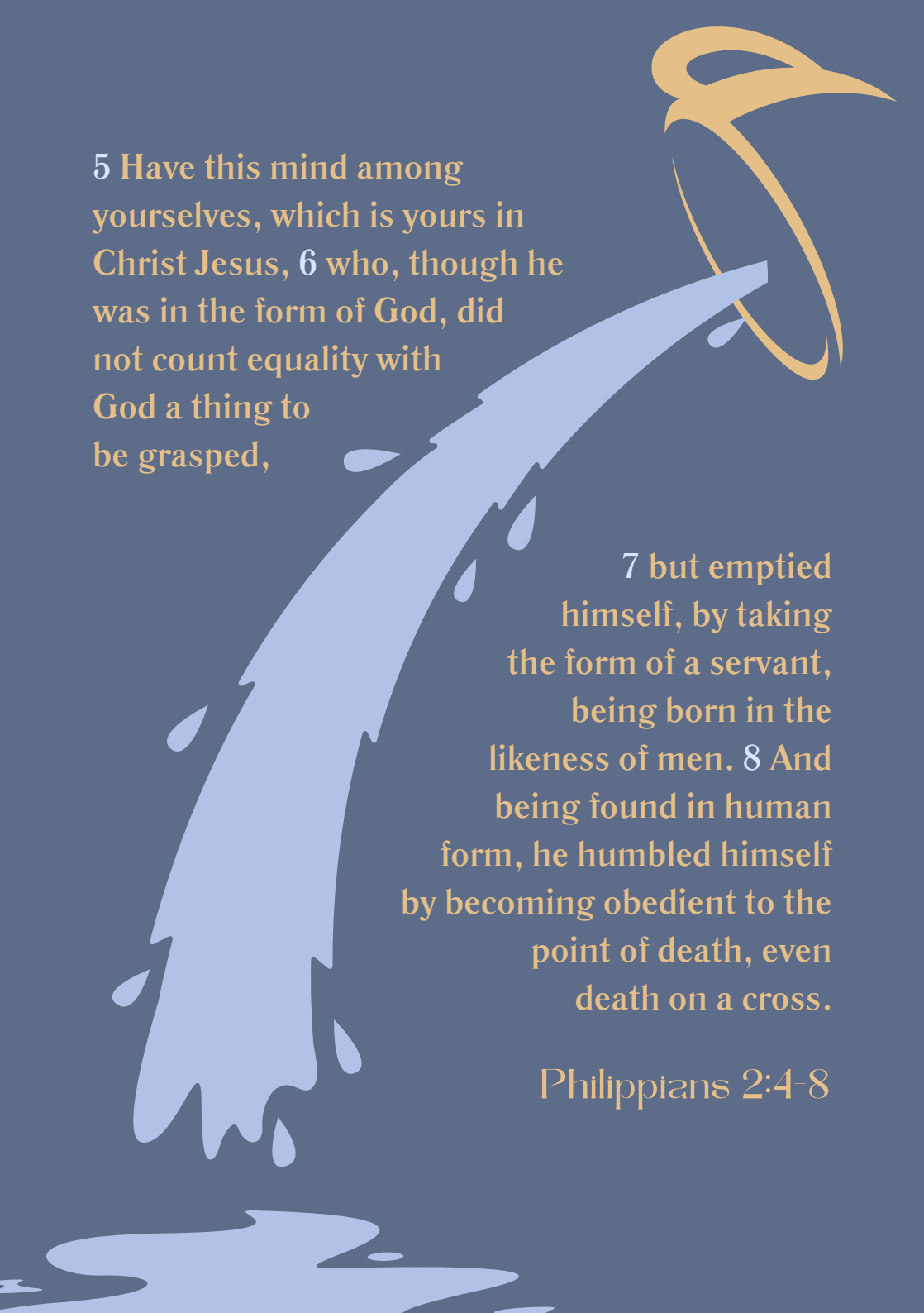
05 How do you understand 'suffering' in the Christian faith, as Paul mentions in v. 29?



WILLIAM HOLMAN HUNT
The Shadow of Death, 1870.

Commentary

William Holman Hunt's 'The Shadow of Death' presents to us the tense relationship of Jesus Christ – as the Incarnate God, the humble working man, and the Messiah on the Cross. The evening sunshine casts behind the body of Jesus, a grave shadow upon tools of the carpenter – prefiguring the brutal crucifixion. Yet, that same sunshine illuminates the natural blue sky that serves as the halo around the head of the divine Jesus. All this, set in the expanse of a humble workshop, a space which Jesus shares with his mother, Mary, as she opens the gifts from the Magi, pointing back to the nativity. Through Hunt's portrayal, he unveils to us the deep theological tension of our sovereign God, humbling Himself not only to take on the form of man, but to empty Himself upon the cross (Philippians 2:6-8).



5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,

7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

Philippians 2:4-8

Epistle to the Philippians

SERMON NOTES

Epistle to the Philippians

Read Philippians 2

01 Would those around you, see in you a servant?

02 How may you count others more significant than yourself, despite all that you have and are?

03 Amidst our Singaporean culture of complaining and disgruntled-ness, how may we as Christians live as a light, doing all things without grumbling or disputing?

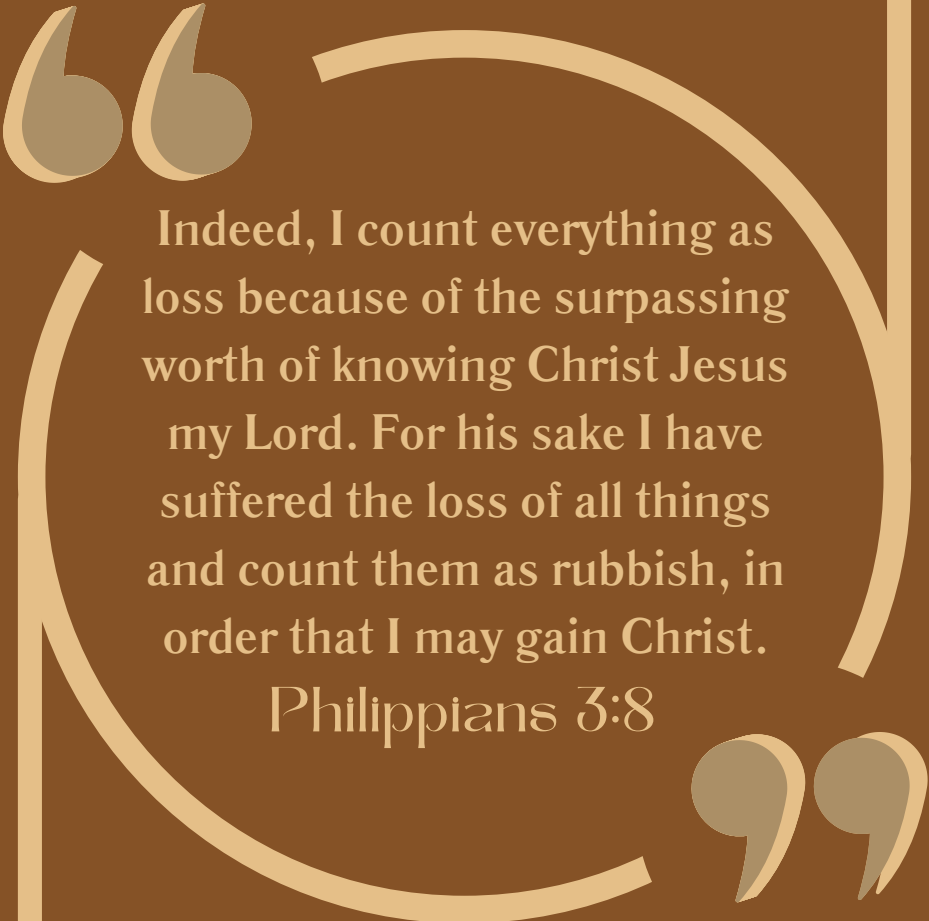
04 What do you think are some visible signs of a reliable servant of Christ - just as Timothy was seen as one?



VINCENT VAN GOGH
The Bearers of the Burden, 1881.

Commentary

Paul in Philippians urges his readers to cultivate humility and exhorts them to share in the suffering of Christ for the sake of others (Philippians 3:10). Here Vincent van Gogh depicts humble women labouring on, bent under sacks of coal gleaned from slag-heaps to burn in their homes – their intensive act of humble servitude to others. Amidst the actions of the women, we are confronted by Jesus Christ, who bore the burden of the world through suffering servitude. We see this very act of Christ, hanging in the right foreground, depicting the very imagery of humble servitude.



“Indeed, I count everything as
loss because of the surpassing
worth of knowing Christ Jesus
my Lord. For his sake I have
suffered the loss of all things
and count them as rubbish, in
order that I may gain Christ.

Philippians 3:8



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Epistle to the Philippians

SERMON NOTES

Epistle to the Philippians

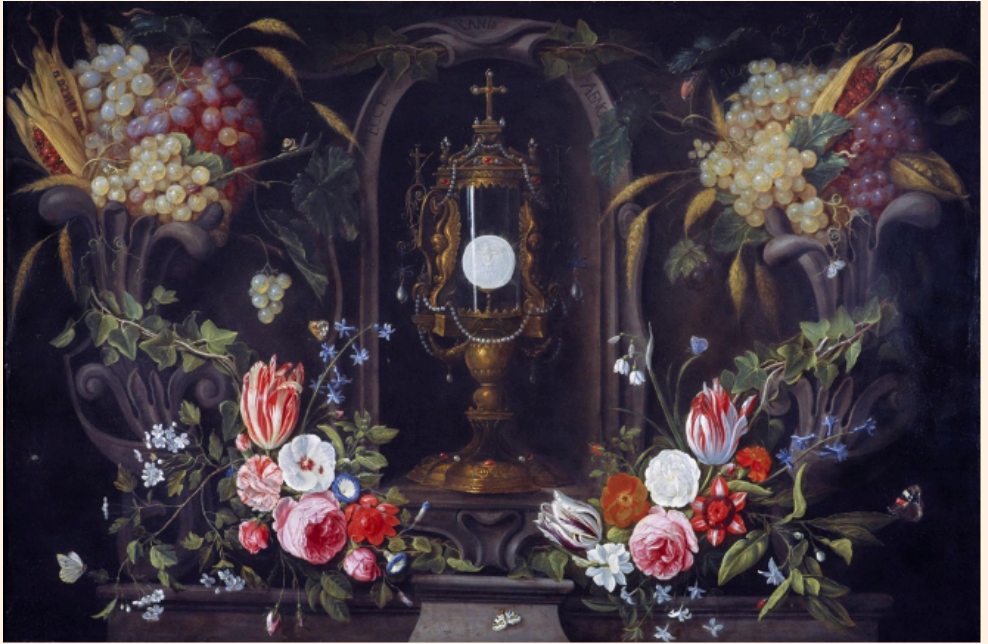
Read Philippians 3

01 What are the things of the flesh that this world places its confidence in?

02 Are those things you listed above, worthy of counting as loss in the light of gaining Christ?

03 What do we actually gain, when we "gain Christ" as Paul says?

04 What would you say, is the goal for a Christian?



JAN VAN KESSEL I

Still Life of Flowers and Grapes encircling a
Monstrance in a Niche, 1670.

Commentary

Paul instructs his readers to 'think about' (*logizesthe*) whatever is true, honourable, just, and pure (Philippians 4:8). Jan Van Kessel bids his viewer to meditate precisely this way by rendering one of the most recognizable signs of the Christian faith as an object worthy of ceaseless devotion. At the centre of the painting, we see a wafer that has been consecrated for the Eucharist, set in a monstrance and placed into a niche. Surrounding the monstrance are emblems of nature's abundant goodness. Delicately painted flowers surround it, but are destined to wither and wilt: we would be foolish to focus on such fleeting beauty. Our gaze must move beyond these to the plain white wafer, the only object worthy of our full attention. By presenting this heavenly food for our adoration and reflection, Van Kessel offers us an image through which we might cultivate a habit of *logizesthe*.



Therefore, my brothers,
whom I love and long
for, my joy and crown,
stand firm thus in the
Lord, my beloved.

Philippians 4:1

Epistle to the Philippians

SERMON NOTES

Epistle to the Philippians

Read Philippians 4

01 In what way does Paul seek the Philippians to "stand firm in the Lord" (v. 1)?

02 How does modelling a Christlike life impact discipleship within the Church (cf. v. 9)

03 In what ways can we model after the Church in Philippi to support and partner with fellow workers of Christ like Paul?

04 What do you think were the gifts that Paul received, beyond the physical gifts Epaphroditus brought along from the Church in Philippi?



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