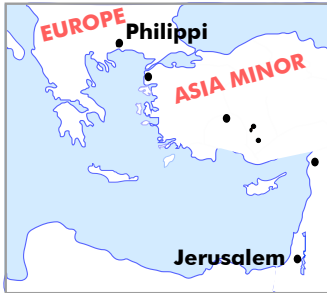


## Lesson #11 – Philippians 2019

Before starting this lesson, read **the entire book, chapters 1 - 4.**

The Philippians lived in northeast Macedonia - what we know today as northern Greece. Their city was on the military highway known as **Egnatia Way**.



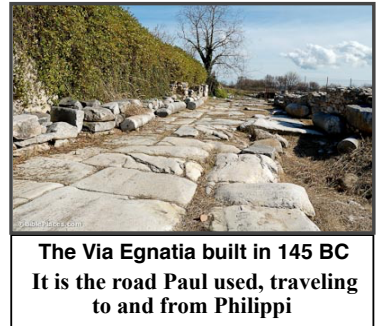
Philippi was the last city in the west, linking the Roman empire with the east. As a result, Caesar Augustus made it a Roman colony in 42 BC. It would be the place where his military veterans could retire. It became known as “little Rome.”

All the residents were given Roman citizenship. They were exempt from taxes, free to travel and had guaranteed legal rights. Thru the years, the people modeled not only their city, but also their life and actions after Rome. They were arrogant and got what they wanted thru force and

power. Because Roman soldiers were known for their hatred of Jews, Jewish people had no desire to live in Philippi.

When Paul was on his 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary trip (49-53 AD), God directed him to the western coast of Asia province. That night in a dream, he saw a man from northern Greece asking for help. Believing the dream to be from God, Paul and his co-workers went to Macedonia near the end of 50 AD. Their first place of ministry was this Roman city of Philippi. A few months later, when Paul, Silas and Timothy left, a small church had been established. It met in the home of a businesswoman named Lydia. Dr. Luke, who had also been with Paul, stayed to be their first pastor. (see endnote)

Four times over the next 10 years, these church members sent financial help to Paul. Now it is 60 AD. The church hears Paul is in Rome, under house arrest. Showing love and concern they send yet another offering with their current pastor, a man named Epaphroditus. When he arrives in Rome, he not only delivers their gift, but also stays to help Paul - fixing meals, buying food, running errands and delivering messages. But then he becomes gravely ill. This news gets back to Philippi and the church becomes concerned lest their pastor dies. After quite some time, Epaphroditus gets well, but his church members are not convinced. So both he and Paul decide he should return to reassure them.



**The Via Egnatia built in 145 BC  
It is the road Paul used, traveling  
to and from Philippi**

Paul uses this opportunity to write the church - both the members and leaders. This letter shows how special they are to him. There is a closeness and bond that is different from his relationships with other churches. He says they are his joy and crown. Twice he tells them he longs for **them**. (He told the Thessalonians he longed to **see** them)

He has 3 reasons for writing them.

1. To thank them for their gift and the help of their pastor.
2. To assure them they will be the first to know the verdict of his trial.
3. To gently reprove them for wrong action in their Christian life.

Notice how this fits with the books we have studied thus far. The books immediately following Acts are teaching for the churches. Each topic is divided into teaching, reproof of action and correction of belief.

On the topic of **SALVATION**, Paul gave **teaching** to the **ROMANS**.

He **reproved** the **CORINTHIANS** for not practicing their salvation.

He **corrected** the **GALATIANS** for their wrong belief about salvation.

But salvation is not the end. The Christian life is to be lived and practiced.

So in **EPHESIANS**, Paul gave **teaching** about the **CHRISTIAN LIFE**.

Christ is Head; all Christians everywhere are part of His Body.

There is just one Head and just one Body.

		SALVATION	CHRISTIAN LIFE
<b>BEGINNING OF LOCAL CHURCHES</b>  <b>Acts</b>	<b>TEACHING FOR church members</b>	<b>ROMANS</b> <b>1-2 CORINTHIANS</b> <b>GALATIANS</b>	<b>EPHESIANS</b> <b>PHILIPPIANS</b>
		{ teaching reproof of action correction of belief 2 Tim. 3:16	

The Ephesians were the first to get this teaching in **writing**.

However, Paul had taught it **verbally** to the Philippians when he was with them. At this point, they have the knowledge, but are not practicing it. We know this because he is not **teaching** and explaining about the one Body. He is **reproving** the **PHILIPPIANS** for **wrong action**. They are not **acting** like one Body so the emphasis is **unity**.

## OUTLINE

Reproof thru praise	1:1-26
Reproof thru reminders	1:27 - 2:4
Reproof thru examples	2:5 – 3:21
Reproof thru instruction	4

Paul usually starts his letters with his name and then a title to explain the basis on which he is writing.

*Paul, an apostle; an apostle and teacher; an apostle and servant.*

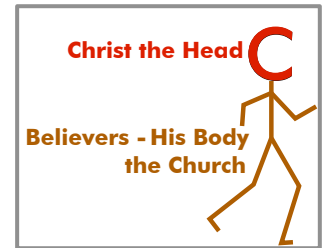
Philippians is the only book that Paul uses the title, *servant* by itself.

This letter is reproof for not practicing the oneness of the Body. So Paul does not want to write as tho he is over them as Head. Christ is Head over all of them.

Paul is writing them as another member of that one Body. Timothy joins him in that oneness.

*Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints (believers) in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons: 1:1*

In this context, the word *overseer* means pastor/elder. This is the only letter where Paul addresses church members and church leaders (pastors and deacons) separately.



In previous lessons we talked about a group of false teachers that developed in Jerusalem.

They said everyone had to keep all the Mosaic and Mishnah laws to have salvation or be obedient in the Christian life.

They said Gentile men had to be circumcised.

These false teachers went to every church that Paul started and tried to change the gospel message.

From the context of this letter, we can put together the problem within the church.

These false teachers had come to the Philippian church, but the church leaders had dealt with them.

However, this had created divisions within the church - between the leaders themselves and between the leaders and congregation.

Some leaders think they handled things so much better than others.

Church members have been arguing and complaining about how it had been handled.

Evidently some think the false teaching is not a problem.

Some are fearful of what will happen when the false teachers return.

Others are fearful of suffering they may have to go thru.

This has brought discouragement to both the leaders and church members. There is a feeling of pessimism and sadness.

This is why Paul emphasizes two ideas - **unity** and **joy**.

### Reproof thru Praise

Paul begins and ends this letter with praise.

He thanks them for their partnership with him.

When he had first been in their city, they had listened and responded to the message of salvation.

Then they began to work alongside of him, giving out the message, so that the church developed and grew quickly.

After he left, they continued to share in his ministry thru prayer and financial help.

As he traveled thruout Greece, they rejoiced to hear of new believers and churches that were started.

Paul is thrilled they understand the importance of working together with him. It has made a difference in his work. He is confident this teamwork will continue. Christ as Head will continue to work in their lives to develop them even more.

*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. 1:6*

This promise is not just for the Philippians, but for us as well. God will finish what He has started in our lives.

Months earlier, when the Philippians heard Paul was in Rome under house arrest, they had immediately sent money along with their pastor. They had also sent a message of sympathy. How terrible that Paul's ministry had been cut short, now that he was a prisoner.

Paul tells them his ministry has not ended. It is greater than ever and they, the Philippians, are still his partners. He explains,

*As a result, it has become clear thruout the whole palace guard and to everyone else, that I am in chains for Christ.* 1:13

"Palace guard" is not completely accurate. The actual Greek word is *praetorium*. This refers to a part of the Roman palace where the royal bodyguard stayed. These were hundreds of elite soldiers responsible for the protection of Caesar. They also were given charge of political prisoners under house arrest. Paul is considered a political prisoner and so it is this group of solders that are assigned to him.

One at a time, they are fastened to him with a 6-foot chain and rotated every 6-8 hours. Being next to him, they hear Paul as he dictates his letters, as he gets down on his knees and prays for the churches and as he teaches those that come to see him. Over a two year period, as they heard the gospel message, many of these soldiers believed. We know this from Paul's comment at the end of the letter.

*All the saints (believers) send you greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar's household.* 4:22

These are the soldiers who live in part of Caesar's palace. What a ministry Paul is having, reaching the elite in Caesar's household.



According to 1:14, when other believers saw the response of the Roman soldiers, they were encouraged and lost their fear to speak about Jesus. Some did it for right motives; others did it with a desire to make their ministry look better than Paul's. But since the gospel message itself was pure, Paul's arrest truly had advanced the gospel in Rome.

Paul thanks the Philippians for sharing in his ministry. He then assures them they will be the first to know the verdict of his trial. He has been in Rome for 2 years, the maximum time to hold a Roman citizen who has not be convicted of a crime. So the verdict should be coming within a few months. Paul's life is centered around Jesus.

If the verdict is **guilty** and he is put to death, he knows he would be in God's presence. That is what he desires, so for Paul, *to die is gain*.

But he is sure the verdict will be *not guilty* and he will be set free. He writes,

*Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith.* 1:25

They still need his ministry. Right now, they need his reproof.

### Reproof thru Reminders

He reminds them about their **responsibility**. He tells them,

*Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.* 1:27

The Greek word for **conduct/live** was used for Roman citizens to say, *act like citizens - fulfill your responsibilities*. The Philippians are Roman citizens with wonderful **privileges**. But they also have responsibilities to Caesar, their head and to Roman citizens around them. They know how this word relates to their **secular** life.

Paul now uses this word to give a **spiritual** application. They are not just Roman citizens.

As believers, they are heavenly citizens, with wonderful privileges. But they also have responsibilities - first to Christ, as Head and then to other believers.

Paul says, *live up to your position as heavenly citizens - fulfill your responsibilities*.

The end of verse 27 tells them the **responsibility** they have at the moment.

They need to *contend*. The Greek word means *striving together as equals on a team*. False teachers had come to their church. They had dealt with them, but now the church is divided. They need to be united in their thinking, with one purpose. When the false teachers return, the church will again face opposition and suffering just as Paul did when he resisted their false teaching.

To be effective, they need to resist, striving together as equals on a team.

Paul next reminds them of the  **blessings**  they have because Christ is Head.

They are in Christ, assured of God's love.

The Holy Spirit has given them a tenderness and compassion for other believers.

They should now use this compassion to have unity with each other.

Church leaders should be willing to listen to church members who have the spiritual gift of discernment and insight from God.

*Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. 2:3*

## Reproof thru Examples

When we see the word **salvation** in the Bible, we automatically assume it is talking about eternal salvation. Because we accepted the payment of Jesus, we are *saved* from making the payment ourselves. But there are other kinds of salvation as well.

Believers need salvation from Satan's attack or salvation from wrong attitudes.

The Philippian leaders need salvation from wrong thinking and wrong attitudes of pride and complaining.

## LIKE JESUS – BE HUMBLE IN MINISTRY

Their first example is Jesus.

*Jesus - who, being in very nature God (deity), did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made Himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. 2:6*

This is another verse in the New Testament that declares the deity of Jesus. In heaven, His deity was evident. Angels bowed before Him. He had glory and power. But when He came to this earth, He did not insist on bringing that glory and power with Him. He left it in heaven. When He took on human nature, He came in humility, born as a helpless baby. His ministry was done in humility.

Paul tells church leaders, *You should have the same thinking as Jesus. You should have humility in your ministry – not seeking glory and power.*

But this cannot be done just by wishing they had the attitude of Jesus. It will require work on their part. They are to respond actively with their will and say, *I want God to change my attitude and I am willing to do whatever it takes.*

According to 2:12, this is to be done with fear and trembling, realizing if **they** do not deal with their wrong attitudes, the Holy Spirit will and He will do it thru discipline.

Paul now explains how God makes it possible. I am paraphrasing verse 13 from the Greek. *For in fact, God is energizing you both in your desire and ability. He does this for His pleasure and so you can please Him.*

Whether it be church leaders in the first century, or we as believers today, God has provided everything we need to change our thinking. The Holy Spirit within us, not only gives us the **ability**, He even gives us the **desire** to change.

## LIKE TIMOTHY – BE CONCERNED FOR THE CHURCH

Timothy is not just interested in himself. As soon as Paul knows the verdict of his trial, Timothy will make the 600-mile trip west to Philippi, so they can have the news. He is willing to give up weeks of his time because he is concerned and interested in the welfare of the Philippian church.



## LIKE EPAPHRODITUS – GIVE OF YOURSELF

The pastor of the Philippian church has been willing to risk his life serving and then representing his church. He had traveled to Rome, stayed there to help Paul, gotten ill, has now recovered and is returning to his church in Philippi

*Welcome him in the Lord with great joy and honor men like him, because he almost died for the work of Christ, risking his life to make up for the help you could not give me. 2:29*

## LIKE PAUL – DESIRE TO BE CHANGED BY GOD

He again warns them of the false teachers and their teaching.

*Watch out for those dogs, those men who do evil, those mutilators of the flesh. 3:2*

Paul is saying, *Watch out for those men who say you have to be circumcised and follow Jewish laws in order to be accepted by God.* The Philippian church cannot ignore these teachers or think their message is harmless. Paul knows how dangerous this teaching is, because that is exactly how he used to think.

Paul had been the leading rabbi of his day. He was destined to become greater than Gamaliel, his famous rabbi teacher. As a Pharisee, he had outwardly kept all the Jewish laws, both the law of Moses and the laws of Mishnah. He was sure the more laws he kept, the more right with God he was. But then he met Jesus on the Damascus Road and he changed his mind completely.

*What is more, I consider everything - all those religious good things that I did - 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, not having a rightness of my own that comes from keeping laws, but that which is thru faith in Christ - the rightness that comes from God and is by faith. 3:8-9*

Paul is no longer trying to impress others with how good he is. Keeping all the Jewish laws in the world could never make him right with God. Like everyone else, he needed the holiness of Jesus credited to him.

According to verse 10, Paul now has just one goal - spiritual maturity. He knows this involves several steps.

**To know Christ** means to understand more of Christ and spiritual things on a deeper level.

He also wants to **experience God's power.**

Not so he can go from being the greatest rabbi to be the greatest apostle.

He wants God's power so he can change - so he can mature in his spiritual life.

But it takes more than power.

Spiritual maturity also comes thru **suffering for doing what is right.**

Choosing to do what God says will often bring rejection and misunderstanding. It brings separation from others. This is what Paul means by the word *death* - rejection separates us from others.

All of these steps lead to Paul's goal of verse 11 *...and so by any means to attain to the resurrection from the dead.*

Paul is not saying he is trying to work his way to heaven. He is not talking about the final resurrection. He is talking about the Christian life right now and what he had written to the Ephesians. He had been spiritually dead in sin. But God made him alive and raised him up. He seated him in Jesus in the heavenlies. God the Father declared him holy.

But Paul knows this is not his daily experience. So his passion and goal is to have his daily life become more and more the way God sees him - that he becomes **more** holy. In other words, he wants to attain spiritual maturity. He wants to attain to the position that God has spiritually raised him to.

He does not think he has arrived, but this is what he is aiming for.

*3:12 Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me - spiritual maturity. (see endnote for Olympic explanation)*

Paul's major goal and passion is not to start more churches or change other people.

**His most important goal in this life is to let God change him.**

And he never loses sight of what awaits him and all believers after this life.

As wonderful as Roman citizenship is, with all its privileges, their heavenly citizenship is far more wonderful. It will last forever. When Jesus returns, He will give them a body like His.

*But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like His glorious body.... 3:20-21*



Everyone wants to know what our heavenly body will be like. In the gospels we are told about Jesus after His resurrection. From that, we can know certain things about our resurrection bodies.

We will be able to see and touch each other. We will know each other.

We will be able to eat.

It will be a body that cannot deteriorate.

It will never experience pain, can never do anything wrong or ever die.

Paul began his letter, telling the Philippians to **stand firm and united against false teachers**.

He is dealing with the life of the local church.

He has told them **how** to do it in his reproof thru praise, reminders and examples.

He now ends this section,

*Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, that* (everything I have just told you), *is how you should stand firm in the Lord, dear friends.* 4:1

### Reproof thru Instruction

It is for their **personal lives**.

He first reproves 2 **leaders**.

*I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord.* 4:2

The little phrase “in the Lord” is important.

Spiritual unity and agreement need to be based on God’s values and standards.

There can never be spiritual unity with those who misuse God’s Word or support things outside His boundaries.

These 2 women had a problem between them - no doubt about the false teachers and how it had been handled. They have started to work it out, but things are still not completely right. So Paul asks a third party, another leader in the church to act as a neutral mediator.

In verse 3 he says these 2 women *contended at my side in the cause of the gospel*. The word *contended* is the same as he used in chapter 1, the word meaning *members on a team considered as equals*. By using this word Paul is saying these women were teacher/leaders in the church. They had worked with him as equals in giving out the gospel message when he had been in Philippi.

If you remember, at the beginning of this letter, Paul did not use the title, *apostle*. Now in writing to these women who had been part of his teaching team, he does not command them. He **asks** them to clear up the differences - *I plead, I beg you*.

The first instruction is for 2 women in a leadership role - to agree with each other.

The rest of the instruction in chapter 4 is for Philippian believers in the church.

They are discouraged. There is a spirit of heaviness and sadness in the church. The focus has been on all the problems they have been thru. Paul says, *put your focus back on God*. To help them do this, he gives a series of commands.

#### **Verse 4 - Rejoice in the Lord.**

In this brief command, Paul is taking them back to the teaching about the Christian life.

They should remember that God the Father sees them in the beauty and holiness of Jesus. They have the Holy Spirit as the Father’s seal that they belong to Him and one day they will be in His home. Now they should live in the **joy** of their spiritual blessings.

*Rejoice in the Lord.*

#### **Verse 5 - Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near**

Within the church, people should be able to say, *I can talk with him or her. I know he is a reasonable person. I know she will listen*. To help us be reasonable, Paul reminds us - Jesus is present with us in our conversations. The Lord is near.

When a church deals with false teaching, it is easy to worry about the future. What is going to happen next?

#### Verse 6

*Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.*

The literal Greek says - *stop perpetually worrying.*

Stop dwelling on the situation, thinking about who said what and what might happen.

Pray with thankfulness.

Thank God for all His spiritual blessings and how He changed our relationship with Him.

Ask Him for wisdom to know what to do and what not to do.

When we thank Him that He is in control and we ask Him for wisdom, notice what God does.

#### Verse 7

*And the peace of God which transcends all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*

The word *guard* is a military term meaning *to mount patrol or set up a wall*. Even when we are doing battle with the enemy, God's peace will mount patrol around or set up a wall around our thoughts. This will keep us from discouragement as well as turning on each other.

God's peace stays with us, if we choose to think about the right things.

#### Verse 8

*Whatever is true, whatever is noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, if anything is excellent or praiseworthy, think about such things.*

Paul is not talking about finding positive things in the situation. Many times there is nothing positive to find. Paul is using words that refer to absolutes. That which is completely true, noble, right and lovely. Paul is talking about Jesus. Our focus needs to stay on Him because He knows the situation and He has the power to change it.

#### REPROOF THRU INSTRUCTION

Agree with each other based on spiritual truth  
Live in the enjoyment of how God sees you  
Be reasonable to deal with  
Stop dwelling on the situation - ask for wisdom  
Enjoy God's peace as you focus on Him

Paul ends this letter reminding them again of their partnership with him. Because they sent help to him, he assures them,

**Verse 19** *My God will fill all your needs and He has all the resources.* 4:19

In closing, I want to go back to chapter one and look at Paul's prayer for the church when he knows they are dealing with false teachers and false teaching. I am reading chapter 1:9, translating it from the original Greek.

*This is my prayer for you. May your love increase in knowledge and insight, so when there are differences, you will have discernment to make wise decisions and not cause others to turn away from God.*

Notice that love is not enough. It has to be guided with knowledge and insight.

They need to know what is right and what is wrong from God's point of view.

They need to recognize what is true and what is false.

The Philippians already have love, tenderness and compassion.

Now they need knowledge and insight so they can have "tough love."

In our churches today, some have had to deal with false teachers in the past. Some are going thru it right now. Others will go thru it in the coming months and years. One thing is for sure - in every local church when members and leaders follow God's values and boundaries, there will be resistance and rebellion. Those within the local church need knowledge and insight to see the difference between a true and false message. They need to stand firm against everything that changes God's Word and/or that goes outside of His boundaries.

Sometimes it will be the leaders who decide to go against God's Word. Church members need knowledge and insight: to know how to oppose it, how long to oppose it and when it is wiser to leave. We can turn others away from God by ignoring false teaching.

But we can also turn others away by opposing the situation when there is absolutely no chance of others changing. Instead of creating hard feelings and ill will, it is wiser to quietly leave.

This is a prayer that every church leader and church member needs today.

It is also a prayer that we as individuals need as we make decisions that involve family and friends.

*May our love increase in knowledge and insight, so when there are differences, we have discernment to make wise decisions and not cause others to turn away from God.*

## ENDNOTES

### **Page 1 Luke, the first pastor of the Philippian church**

The church began when Lydia, her employees, a young girl freed from evil spirits and the jailer along with his family had all put their faith in Jesus. This was near the end of 50 AD. When Paul, Silas and Timothy left town, Luke stayed and pastored the church for the next 6 years. The church met in the home of Lydia.

### **Page 5 Olympic foot race**

In our days, the winner breaks a ribbon at the end of the race. In Paul's days, the winner was the first to grab hold of a post.

For Paul, the Olympic race pictures the Christian life.

Grabbing hold of the post pictures complete spiritual maturity.

Paul says he has not spiritually arrived; he does not have complete spiritual maturity

*Not that I think I have already obtained all this... But I press on to **take hold of** (to grab the post) that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. (On the Damascus Road) 3:12*