

Bible Study # 23

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Ephesians 4

- **Ephesians 4:1-16** *“I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, beg you to lead a life worthy of the calling to which you have been called,...when each part is working properly, makes bodily growth and upbuilds itself in love.”*
 - Paul begins this section by exhorting his listeners to live in a manner worthy of the call they had received
 - Throughout these Epistles we hear this language about the **unity of the Church as the body of Christ**
 - One body
 - One spirit
 - One hope

Ephesians 4 (Cont)

- One Lord
- One faith
- One baptism
- One God and Father of all
- With Christ as the head of the whole body *

Ephesians 4 (Cont)

- **Ephesians 4:17-32** *“Now this I affirm and testify in the Lord,...as God in Christ forgave you.”*
 - Here we find a common **Christian proverb** *“Be angry but to not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and give no opportunity to the devil.”* (Liturgy of the Hours - Wednesday Evening Prayer)
 - Paul was warning against the kind of conduct that his readers practiced before they were converted to Christ
 - He tells them to no longer live as the Gentiles do and reminds them of how people who do not know Jesus live their lives

Ephesians 4 (Cont)

- He suggested that the **spiritual condition of the pagans was even graver** than their intellectual condition because of their alienation from the life and will of God
- Yet, Paul was not finished as he tells them that those Gentiles who were estranged from God were in that state because of their hardness of heart
- The moral consequence of this condition is that they had become callous and thus had lost all sensitivity by turning to a life of licentiousness *

Ephesians 5

- **Ephesians 5:1-20** *“Therefore be imitators of God as beloved children....giving thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father.”*
 - This marks the beginning of a new section in this letter
 - Paul urges his readers to **imitate God** by **becoming like beloved children** who imitated their fathers
 - He suggested that to live in love was to imitate Christ who loved us and handed himself over for us
 - For Paul, Jesus’ death was a sacrificial offering of Himself to God

Ephesians 5 (Cont)

- Paul again addressed the sexual immorality (*porneia*) that was a characteristic of the pagan Gentile
- Immorality can refer to any form of sexual activity that occurred outside of marriage
- He tells them that these activities were totally inappropriate among people set apart for a holy God
- He goes on to explain that even obscene or suggestive talk was out of place for God's people
- He proposed that the opposite of inappropriate speech was a kind of speech that characterized a Christian as one offering "thanksgiving"

Ephesians 5 (Cont)

- This meant that they should offer praise in all circumstances of life
- He suggested that those who live in this immoral or impure way of life will miss out on eternal life with God which to him was the worst tragedy that can befall a human being
- He warned that by being disobedient and living a sexually immoral lifestyle, one would be subject to the wrath of God
- He cautioned his readers not to associate (to be partnered with) those who were living in this evil

Ephesians 5 (Cont)

- Paul further expands on this idea by comparing it to their living in darkness before Baptism, but now living in the light of the Lord
- In fact, he tells them that they are now children of the light
- He asks them to try and learn what is pleasing to the Lord
- After criticizing the wrong kind of conduct and commending the right kind of conduct, he repeats the cycle with a slightly different variation

Ephesians 5 (Cont)

- **Ephesians 5:21-33** *“Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ....let each one of you love his wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.”*
 - In the past, parts of this passage were a part of every Catholic marriage ceremony
 - It is a very beautiful passage based on **Paul’s theology of the church**
 - Unfortunately, today it is often misunderstood causing couples to frequently substitute *Corinthians 13* which is all about love (unfortunately, this is usually taken out of context)

Ephesians 5 (Cont)

- Paul demonstrated the **need for a hierarchy within the Body of Christ** to include the local church and the Christian family
- Paul is pointing out that within every organization there needs to be a leader who is in charge *

Ephesians 6

- **Ephesians 6:1-9** *“Children, obey your parents in the Lord,... and yours is in heaven and that there is no partiality with him.”*
 - Paul continued this **theme of hierarchy** as he called upon slaves (like children) to be obedient to their masters and masters to be kind to their slaves
 - He is speaking about harmony and peace in relationships
 - Slaves in that culture and time frame was not the same as we experienced slavery in our country
 - Slaves had many rights and were treated much more like indentured servants than what we think of as slaves

Ephesians 6 (Cont)

- From the earliest time the Church has taught that slavery was an evil thing
- Masters were encouraged to free their slaves
- Paul will speak more to this in his **Letter to *Philemon***
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Ephesians 6 (Cont)

- **Ephesians 6:10-20** *“Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might...as I ought to speak.”*
 - The armor of God:
 - Girding your loins with the truth
 - Putting on the breastplate of righteousness
 - Enclosing your feet with the equipment of the gospel of peace
 - Taking the shield of faith
 - Taking on the helmet of salvation
 - Picking up the sword of the Spirit – the word of God *

Ephesians 6 (Cont)

- **Ephesians 6:21-24** *“Now that you also may know how I am and what I am doing,...Grace be with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ with love undying.”*
 - It appears that **Tychicus** delivered this letter to the *Ephesians*
 - Most likely it was on the first Sunday after he arrived in *Ephesus*
 - *Tychicus* would have read the letter out loud to the gathered community during the celebration of the liturgy
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Transition

- Next time we will begin our study of Paul's **Letter to the Philippians**

Macedonia

- Look at the call of Paul to Macedonia **Acts 16:6 -10**
- The Macedonian people were the most liked by the Romans who had ruled them since 167 B.C.
- Thessalonica and Philippi were the most important of the four Roman districts within Macedonia
- Paul entered Macedonia on his second missionary journey

Philippi

- Philippi was named after Philip of Macedonia, the father of Alexander the Great, who established a fortified camp there in 360 BC
- The city was overrun by the Romans in 168 BC
- In 42 BC, Augustus established it as a Roman military colony with the rights of the city of Rome and exemption from taxes
- The veterans living there considered themselves to be true Romans

Philippi (Cont)

- Together with their deities (Minerva, Diana, Mercury, and Hercules), they brought with them Roman speech and culture
- The Roman road that crossed Macedonia from East to West and by way of *Brundisium* connected them directly with Rome
- At the time of Paul, it was a typical Roman provincial town
- It was a miniature Rome with a forum, a theater, a castle, and a military wall

Philippi (Cont)

- Each year the people elected two mayors (like the two Roman consuls, called *archontes* or strategists)
- When these officials went to the forum to hand down a sentence, they were preceded by two *lictors* carrying the bundle of rods and the executioner's ax
- Some of the original settlers still lived among these Roman colonists and they had always been a difficult people, blunt in speech, proud, sullen, loud, and always ready to join in some political disturbance
- Women seemed to exercise considerable influence

Philippi (Cont)

- At the time of Paul's visit during his Second Missionary Journey, the city was thoroughly Gentile with a large Roman population
- The Jewish community appears to have been relatively small as they were without a synagogue
- This is the most likely reason that they gathered at the river to pray (Acts 16:13)
- Paul, along with Silas, Timothy and Luke, established a Christian community there

Philippi (Cont)

- Paul visited the city at least twice during his Third Missionary Journey
- When the Philippian Christians heard about Paul's imprisonment in Rome, they sent *Epaphroditus* with gifts to tend to his needs
- Although *Epaphroditus* became ill while in Rome, he recovered and became the courier for Paul's letter to the Philippians thanking them for their kindness

Outline of the Letter of Saint Paul to the Philippians

- **1. Opening Address (1:1-11)**
 - A. Salutation (1:1-2)
 - B. Prayer and Thanksgiving (1:3-11)
- **2. Paul's Imprisonment (1:12-30)**
 - A. The Advance of the Gospel (1:12-18)
 - B. Personal Update (1:19-26)
 - C. Exhortation to Stand Firm (1:27-30)
- **3. Imitating Jesus Christ (2:1-18)**
 - A. Christ's Humility and Obedience (2:1-11)
 - B. Living like Christ (2:12-18)

Outline of the Letter of Saint Paul to the Philippians (Cont)

- **4. The Arrival of Timothy and Epaphroditus (2: 19-30)**
- **5. Striving for the Goal (3:1-21)**
 - A. Warning against Judaizers (3:1-11)
 - B. Pursuing the Heavenly Prize (3:12-21)
- 6. Final Instructions and Praise (4:1-20)**
 - A. Working for Unity (4:1-3)
 - B. Rejoicing in the Lord (4:4-9)
 - C. Gratitude for the Philippians' Assistance (4:10-20)
- 7. Conclusion (4:21-23)**

Philippians 1

- **Phil 1:1** *“Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who were at Philippi, with a Bishop and deacons:”*
 - The Philippians were Paul’s favorite community and from this letter we can see that he really loved these people
 - We have seen this love for the Philippians described in the two previous letters to the Corinthians where he spoke highly of the Christians in Macedonia (2nd Corr 8:1-5)
 - Note the difference in tone throughout this letter from that in his earlier letters

Philippians 1 (Cont)

- His use of the two major Ecclesial positions of “Bishop” and “Deacon” were presented without any reference to “priest” which was the custom in the early Church
- Bishops were those who took over from the Apostles
- Deacons were those who served and assisted the Bishops, allowing the Bishops to preach the Gospel
- In the Early Church every parish was governed by a Bishop, and only after the faith began to spread beyond the cities into the smaller villages was there a need to ordain priests *

Philippians 1 (Cont)

- **Phil 1:2-7** *“Grace to you and peace from God our father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayers with joy, thankful for your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now...both in my imprisonment and in defense and confirmation of the gospel.”*
 - Paul was speaking to them in this manner because they had sent *Epaphroditus* to Rome to see how Paul was doing and to find out what else they could do for him while he was in prison *

Philippians 1 (Cont)

- **Phil 1:8-18** *“For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. Christ is proclaimed: and in that I rejoice.”*
 - Paul presented in this section his overarching theme which was his focus on of his being a servant as well as a prisoner for Christ
 - He understood that the reason for his suffering was the forwarding of the Gospel
 - Father Sebastian suggested that this message found throughout in the Prison Epistles as well as the Book of Job can be helpful for someone who is suffering or struggling to find meaning in their suffering

Philippians 1 (Cont)

- Paul points out the purpose of our suffering by demonstrating that it unites us with Christ and His suffering
- Imagine what Paul must have thought about his future as he remained locked up for two years
- His faith became apparent in these Epistles as he demonstrated how he was a member of the Body of Christ through his baptism
- Thus, when Christians suffer as participants in the life of Christ, Christ is suffering along with us

Philippians 1 (Cont)

- The suffering of Christ was worked out for the salvation of others, that is His death and resurrection brought about the sacrament of baptism
- Paul saw that his own suffering had some sort of salvific purpose *

Philippians 1 (Cont)

- **Phil 1:19-21** *“Yes, and I shall rejoice.... For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain.”*
 - At this point it seems as though Paul understood that he was most probably going to be released from his imprisonment (deliverance)
 - He also began to relate to the possibility of his death as being a normal part of life
 - It was not something that he wanted, but something that was normal for the human person
 - But he decided that whether he lived or died it would be for Christ *

Philippians 1 (Cont)

- **Phil 1:22-26** *“If it is to be life in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell....so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again.”*
 - He expressed a strong desire to visit the Philippians again:
 - This may have happened during the period between his 1st and 2nd imprisonment
 - We know that during that period he was at least somewhere in Macedonia *