

Supporting Notes & Questions

Week beginning Monday 3rd May 2021

Prepared by Ken Sykes

Ephesians 6 – 1-9 "Where our religion is true, it will affect every relationship in life. The love of Christ must find its manifestation in nursery and in kitchen, in workshop and in municipal chamber. But notice that its duties are reciprocal. We must give on our side, just as we expect others to give on theirs." The centre of all authority is Christ and to Him we must give account. V12 answers the question from Chapter 4. So why do we need the full armour of God? Do we take this as seriously as Paul did? ...and v18? Vv23,24 Peace, faith, grace, love. How abundant are they in our lives and the life of our church?

PHILIPPIANS

Prepared by Rosemary Nunn

Paul's "epistle of joy", full of memorable sentences, was written during imprisonment (probably in Ephesus/Rome), yet speaks of "joy" and "rejoice" 16 times in its 4 chapters. The first European church (see Acts 16) was in Philippi, a Roman colony in Macedonia in the north of modern Greece. This warm, personal letter to *partners* (key word!) in the faith has an encouraging rather than critical tone, even when addressing difficulties. As well as saying thank-you for a generous monetary gift, it also aims to unite and build up this body of church members on their faith journey. Catch afresh Paul's infectious enthusiasm for Christ!

Tuesday 4th. Philippians 1

1-11. Greetings and gratitude. Paul calls all Christians saints. Not just the stained glass variety! He thanks God for the Philippians, because they are partners in the gospel and maturing in faith. His prayer for them (9-11) describes what *full* growth to maturity will look like. Pray the prayer for yourself, asking that God's grace and help may be at work in *you*.

12-18a. Paul sees his imprisonment creating opportunities for spreading the gospel. His guards hear his message, and others feel encouraged to speak out, too. Are we able to see difficulties as opportunities?

18b-30. Paul's future is uncertain. While ready for more Christ-work, he equally anticipates death as positive: he will be with his beloved Jesus. How do we face death?

27-30. Despite opposition, the lives of the Philippian Christians, individually and as a united community, should be in line with Christ. What opposition do we face? *Pray StF 504. May the mind of Christ my Saviour*

Wednesday 5th. Philippians 2

1-18. The essential key to unity is a shared focus on Jesus, echoing his humility, unshakeable others-first attitude and obedience. The "hymn" (probably quoted from another source) spells out the breathtaking extent of that humility and care – from heaven, to earth, to the cross, to exaltation - in the person of the fully divine yet fully human Jesus.

12-30. Do we "shine like stars" or is grumbling more our style? Timothy and Epaphroditus (deliverer of the gift) are fine lived-out examples of imitators of Jesus. And us? *Pray StF 272. From heaven you came*

Thursday 6th. Philippians 3

1-11. Paul turns the harsh language of "dogs", usually meaning Gentiles, onto those insisting God places rigid limits on those he accepts: Jewish lineage, "badges" (circumcision), strict observance of rules. Paul, once immensely proud of his top-notch Jewish credentials, now sees all that as rubbish (literally "dung"), compared with coming to know Jesus and his own consequent total turnaround. What false limits to God's acceptance are spoken of today? *Pray StF 489. All I once held dear*

3:12-4:1. None, including Paul, have "arrived" as Christ-followers, but must singlemindedly press on towards maturity like athletes focused on a finishing line. No resting on our laurels! As citizens of heaven's kingdom, we should find the best examples to imitate. Who are yours?

Friday 7th. Philippians 4.

1-9. Jam-packed with final instructions for Christian attitudes. A quarrel? With shared love of Jesus can we agree to disagree? "Rejoice!" Note joy, regardless of circumstances. Gentleness says so much. Prayer can disempower anxiety. With what do you feed your mind? (v 8).

10-23. Gratitude for the Philippians' exceptional generosity. Can you echo Paul's contented mindset (11-13)? *Pray StF 303. I know that my Redeemer lives.* Many thoughts expressed in this letter are captured here.