



PHILIPPIANS OVERVIEW

Stuck in house arrest, Paul writes to encourage the Philippian church to live as citizens worthy of the Gospel in the midst of their suffering. Many of us are also suffering right now. During this pandemic, we are experiencing loss, but we are not losing. We are in this together, growing in Christ and in unity, and God is refining us through suffering and purifying us through loss. To live for Christ and die to self in community in the midst of suffering and loss is to Christ's glory and our gain.

Paul's letter to the Philippians is so apt for us today. We need his words that can enable us, in light of and because of Christ Jesus, to rejoice in the midst of suffering, trial and loss. Now is the time to be a united church on mission together, willing to lose it all for Christ's fame and our gain.

WEEK 6: LIGHT UP THE WORLD

Read the text: Philippians 2:12-18

Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Do all things without grumbling or disputing, that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the

midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.

In today's passage, Paul calls the church to live in light of the saving work that God has already accomplished in them. If they have been saved by God, then they are being transformed more and more to become like Jesus. This transformation into the image of Jesus, what Paul also calls sanctification, involves our working out of our salvation, our shining as lights in our world, and our rejoicing in suffering. First, we work out our salvation by humbling ourselves before God and inviting Him to keep working in us, as we step out to obey Him. We work out our salvation by asking Him to give us the desire and the ability to obey. As we do this, we will shine as lights in the midst of a dark world. And, what makes us stand out as bright lights is what we do with our tongues...how we talk *to* and how we talk *about* one another. Last, God wants the salvation that He has accomplished in us to be embodied in our words and in our lives. This means we will be called to sacrifice and suffer for others and, like Paul, we can rejoice when this happens because our pouring out our lives is an expression of how Jesus poured out his life for us.

Discussion Questions:

These questions are written for DNA groups, but you can use in any setting, including missional communities. Because they were written for the intimacy of DNA friendships, you may need to adjust for larger groups.

1. Our sanctification, or God making us more like Jesus, happens at the points where our lives look most different from Jesus. Where are those points in your life right now?

Where do you presently need God to will and work in your life? Where do you need God to give you the *want to* and where do you need God to give the *ability to*?

2. Pastor Jeff said, “The Gospel is the word of life. It is spoken. Paul wants to be clear: you can’t faithfully hold fast to the gospel message of God’s kindness, mercy and grace while you speak words that lack kindness, mercy and grace. He wants the message we believe to be embodied in the words we speak and the way we speak them...not just the words we speak *about* Jesus but *every word* we speak so it represents Jesus.” Does every word you speak, post, tweet, or write represent and embody Jesus? Where do you most commonly struggle to speak, or write, words that embody the way of Jesus? It may be in how you respond to disobeying kids, to frustrating managers, or even to the unkindness of others. It may even be the times you’re quiet when Jesus is calling you to speak. Take time to share what this looks like for you. Confess and repent and know that you are forgiven by God and can be changed by His Spirit.

3. For the Philippians, “shining as stars” in the midst of their city meant doing ALL THINGS without grumbling or quarreling. What are you most tempted to grumble and quarrel about right now? Jesus says that out of the heart the mouth speaks (Mt. 12:34). What are your words, whether written on social media or spoken in private conversations, revealing about your heart? As you think about why you grumble, what do you think you need and what are you longing for? How would moving towards Jesus and trusting Him to meet that need and longing change your heart? Will you do that today?