

WEDNESDAY BIBLE FELLOWSHIP

Christ Church, Crouch End Hill

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No: 18

Philippians Chapter 2:12 - 30

INTRODUCTION

"That was a lovely sermon, Vicar!" says the lady at the church door. The problem with "lovely sermons" is that they give you a warm glow inside and then are forgotten about, instead of being acted on. It is very easy to respond like that to the wonderful words in chapter 2.5-11 which we looked at last week. They are tremendously inspiring and uplifting - but it mustn't end there. Paul has a nasty habit of turning doctrine into practice! His letters are full of inspiring passages followed by the word "therefore" leading into an outline of the practical consequences of our beliefs. Chapter 2.12 is such a turning point - the self-sacrificing humility of Christ should affect our relationships and be seen in our care for one another.

We learn much from the examples of others and so this week's study takes the form of four character studies. Paul provides us in these verses with pen-portraits of his colleague Timothy and of Epaphroditus, the Philippians' messenger to him. The passage also contains a picture of the sort of people Paul wanted the Philippians to be and his words reveal his own care for his fellow-Christians and his relationships with them - as pastor, as "father in Christ", as fellow-worker.

AIM

To learn ways of giving encouragement to one another both practically and spiritually.

READ PHILIPPIANS 2:12-30

- Can you think of a person who either was greatly involved in your becoming a Christian or who has helped you grow in the Christian faith?
 - Write down things about that person which helped you. In small groups share those characteristics.
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Questions for discussions

The Philippians

- How does Paul expect the Philippian Christians to be living their lives? What will help them?
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- How can we "shine" in the world today? (vv.12-18). How had they shown their concern for Paul? How can you and your church show concern for others? (vv.25-9, see also 4.14-18).
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Note

v.12 "Therefore" links the example of Christ and its application in the life of Christians. As Christ obeyed the Father so too they must obey God's will. Paul has seen their obedience in his times with them and heard of it since, but his absence (which may be permanent if he is put to death) should not be an excuse for going their own way but instead should be a spur to further obedience. Paul is not saying here that they are saved by virtue of any good which they do -the principle of salvation by faith in Christ is spelt out clearly in all his letters. However, we must work out in practice, in our relationships with one another, what it means to be a saved people - and do so in a spirit of reverence for God.

Timothy

- What sort of person was Timothy? (vv.19-23)! You might like to look at Timothy in more depth by looking up these verses. Acts 16.1-3,1 Corinthians 16.10-11, 1 Timothy 4.14, Hebrews 13.23, Romans 16.21,2 Corinthians 1.19,2 Timothy 1.4-8, 1 Timothy 1.18 and 2 Timothy 2.22.
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- What were his strengths? What were his weaknesses?
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- Why are people like him important in the life of the church? In what ways do our interests come before those of Christ? Why is this?
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Epaphroditus

- How had Epaphroditus shown his commitment to Christ? and to his fellow Christians? (vv.25-29). How do we react to hardships- do we give in to self-pity and moan and groan?
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- How do verses 26-30 illustrate some of the varying ways we react to illness?
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- Should Epaphroditus have been so worried?
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Paul

- What sort of relationships did Paul have with the Philippians, with Timothy and with Epaphroditus? Why are there differences? How do we see this variety of relationships in the church today? What do these verses show us about Paul as a pastor?
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