

The Half Hour That Changes the World

Philippians

Book 50

Basic Questions behind the book:

What does it mean to you to always rejoice in the Lord?

Summary of book:

Philippians is a letter in the commonly accepted sense of the term. As such it opens a window into the relationship between the writer and the readers; in our case between Paul and the congregation at Philippi. This relationship is remembered, enjoyed, nourished and informed.

In Paul's time, epistles had come to have a rather standard form consisting of three parts: a salutation, the body and farewell.

His letter was personal, but not private. It was to be read in worship.

The present text reveals five specific things for which Paul diligently prayed on behalf of the Philippians: their spiritual progress in love, excellence, integrity, good works, and in glorifying God.

Paul's greeting to the churches 'grace and peace' is familiar. The double greeting was a compound derived from his heritage as a Jew and his mission as an apostle to the gentiles.

Vital Statistics:

Purpose: To thank the Philippians for the gift they had sent Paul and to strengthen these believers by showing them that true joy comes from Jesus Christ alone.

Author: Paul the apostle.

Recipients: All the Christians at Philippi, and all believers everywhere.

Dating: Around AD 61, from Rome during Paul's imprisonment there.

Setting: Paul and his companions began the church at Philippi on his second missionary visit. The first church established in the European continent. Paul receives a gift from the church while in prison in Rome. He writes this letter to thank and encourage them.

Other Notes:

Philippians has become so central in our readings of Scripture in Christian Worship. All lectionaries use well over fifty percent of Philippians and some as much as 85 percent.

Link to Christ:

The hymn of chapter 2 is perhaps the most majestic poetry in the whole Bible. It celebrates Christ's coming as God in human form, his humility and his sacrifice, and rejoices in his eternal sovereignty.

"At the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." (2:10-11)

"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!" (4:4)

(Thanks to Reverend Eva Walker for her support in preparing this Information Sheet).