

## **Bible Notes for Small Groups. WB 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2025**

### **This week we are looking at living a life of generosity**

The letter to the Philippians is the only letter in the New Testament that is full of encouragement. The Philippians supported Paul when he was in prison. They were the only church who did. It is loaded with inspiration in how to live generously as a faith filled community; living by faith in Christ individually, corporately and as a family.

### **Read Philippians 4:1-9**

Paul repeats his **call for unity**, being of the same mind as Christ. There were two women in the church who faithfully supported Paul when he was with them. They may even have been leaders of the church but something went wrong between them. At the beginning of the letter Paul pleads with them to sort it out. He encourages accountability because although he is talking about two people he is writing to the whole church. He does not take sides and he does not pull rank over them. Paul does not tell them that they must always agree with everything but encourages them to find common ground upon which they can agree. He doesn't want them to just get along and pretend nothing has happened. But he wants them to sort it out.

He also asks the whole church to help out in this. Christian unity is everyone's business. The Spirit does not move where there is disunity. We should all help to achieve unity in Christ.

- How can we help to achieve unity without criticising or admonishing?

He says **'Rejoice in the Lord ALWAYS'**. He is not saying 'cheer up' or 'put a brave face on it'. By rejoice he is saying 'praise God in spite of what is happening'. Praise the holiness, the faithfulness, the goodness of God. Praise Him for who He is. When that happens, it is the evidence of the presence of the Holy Spirit. It goes past happiness; it is a touch of heaven in our lives. It calms the storm because He is in control not us.

**Peace that passes all understanding.** He says give thanks and present your requests. Then the peace of God **will** arrive as we let go of our limited understanding of what we think should happen or what should be the answer to our requests.

**Think about the ‘Whatever’s’.** Whatever is **right,**  
**lovely,**  
**admirable,**  
**excellent,**  
**praiseworthy.**

- How do you feel when you think about any of those things in Paul’s list of whatever’s?

The world uses ‘whatever’ to mean that the thing is without value or importance.

‘Have you cleaned your room?’

‘Whatever!!!.’

These whatever’s of Apostle Paul are the important things that help us to reflect the image of God in our lives. Whatever helps us to know what is right. Whatever we consider to be lovely. It is a personal call to fill our minds with God’s goodness.

### **Read Philippians 4:10-20**

#### **Now we come to the main crux of this study**

Paul acknowledges the precious gift sent to him while in prison. It shows the Philippians to be a community living the life of generosity. He gives three main words of advice.

**Show concern.** The Philippians got it right. The generosity came from the whole community. How can we do this?

- Is there anything that we as a church should be showing concern about at the moment?

*How can we do that?*

**Learn contentment whatever the circumstances.** Paul had to learn to be content in all circumstances, it is not something that comes naturally. It is a learned discipline that springs from spending time with God. He is content because he has learned that God is with him in the circumstance. He focusses on God the Father not on the world.

- As Lent approaches what can we do as individuals and as a whole church family to develop habits of spending more time listening to God and speaking with Him? Not habits that just disappear when Lent is over.

*Can you agree to meet with one or two others in your group to spend time regularly with God together? Friday Meditation and Friday Prayers are times when this is available as a group.*

**Be generous.** The sharing of their gifts with Paul shows their maturity of living in a generous community of faith in Jesus. They sent money but also one of their community to be with him and give him encouragement. Paul is confident of God's goodness to the Philippians because of their community generosity. It is a sign to those around them of the Kingdom of God within them.

- As a church we already support some individuals and group ministries in this country and abroad. But how can we expand this practice of sharing what we have with others?

*Keep a record of your answers and try to fulfil some of them in your small group. Perhaps share them with others including any of the elders.*

Pastor Paul suggests, as we come towards the end of the theme of Philippians, that we take time over the next few weeks at home to re-read all four chapters. As we do we can pray through some of the issues we have been considering on Sundays and in our groups and see what God is saying to us?