

Through the Bible

PHILIPPIANS

Zac Poonen



Illustrations by Vinay Kuruvilla

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CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP CHURCH

69, PARADISE ENCLAVE, BELAHALLI
KANNUR POST, BANGALORE - 562 149
INDIA

PHILIPPIANS



THE *THEME* OF PHILIPPIANS IS FOUND IN 2:5, "HAVE THIS ATTITUDE IN YOURSELF WHICH WAS IN CHRIST JESUS."



PHILIPPIANS WAS WRITTEN WHEN PAUL WAS IN PRISON (1:13). IT IS CHALLENGING TO SEE THAT PAUL WROTE SO MUCH ABOUT JOY WHILE HE WAS IN A PRISON.



PAUL'S WORDS HERE TEACH US THAT IT IS POSSIBLE FOR A CHRISTIAN TO HAVE JOY UNDER ALL CIRCUMSTANCES. THAT IS THE MIND AND ATTITUDE OF CHRIST. JESUS SPOKE MOST ABOUT JOY ON THE NIGHT BEFORE HE WAS CRUCIFIED (IN JOHN 15 AND 16).



MANY YEARS EARLIER PAUL HAD BEEN LED BY THE LORD THROUGH A VISION TO GO TO PHILIPPI (ACTS 16:9--12). HE HAD FOLLOWED THAT VISION AND GONE THERE AND LED PEOPLE TO THE LORD -- AND BEEN IMPRISONED IN PHILIPPI TOO. THE JAILER WHO WAS CONVERTED THERE WAS PROBABLY AN ELDER IN THE CHURCH IN PHILIPPI NOW, AND HE WOULD HAVE TOLD THE PEOPLE THEN, "I SAW THIS MAN REJOICING IN PRISON." NOW AS HE WRITES THIS LETTER, JOY DID NOT COME FROM HIS CIRCUMSTANCES, BUT FROM THE GRACE OF GOD THAT HE SAW IN THE BELIEVERS AT PHILIPPI.



PAUL WAS A GREAT PRAYER WARRIOR (1:4). A TRUE SERVANT OF GOD NOT ONLY PREACHES, BUT ALSO PRAYS FOR HIS PEOPLE.



PAUL CARRIED BELIEVERS, FOR WHOM GOD HAD GIVEN HIM RESPONSIBILITY, IN HIS HEART (1:7), JUST LIKE AARON HAD THE NAMES OF THE 12 TRIBES OF ISRAEL ON THE BREASTPLATE OVER HIS HEART.



HE PRAYED THAT THEIR **LOVE** WOULD **INCREASE** IN **DISCERNMENT** (1:9, 10). **LOVE** WITHOUT **DISCERNMENT** CAN BE **DANGEROUS**. WHEN OUR **LOVE** INCREASES ALONG WITH **SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT**, THEN WE WILL BE ABLE TO **APPROVE** THE THINGS THAT ARE **EXCELLENT** ABOVE THE THINGS THAT ARE **GOOD**.



THEN HE MENTIONS HIS **IMPRISONMENT** AND SAYS, "**DON'T** BE **DISCOURAGED** ABOUT MY **IMPRISONMENT** BECAUSE MY **IMPRISONMENT** HAS TURNED OUT FOR THE **PROGRESS** OF THE **GOSPEL**" (1:12). **GOD** DETERMINED THAT THIS MAN'S **SPIRITUAL WEALTH** SHOULD **NOT** GO DOWN WITH HIM INTO THE **GRAVE**, BUT BE **PRESERVED** AND **TRANSMITTED** FOR THE **BLESSING** OF **COMING GENERATIONS**. BUT HOW **COULD** **GOD** MAKE **PAUL** **SLOW** DOWN ENOUGH TO MAKE HIM **SIT** DOWN AND **WRITE** ALL THAT? HE ALLOWED **PAUL** TO BE **IMPRISONED** SO **COULD** **NOT** **TRAVEL**. THAT IS HOW HE **WROTE** **SCRIPTURE**



SO WE CAN BE **THANKFUL** WHENEVER **GOD** **STOPS** US IN OUR **TRACKS**. HE HAS A **PURPOSE** IN IT, FOR "**THE STOPS** OF **GOOD** **MEN** ARE **DIRECTED** BY THE **LORD**, **JUST** AS **MUCH** AS **THEIR** **STEPS**" (PSALM 37:23).



IN THOSE DAYS, **PRISONERS** WERE CHAINED TO A **PRISON** **GUARD** TO **PREVENT** THEM FROM **ESCAPING**. DURING THE **8** **HOURS** THAT A **ROMAN** **SOLDIER** WAS CHAINED TO HIM, **PAUL** **PREACHED** THE **GOSPEL** TO HIM. THE **GUARD** **COULD** **NOT** **GO** **AWAY**!



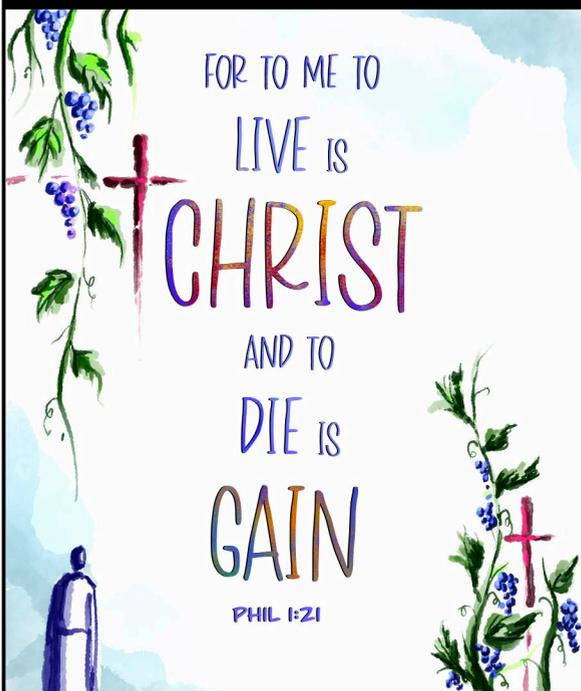
THE **GUARD** **MAY** **HAVE** **REPENTED** AND **RECEIVED** **CHRIST** AS HIS **SAVIOUR**. WHEN HIS **8-HOUR** **SHIFT** WAS **OVER**, **ANOTHER** **GUARD** **REPLACED** HIM FOR THE **NEXT** **8** **HOURS**. **THUS** A **NUMBER** OF THE **GUARDS** WERE **CONVERTED** AND **VERY** **SOON** THERE WAS A **LITTLE** **CHURCH** **MEETING** IN **CAESAR'S** **PALACE**!! (1:13, 4:22)



BECAUSE OF **PAUL'S** **IMPRISONMENT**, **MANY** **BELIEVERS** **BECAME** **MORE** **COURAGEOUS** TO **PREACH** (1:14). **TIMID** **BELIEVERS** **GOT** **RID** OF THEIR **FEAR** OF **PREACHING** THE **GOSPEL** AND **BECAME** **BOLD**.



BUT THERE WERE *SOME* PEOPLE THERE WHO WERE *JEALOUS* OF PAUL AND WHO HAD A SPIRIT OF *COMPETITION* AND *STRIFE*. BUT HE *REJOICED* THAT *CHRIST* WAS BEING *PREACHED* AND LEFT IT TO *GOD* TO *JUDGE* THEM FOR THEIR *WRONG* *MOTIVES* (1:15). AN *UNCONVERTED* PERSON MAY *DISTRIBUTE* *GOSPEL* *TRACTS* OR A *PREACHER* MAY *PREACH* *CHRIST* IN ORDER TO *MAKE* *MONEY*. PEOPLE CAN BE *SAVED* THROUGH THESE *MINISTRIES*. BUT THE *UNCONVERTED* MAN WHO *DISTRIBUTED* THE *TRACTS*/ *PREACHED* WITH *WRONG* *MOTIVES* GOES TO *HELL*.



IN 1:27 WE SEE PAUL'S BURDEN -- UNITY -- AS WE CAN SEE IN THE DIFFERENT EXPRESSIONS HE USES HERE -- ONE MIND, ONE SPIRIT, AND STRIVING TOGETHER.



IF HE *DIED*, HE WOULD BE WITH THE *LORD* *IMMEDIATELY*. IF HE *CONTINUED* TO *LIVE*, HE WOULD HAVE *SOME* MORE YEARS OF *FRUITFUL* *LABOUR* IN *CHRIST'S* *VINEYARD*. BOTH *OPTIONS* *APPEALED* TO *PAUL* *EQUALLY*.



IN 1:28, HE *URGES* THEM *NOT* TO BE *ALARMED* BECAUSE OF THEIR *ENEMIES*, FOR THEIR *"BEING AT REST"* WHEN *PERSECUTED* WOULD BE AN *EVIDENCE* OF THEIR OWN *SALVATION* AND A *SIGN* OF *DESTRUCTION* TO THEIR *ENEMIES!*



WHEN *PILATE* TOLD *JESUS*, "DON'T YOU KNOW THAT I HAVE *POWER* TO *CRUCIFY* YOU?" *JESUS* REPLIED, "YOU CAN HAVE *NO* *POWER* AGAINST ME, UNLESS *MY* *FATHER* *GIVES* IT TO YOU". *GOD* HAS GIVEN US *TWO* *PRIVILEGES* (1:29) -- "TO *BELIEVE* IN *CHRIST*" AND "TO *SUFFER* FOR *HIS* *SAKE*".

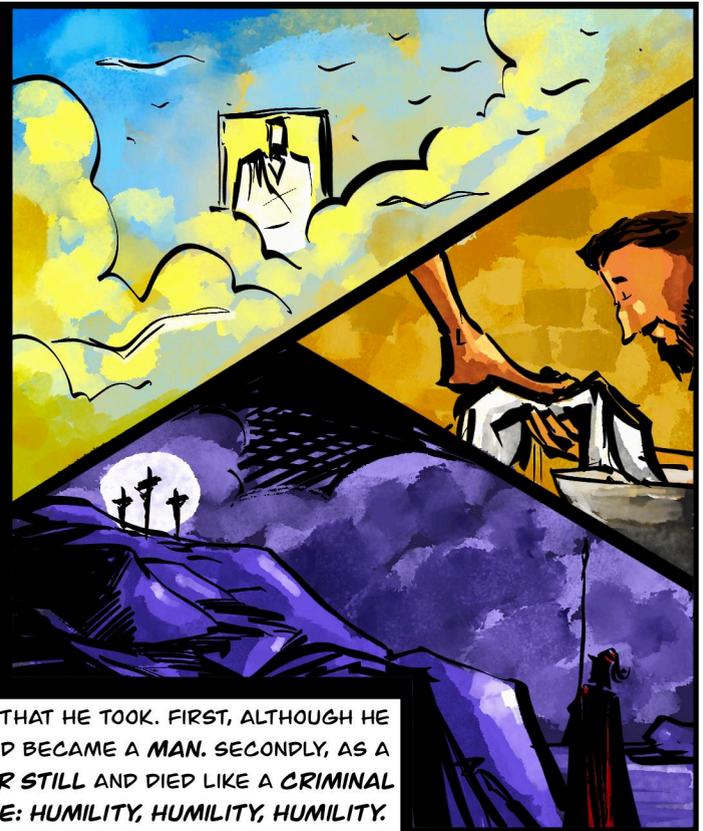
THE WAY TO *UNITY* IS - *NEVER* DO ANYTHING FROM *SELFISHNESS* OR *PRIDE* (2:3). THE *TWO* *SINS* THAT WILL REMAIN WITH US IN *SOME* *DEGREE* UNTIL WE *DIE* ARE *SELFISHNESS* AND *PRIDE*. THEY ARE LIKE *TWO* *HUGE* *ONIONS*. WHEN WE *PEEL* OFF *ONE* *LAYER*, WE FIND *ANOTHER* *LAYER* *UNDERNEATH*.

THERE IS A LOT OF *SELFISHNESS* IN THE *ATTITUDE* OF THE *RACE* OF *ADAM* TO THEIR OWN *CONVENIENCES*. WE LIKE TO *CHOOSE* THE *BEST* *BED*, THE *BEST* *FOOD* AND THE *BIGGEST* *SLICE* OF *CAKE* - THOUGH *ADULTS* MAY *NOT* *EXPRESS* IT SO *CRUDELY*





WHAT IS THE **ATTITUDE OF JESUS?** WHILE IN HEAVEN, HE THOUGHT OF THE **PATHETIC CONDITION** OF PEOPLE ON EARTH WHO DID **NOT** HAVE ALL THAT HE HAD; AND **HIS ATTITUDE** WAS, "I WANT **THEM** ALSO TO HAVE WHAT I HAVE HERE IN HEAVEN."



WHEN CHRIST CAME TO EARTH, WE SEE **THREE STEPS** OF **HUMILITY** THAT HE TOOK. FIRST, ALTHOUGH HE WAS **EQUAL** WITH THE FATHER, HE **GAVE UP** THOSE **PRIVILEGES** AND BECAME A **MAN**. SECONDLY, AS A **MAN**, HE BECAME A **SERVANT** OF ALL MEN. THIRDLY, HE WENT **LOWER STILL** AND DIED LIKE A **CRIMINAL** (2:6--8). THESE ARE THE **THREE SECRETS** OF THE **CHRISTIAN LIFE**: **HUMILITY, HUMILITY, HUMILITY.**



HE KNEW THAT HE COULD **HELP** PEOPLE ONLY IF HE **SERVED** THEM, AND **NOT** IF HE WAS LIKE A **KING** OVER THEM. THAT'S WHY HE **REFUSED** TO BE A **KING**, WHEN THE PEOPLE **TRIED** TO MAKE HIM ONE.



THERE IS A DIFFERENCE BETWEEN **SERVING** AND **BEING A SERVANT**. A **MINISTER** MIGHT **SWEEP** THE ROAD FOR **5 SECONDS** AND WAITS FOR THE **NEWSPAPERS** TO TAKE HIS **PHOTOGRAPH**. IS HE A **SERVANT**? **NO**. HE IS ONLY **ACTING** LIKE A **SERVANT** FOR **5 SECONDS** TO GET A **REPUTATION**.



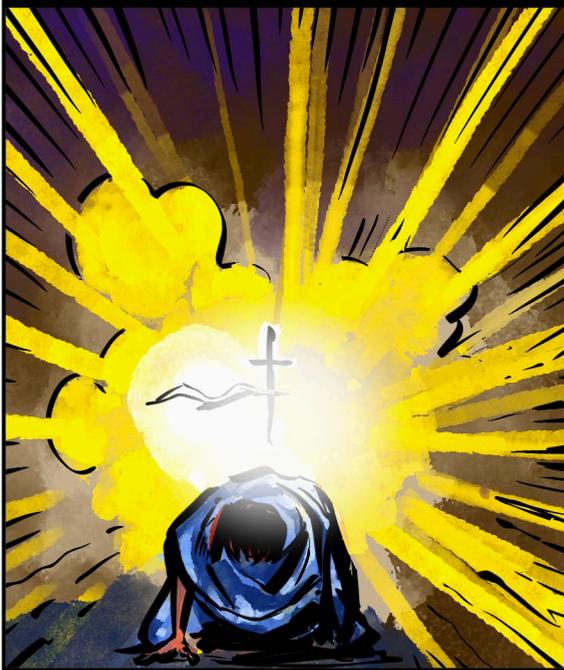
JESUS **HUMBL**ED HIMSELF TO BE A **SERVANT** -- AND **GOD EXAL**TED HIM. THE **MORE** YOU **HUMBL**E YOURSELF, THE **MORE** **GOD** WILL **EXAL**T YOU -- **SPIRITUALLY**. HE **WON'T** EXALT YOU OVER **PEOPLE** BUT OVER **SIN**, THE **WORLD**, AND THE **DEVIL**.

WE ARE TOLD THAT IN 2:12,13 - GOD FIRST WORKS WITHIN US AND WE HAVE TO THEN WORK IT OUT IN OUR DAILY SITUATIONS . WE CANNOT PRODUCE THE HUMILITY AND THE UNSELFISH LOVE OF CHRIST ON OUR OWN.

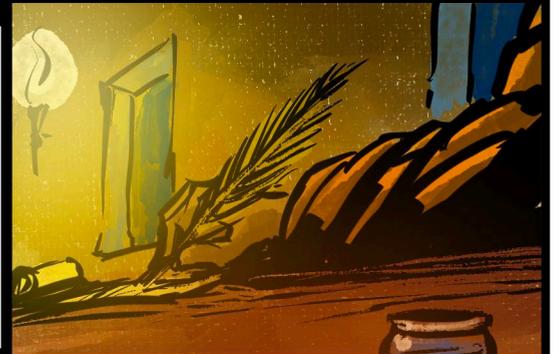


IN 2:14, WE ARE TOLD TO DO EVERYTHING WITHOUT GRUMBLING OR COMPLAINING. THIS LOOKS LIKE AN IMPOSSIBLE STANDARD BUT IT CAN BE DONE WITH GOD'S POWER.

PAUL SAID THAT AMONG ALL HIS COWORKERS WHO WERE WITH HIM THEN, HE COULD ONLY CHOOSE TIMOTHY TO SEND TO PHILIPPI, BECAUSE ALL THE OTHERS SOUGHT THEIR OWN - SOME HONOUR, SOME MONEY AND SOME COMFORT FOR THEMSELVES.



IN 3:1, PAUL SAYS, "TO WRITE THE SAME THINGS AGAIN IS NO TROUBLE TO ME, AND IT IS A SAFEGUARD FOR YOU." PAUL WAS NOT ASHAMED OF REPETITION IN HIS WRITINGS. HE SOUGHT THE GOOD OF PEOPLE AND NOT HIS OWN HONOUR.



GOD IS LOOKING FOR THOSE WHO SEEK THE THINGS OF CHRIST FIRST AND FOREMOST. TO SUCH HE GIVES REVELATION AND THROUGH SUCH HE DOES AN ETERNAL WORK. TIMOTHY AND EPAPHRODITUS WERE LIKE THAT. EPAPHRODITUS WAS SICK TO THE POINT OF DEATH WHILE SERVING GOD, BUT YET HIS LIFE RADIATED THE GLORY OF CHRIST.



IN 3:2, PAUL SAYS, "... WE ARE THE TRUE CIRCUMCISION." CIRCUMCISION -- THE CUTTING OFF OF THE FLESH -- SYMBOLISED "NO CONFIDENCE IN THE FLESH AND GLORYING ONLY IN CHRIST" (3:3).



PAUL GOES ON TO SAY THAT HE HAD MANY THINGS TO BOAST OF, IN TERMS OF THE FLESH. HE FAITHFULLY KEPT THE FIRST 9 COMMANDMENTS. (NO-ONE IN THE OLD COVENANT COULD KEEP THE 10TH COMMANDMENT -- ROMANS 7:7--9)

BUT WHEN HE FOUND CHRIST HE DISCOVERED THAT ALL HIS "HUMAN GOODNESS" WAS ACTUALLY GARBAGE -- RUBBISH. HE SAID THAT EVERYTHING ON EARTH - MONEY, FAME, HONOUR - INCLUDING HUMAN RIGHTEOUSNESS, WAS ACTUALLY GARBAGE AND RUBBISH COMPARED TO CHRIST.



THE STREETS OF HEAVEN ARE PAVED WITH GOLD. GOLD IS UNDER OUR FEET IN HEAVEN. THAT IS WHERE MONEY SHOULD BE FOR EVERY TRUE SERVANT OF THE LORD ON EARTH TOO. ON EARTH, THEY PUT GOLD ON THEIR HEADS. IF YOU CAN PUT GOLD UNDER YOUR FEET NOW, THEN YOU ARE READY FOR HEAVEN.



THEN WE SEE HIS EARNEST DESIRE WAS TO KNOW CHRIST MORE, TO KNOW MORE OF THE POWER OF HIS RESURRECTION AND MORE OF THE FELLOWSHIP OF HIS SUFFERINGS (3:10).



HE GOES ON TO SAY THAT HE HAD NOT YET REACHED THE PERFECTION OF CHRIST (3:12). BECOMING TOTALLY LIKE CHRIST IS THE TOP OF THE MOUNTAIN, WHICH WILL HAPPEN ONLY WHEN CHRIST RETURNS. EVERY DAY WE MUST CLIMB A LITTLE HIGHER TOWARDS THAT PEAK, KEEPING OUR CONSCIENCE CLEAR WITH GOD AND MEN. THUS WE PRESS ON TO PERFECTION.



BUT MOST CHRISTIANS DO NOT WALK LIKE THIS. INSTEAD, THEY ARE ENEMIES OF THE CROSS OF CHRIST (VERSE 18). THEIR GOD IS THEIR STOMACH (VERSE 19).





IN 4:4, THE HOLY SPIRIT URGES US, "REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS" -- NOT SOMETIMES OR EVEN MOST OF THE TIME, BUT ALL THE TIME. BY THE GRACE OF GOD IT IS POSSIBLE.



IF WE HAVE NOT SEEN EVERYTHING IN THE WORLD AS GARBAGE, OUTSIDE OF CHRIST -- THEN IT IS INDEED IMPOSSIBLE TO REJOICE ALWAYS! PAUL WAS A PRISONER IN A ROTTEN DUNGEON OF A PRISON IN ROME WHEN HE WROTE THOSE WORDS.



THEN PAUL SAYS ONE MORE CHALLENGING THING: "BE ANXIOUS ABOUT NOTHING" (4:6). ANXIETY COMES SO EASILY TO ALL OF US.

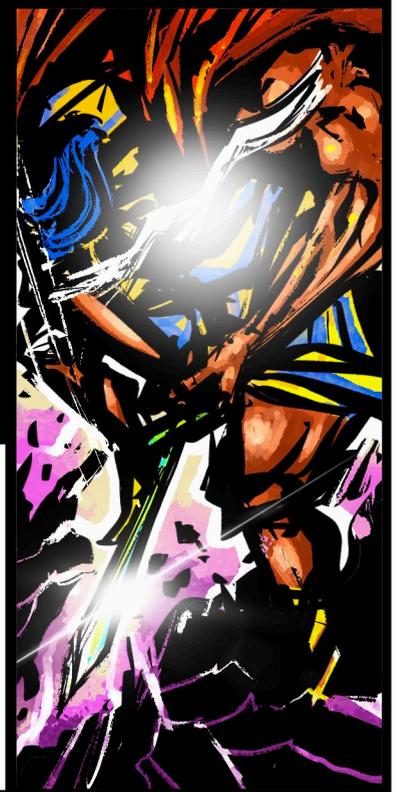


WE SHOULD PRESS ON, SO THAT OUR FAITH AND CONFIDENCE IN GOD GROWS, SO THAT WHENEVER WE ARE ANXIOUS ABOUT ANYTHING, WE TAKE IT TO THE LORD IN PRAYER WITH THANKSGIVING.



WE ARE EXHORTED FURTHER TO ALWAYS SET YOUR MINDS ON THE THINGS THAT ARE EXCELLENT (4:8).

PAUL THEN TELLS US THAT IN HIS OWN LIFE HE HAS LEARNT THE SECRET OF BEING CONTENT WITH MUCH OR LITTLE, WHATEVER GOD, IN HIS WISDOM, CHOSE TO GIVE HIM (4:11, 12).



PAUL THEN MAKES THIS TRIUMPHANT DECLARATION: "I CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH CHRIST WHO STRENGTHENS ME" (4:13).



TO THIS GENEROUS CHURCH, PAUL SAYS, "MY GOD WILL SUPPLY ALL YOUR NEEDS ACCORDING TO HIS RICHES IN GLORY THROUGH CHRIST JESUS" (4:19). GOD WILL SUPPLY US WITH EVERYTHING THAT WE NEED TO OVERCOME SATAN AND TO LIVE A GODLY LIFE