

p 91 WEEK 12: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

We will conclude our study of Philippians by summarizing the big picture of God's message through Philippians as a whole. Then we will consider several questions in order to reflect on various *Gospel Glimpses*, *Whole-Bible Connections*, and *Theological Soundings* throughout the entire book.

The Big Picture of Philippians

On behalf of the concerned Philippians, Epaphroditus risked his life in getting support to Paul, who was imprisoned in Rome. Upon his arrival, Epaphroditus was also able to report on the state of the Philippian church to the concerned apostle. Thus, while Philippians is primarily a letter of thanks for financial support and an update on the *comings* and *goings* of key people, Paul also writes to confront and instruct in the areas most needed in Philippi at the time.

In chapter 1, Paul acknowledges the Philippians' concern for his imprisonment with affection and thanks, but he redirects their concerns and priorities. He explains that his imprisonment is really no problem at all, but has in fact been good for the spread of the gospel in Rome. His possible execution is no problem either, since death would enable him to be with Christ.

p 92 Paul also writes to confront a trend of disunity and selfishness in the body (1:27–2:18). In chapter 3, he warns about false teachers in the area, and reiterates the truth of the gospel to which the church must tightly hold. He also reminds them that the Christian life is a race to be run with endurance. In chapter 4, Paul highlights how perseverance and growth significantly involve the faculties of the inner man: the mind, the heart, feelings, and thoughts.

Perhaps some of the Philippian Christians had grown passive in their Christian life. Maybe some (or many) had grown soft, afraid of suffering, quick to complain, slow to reconcile, and/or gripped by worry. Perhaps some had taken their eyes off their heavenly home and had lost the powerfully motivating hope of Christ's return. Such matters are addressed in Philippians, not arbitrarily but most likely by necessity.

Nevertheless, whether he is thanking, confronting, or instructing the Philippians, Paul's pen drips with warmth and affection throughout the letter. Reminders of his love and care for them, and their long-standing partnership in the gospel, are ever present. He calls on them as a brother who is side by side with them in the faith, not commanding them with all the weight of his apostolic authority. Throughout, he calls on them to emulate the humble, sacrificial example of others: Paul himself, Epaphroditus, Timothy, and especially Jesus.

Gospel Glimpses

We have seen that the gospel saturates Philippians. Paul gives a uniquely thorough and personal exposition of the gospel in chapter 3. While primarily intended as a model of humility, Paul's words on Christ's incarnation, servanthood, suffering, death, and exaltation in chapter 2 are a window into the basis of gospel hope. Throughout Philippians the gospel's implications are far-reaching: life-transforming, joy-giving, and saint-connecting. Thus, the spread of the gospel in the world is of utmost importance. The gospel is to be lived out and proclaimed; it is to be taken far and wide; and those who take it are to be supported.

Has this study of Philippians brought new clarity to your understanding of the gospel? How so?

p 93 Were there any particular passages or themes in Philippians that led you to have a fresh understanding and grasp of God's grace to us through Jesus?

Whole-Bible Connections

Philippians has numerous connections to the Old Testament promises, such as God's grace among the Gentiles, the coming of the suffering servant and exalted King, God dwelling with his people, the inevitable path from suffering to glory, and the consummation of all things.

How has this study of Philippians grown your understanding of the storyline of Bible?

What are some connections between Philippians and the Old Testament that you hadn't noticed before?

p 94 Have any passages or themes expanded your understanding of the redemption that Jesus provides, which he began at his first coming and will consummate at his return?

Theological Soundings

We have seen that Philippians is intensely personal and practical, but also richly doctrinal. Its doctrinal themes include: Christ's eternality, deity, incarnation, and dual natures; the return of Christ, the bodily resurrection, and the consummation of all things; justification and union with Christ; the nature of sanctification and perseverance; God's sovereignty, and its relationship to human responsibility in salvation and sanctification.

Has your theology shifted in any minor or major ways during the course of studying Philippians? How so?

How has your understanding of the nature and character of God been deepened throughout this study?

p 95 What unique contributions does Philippians make toward our understanding of who Jesus is and what he accomplished through his life, death, and resurrection?

What, specifically, does Philippians teach us about the human condition and our need of redemption?

Personal Implications

God wrote the book of Philippians to transform us. As you reflect on Philippians as a whole, what implications do you see for your life?

What implications for life flow from your reflections on the questions already asked in this week's study concerning Gospel Glimpses, Whole-Bible Connections, and Theological Soundings?

p 96 What have you learned in Philippians that might lead you to praise God, turn away from sin, or trust more firmly in his promises?

As You Finish Studying Philippians ...

We rejoice with you as you finish studying the book of Philippians! May this study become part of your Christian walk of faith, day by day and week by week throughout all your life. Now we would greatly encourage you to continue to study the Word of God on a week-by-week basis. To continue your study of the Bible, we would encourage you to consider other books in the *Knowing the Bible* series, and to visit www.knowingthebibleseries.org.

Lastly, take a moment again to look back through this book of Philippians, which you have studied during these recent weeks. Review again the notes that you have written, and the things that you have highlighted or underlined. Reflect again on the key themes that the Lord has been teaching you about himself and about his Word. May these things become a treasure for you throughout your life—which we pray will be true for you, in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Amen.