

# **Study Guide to Philippians**

*an invitation to discover God's passion*

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**New International Version of the Bible**



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Bishop Barham University College, Kabale.

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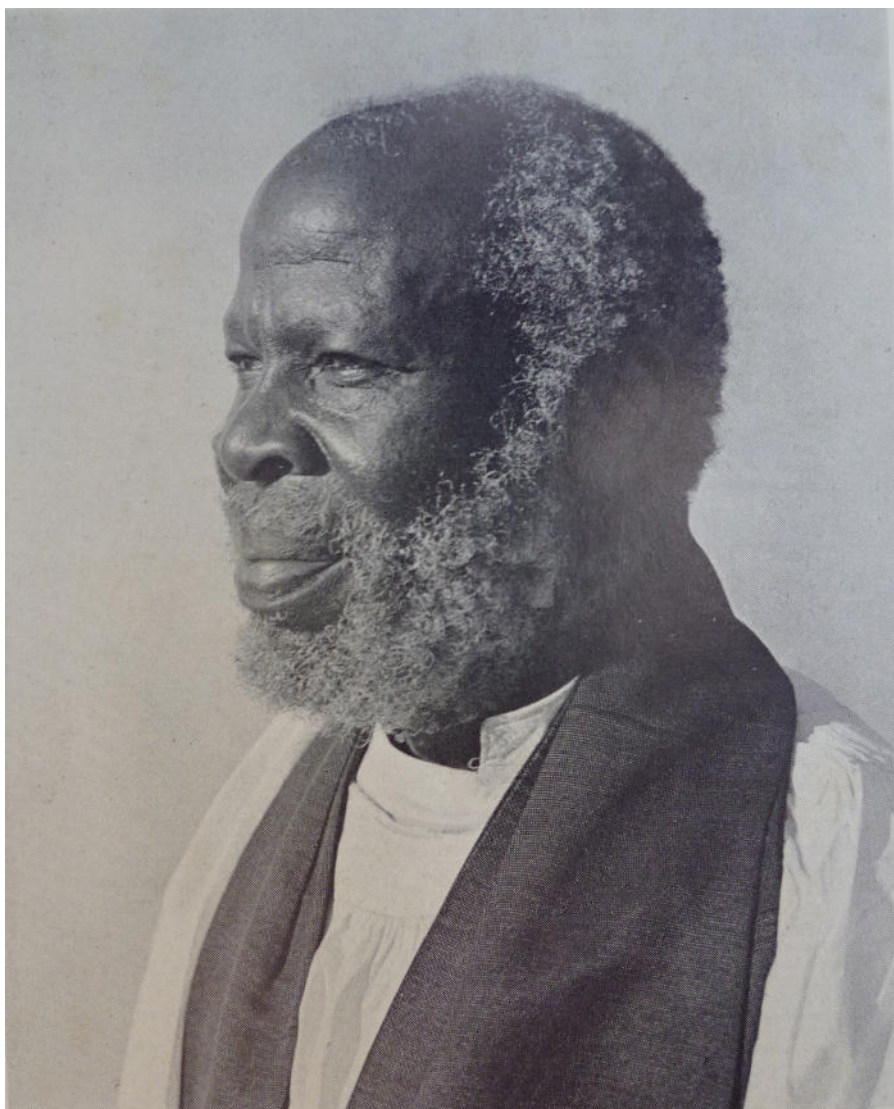
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**In  
remembrance of  
the great Ugandan  
missionary  
Apolo Kivebulaya  
(1864 - 1933)**



## **Foreword**

Apolo Kivebulaya was born in 1864. This year we remember and celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his birth.

Apolo had a clear understanding that God wants to rescue all nations. God's desire is that every tribe and every nation should worship and honour Him as the only true God, in view of who He is and what He does (Ps 67:1f; 96:1f). Apolo's love for God and his love for people compelled him to go into the rainforest of what is now the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) to share God's saving grace with those who had never heard the Gospel.

150 years after Apolo, we still have many places in the DRC, South Sudan, Uganda (e.g. in the Karamoja area), etc., where the Gospel has not yet penetrated the society. Those places might be less dangerous than the places Apolo visited in his day. However, the love of Christ compels us to pray and to partner with Christians in neighbouring areas to ensure that God's love reaches those people.

Let us follow the footsteps of Jesus and the example of the apostles, allowing God to involve us in sharing the Gospel with those who have never heard it.

The flowers of a tree are not just for decoration. They are to bear fruit and seeds. In the same way, Christians are not just for decoration. We are called to bear fruit by sharing God's love with others.

I wish to commend the Revd. Matthias Scheitacker for a job well done. This is a uniquely mission-oriented commentary on the letter to the Philippians. The testimonies from a variety of Ugandan Christians are helpfully blended into the commentary and they make the study very relevant to everyday reality. I thank the Department of Theology and Divinity at Bishop Barham University College for their literature mission initiative and I wish them God's richest blessings. And I do hope the literature mission will also produce books and other materials in our mother tongues.

It is my prayer that this booklet will be used by many people individually and in fellowship groups to strengthen their faith. May it create in us a

desire to go to those people who have never heard the Gospel of Christ, as Apolo did. May God raise a generation of great missionaries from our midst, who are willing to respond wholeheartedly as Isaiah did: “Here I am, send me” (Isaiah 6:8).

**The Most Rev. Stanley Ntagali,**

Archbishop, Church of Uganda and Bishop of Kampala Diocese

## **Preface**

This booklet, „Study Guide to Philippians, an invitation to discover God’s passion“, is a book for all of us who heard the voice of God calling us to renounce our sinful nature and live a life reconciled with Him, with our neighbours, and with ourselves. In other words, the book is for us, who have experienced the saving grace of God and are living a joyful life in Christ, even if we experience hardships. But it is also for anyone seeking to know God.

When someone eats a very delicious meal, he might wish that his beloved ones were around to enjoy the meal with him. It is love which promptings that person to think in that direction. One cannot avoid wishing to share the good things of life with one’s beloved ones.

God loves us and we are also called to love Him and our neighbours. This is God’s commandment (Mt 22:37-39). God first loved us when He created us in His image and appointed us as stewards of all that He created (Gen 1:26-28). He further showed us the extent of His love when He gave us His one and only Son so that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life (John 3:16-17). Imagine Jesus dying for us while we were still sinners. We did not deserve this great gift from God.

We, the Bakiga, have a saying that “Akaibo kaza owa nyamugarura”, which in effect means that “a good turn deserves another”. God took the initiative to create us and redeem us from worldliness. He reconciled us to himself and to one another and even to ourselves. We should not fail to share what He has done for us. It would be a sign of ingratitude to God if we did not. We are what we are because of Him.

There is need for us to open our mouths and tell others the joy we have in Jesus Christ. We need to share the Gospel with those who are around us and have not experienced its effects. Jesus said that we are the salt of the earth and the light of the world (Mt 13:16-18). All of us know the taste of food without salt. None can say: “I like the food without salt”. Likewise, no one can enjoy darkness if he has ever known what light is. The world around us needs to experience transformation through Christ. Who will do it, if not we who are transformed?



If we fail, it means we are not living a purposeful life and we stand guilty before God. Surely, we need to tell others how we are overcoming temptations, what motivates us to work harder and why sometimes we work beyond official hours. We need to remember that “Ekihimbya omusi n’ekiri omu seiso” (The drive within you compels you to share it with others). Our drive is the joy of being in Jesus Christ and He being in us.

Furthermore, we need to concentrate on reading the Bible, for that is where we derive our spiritual food from. A hungry person cannot feed others.

This book can be of help to everyone who reads it. I can assure you that you will be captured by what you will find in it. You will enjoy the different people’s testimonies and the explanations of the Biblical texts. You will draw closer to God as you read this Study Guide to Philipians, one of Paul’s most intimate Epistles.

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Head of Department of Theology, Divinity and Foundation studies at  
Bishop Barham University College

**Revd. Prof. Manuel J.K.Muranga**

Principal at Bishop Barham University College

## **Acknowledgements**

Our thanks go first and foremost to the Almighty God who deserves to be glorified with all our heart, with all our soul and with all our mind. Our desire is that this book becomes a humble contribution to the extension of His glory in His world.

We offer our sincere appreciation to the Most Revd. Stanley Ntagali, Archbishop of the Church of Uganda and Bishop of Kampala Diocese, for his prayers and support, and for accepting to write the foreword to this book.

In a special way, we thank Revd. Prof. Manuel Muranga for his encouragement and editorial help. It was his tireless effort and sound advice that raised this book to the present standard.

Further, we appreciate the consistent encouragement from Revd. Canon Damson Akandwanirira and the entire BBUC Community for their support and for accepting to write moving testimonies to the biblical passages.

We owe a special word of thanks to our friend Sina Eickmeier who worked as a volunteer at BBUC 2013/14. She committed herself to designing the layout and the icons for this book. Further we thank Lukas Poehler from Germany, who worked as a volunteer at BBUC 2012/13. It was his effort that brought the cover design to the present standard.

Finally, we want to express our deep appreciation to our families. Thank you so much for your support and your prayers that encouraged us to finish this work.

## **Introduction to this Study Guide**

150 years ago, 1864, Apolo Kivebulaya was born in Buganda. In his youth, he fought as a soldier in the Muslim army against Christians and pagans. The Moslems during those days raided the country and performed deeds of sickening cruelty. He and his companions besieged villages and killed the people and, as their custom was, they burnt the people so that their smell might fill the villages.

However, Apolo's zeal in these cruelties decreased and he decided to run away from the army. He fled to Ankole, where he joined the Protestant Christians. Apolo reported: "It was then that I really began to be friends with the 'readers'. It was then that I began to pray, from seeing my fellows pray. I learnt to pray before I could read."<sup>1</sup> It was during those days that God called Apolo and he finally surrendered his life to Christ.

Later he testified: "In June 1895, I asked that I might become a teacher. I then did some more reading at Namirembe and from time to time I was sent to preach the Gospel to the children in the villages around the town."<sup>2</sup>

Three months later, he remembers: "One day when I was in church, some teachers who had come from Toro said they badly needed more teachers. I went at once to Roscoe, and explained that I wanted to go to Toro... then they sent me to Toro in September 1895."<sup>3</sup> In 1896 he was chosen to go to Mboga Zaire (DR Congo). Apolo went with humility and courage. He had a passion to organise teams for mission, ministering to the people in the rain forest who had never heard the Gospel. He planted many churches there and left catechists behind to nurture those newly converted Christians.

In a similar way, Paul's life and his letter to the Philippians shows his passion to spread the Gospel. He travelled thousands of kilometres, preaching the Gospel where it has not yet reached and establishing new

<sup>1</sup> Luck, Anne: African Saint. The Story of Apolo Kivebulaya, London: SCM Press LTD, 1963, p. 45.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid., p. 61.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid., p. 62.

churches with those who accepted Christ. There is no doubt that He was one of the greatest missionaries who ever lived. Most of his letters were written in the context of a mission situation.

It is important to note that for Paul, theology is not philosophical or academic in nature - it is always lived in the context of his mission work, embedded in his personal testimonies<sup>4</sup> and an overflowing joy in God (cf. 1:3f; 3:1f; 4:4-7; 4:19f). To isolate the message of Philippians from its mission context, as if the mission context were irrelevant, would be in effect to eliminate one of the primary theological contributions of the letter!

I am convinced that Paul's mission context is the key to unlock this letter. This Study Guide is a humble attempt to interpret it in that context.

I am fully aware that there is much more to say to each passage than is explained in this booklet. However, since it is better to fix one or two nails properly to join two pieces of wood than dipping 10 nails into the surface, we emphasised for each passage only one or two spiritual aspects and tried to apply them to our daily life.

The aim of this Study Guide is:

- to explain and apply the message of the Bible in non-technical language,
- to encourage discussion, prayer and action on what the Bible teaches,
- to help the church capture its call to prepare for mission as Paul and the church in Philippi did.

This Study Guide on Philippians is for both, personal study and small groups in churches, schools, institutions of higher learning, etc.

The following steps may help you if you use it for fellowship groups:

- Start with a prayer, inviting the Holy Spirit to speak to you and to renew your heart through the Word of God.

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<sup>4</sup> In Philippians, he writes freely about his pre-Christian days, his dramatic conversion, his new outlook, his attitude to life and death and how he copes with changing circumstances (cf. Phil 1:12f; 2:25f; 3:4f).

- After reading the passage loud, encourage the group to have a few minutes of silence where everyone reads the passage in silence. Meditate about its relevance and allow the whole Holy Spirit to reveal His will. This step helps especially those who have some difficulties in sharing their ideas quickly while those who like to talk a lot are encouraged to summarize and focus their testimonies.
- Studies have shown that sharing God’s Word is one of the most efficient ways to grow in faith. Through sharing, everyone is supposed to apply the passage to his/her personal context. Make sure that everyone is allowed to express briefly how the passage speaks to his/her heart. We learn best through authentic, living examples. When you share, try to be as specific as you can. Testimonies that are very general can hardly touch someone’s heart. Gently encourage silent members to share and those who like to talk a lot to shorten their testimonies.
- During the time of sharing, encourage members not to preach and dictate what other members should do. Encourage the members to apply Scripture to their experience of real life instead of using the passage as a ‘peg to hang his/her personal opinion on’.
- The Word of God needs to be applied. Therefore, create some time during your fellowship when you encourage members to tell one another how they want to apply this passage during the next week.
- Pray for one another, so that everyone is able to put the Word of God into practice. At the beginning of the next fellowship, it might be helpful to ask: Where you able to apply what God revealed to you through His Word last week? Make sure that there is enough time to pray for those who have challenges, are troubled or simply wish to repent.

In this Study Guide, we have developed symbols to make the contents easier to follow. Every study has an opening section that ‘**focuses**’ on the topic and emphasises the message of the passage in a nutshell. We have also tried to include a ‘**testimony**’ to bring each passage closer to real life. After the passage, we describe the necessary background information, called ‘**eye opener**’. Since Paul wrote real letters to very

specific audiences, it is important for us to understand his message in the **‘context of the letter’**. After a brief **‘explanation’** of difficult verses, we make some suggestions for reflection under the heading **‘questions for [personal and] group discussion’**. These might help you to apply the passage to your life. The part labelled **‘digging deeper’** focuses on our Christian calling to reach out to the world for Christ and to grow deeper in the spiritual life.

Paul says in 1Corinthians 8:1: “Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up”. It is our prayer that this booklet serves many people to come closer towards this ‘love that builds up’. It is this love that made Paul and Apolo travel thousands of kilometers to bring the Good News to those areas where people did not know Christ.

Aberi Balya mentioned that on Apolo’s death bed, he said: “Let me go to find those children of mine who have gone before me into heaven, to be with my Lord, whom I have served from my youth to my old age.”<sup>5</sup> He was ready to die because he did what God had called him to do. May we be able to say the same at the end of our own lives. Apolo died on the 30<sup>th</sup> of May 1933.

**Revd. Matthias Scheitacker**

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<sup>5</sup> Luck, Anne: African Saint. The Story of Apolo Kivebulaya, London: SCM Press LTD, 1963, p. 147.



# 1 Discover God's passion



## Focus

What motivates people to sacrifice everything they have, leave their comfort and strive for something without gaining any earthly profit? We study only two verses, focusing on two key points – however, these two key points are essential for the understanding of the whole letter. It focuses on who God is and on Paul as a servant. The biblical understanding of God is deeply interwoven with His mission in this world. He calls us to surrender our life and offer it for His purpose.



Apolo was granted a year's leave in Buganda but he was so greatly concerned over the condition of the Christians at Mboga/Congo that *“with tears in his eyes he begged Rev. A.B. Loyd ... to let him spend his holiday among these people.”* Apolo commented: *“I did not take up my leave, for God sent me to Mboga, so that I did not stop doing His work of changing people's hearts to hear Him.”*<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Luck, Anne: African Saint. The Story of Apolo Kivebulaya, London: SCM Press LTD, 1963, p. 113.





## Testimony

I have learnt that all human beings want to enjoy a comfortable life. In some areas of Kabale, people walk between 1-3 hours to reach their fields. As I grew up, we often left home at 5 a.m. and reached our fields at 8 a.m to dig. Getting up early and coming home late from the fields was a dreaded exercise whenever we were in our holidays. My mother used to tell us: “If you want to eat well, you must dig well”. However, I thought that those who sit in offices would not face those difficulties.

One day, we were in a field far away from home and it rained heavily. We took refuge under our tarpaulin raincoats but it became so cold. I told my mother: “Those who are in their offices in Kabale must be warm and happy”. My mother replied: “If you study hard, you might avoid the hardship of digging.” This stuck in my mind.

Some years later, Paul’s example challenged me. He left his comfort zone and accepted hardship voluntarily. Paul was like a “Chief Executive Officer” in his days, but after he met Christ, he left his job for “Christ’s chains” (Phil 1:13).

One time, we went for an outreach mission to the Batwa in Kanungu. When we arrived there, we faced difficulties. Some of us were not used to the type of food; others found it very difficult to climb the small footpaths on the mountains; heavy rain made things worse. However, the final verdict was that we enjoyed this mission very much. We made friends with the Batwa and many of them were touched. But most of all, we saw that Jesus loves them as much as he loves us. To me, it was a humbling experience as it removed a complex of superiority within me. Even today I pray not only for the Batwa but also for other “minority” groups, refugees, and others who suffer.

I learnt that when we leave our comfort zone because of God’s calling - even when we face hardship and “Christ’s chains” – God provides deep satisfaction that no comfortable life can compensate.

**Rev. Oscar Mwesigwa**



## **Text**

### ***Philippians 1:1-2***



## **Eye opener**

*“Grace and peace to you from God our Father.”* Our understanding of someone influences our relationship with that person. This is also true with our understanding of God. We will realise in this letter that Paul sacrificed his life for one purpose: To glorify God by bringing the Gospel of Christ to the nations. But why was he committed to doing this?

The entire Old Testament proves: God is a God who loves and speaks to people, revealing His will with the aim of reconciling man with God. From the beginning, the Bible describes God’s passion for all people and His intention that all creation worships and glorifies Him as God (Ps 66:1-4; 67:1-7; 117:1-2). After the fall of man in Genesis 3, the Bible reflects the consequences of sin in Genesis 4-11. However, these chapters show also clearly that God did not stop caring for mankind. His intention that all creation glorifies Him remained.

Then, God introduced a new phase of history by calling Abraham. The story of Abraham and Israel that begins in Genesis 12 is actually God’s answer to the problem of a rebellious human race. Therefore, He made a covenant with Abraham and his descendants, intending them to be *“a blessing for all nations”* Gen 12:3). Israel was chosen for a particular purpose in God’s plan, and that plan became clear at Mount Sinai. The *“blessing for all nations”* is expressed again, making Israel a kingdom of priests (Ex 19:5-6). As priests were to represent God and guide people according to God’s will, Israel as a holy nation was to be representing God among the nations and to guide them. Although Israel had a calling to glorify God among the nations (Ps 57:9-11; Ps 108:3-5) we do not actually see this happening.

Paul concludes in his letter to the Romans that Israel failed to fulfil its calling (Rom 10:14-21) while God's covenant and promises still stand. It was given to Paul to bring out the relevance of God's covenant very clearly: *"The scripture foresaw that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, and announced the Gospel in advance to Abraham: 'All nations will be blessed through you.'* So those who have faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith" (Gal 3:8-9) and: *"If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise"* (Gal 3:29).

Paul points out that the promises of 'a great nation', of 'land', of 'blessing' and of being 'a blessing for all nations' still stand and include the mandate to evangelise the world (cf. Gen 12:3; Gal 3:8; Rom 4.17f). Therefore, he was eager to *"bring the obedience of faith among all the nations for His name's sake"* (Rom 1:5) in order that *"the Gentiles may glorify God"* (Rom 15:9-12).

In the book of Revelation, John saw in a vision *"a great multitude that no-one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne"* (Rev 7:9). All the essential elements of the promise to Abraham are fulfilled here. We see the spiritual descendants of Abraham as a *"great multitude that no-one could count"*, like the sand on the seashore and the stars in the night sky (Gen 15:5; Gen 22:17). We see all the peoples of the earth being blessed (cf. Gen 12:3), for the numberless multitude is composed of people from *"every nation, tribe, people and language"*. And we see them standing in the true Promised Land before the throne *"whose architect and builder is God"* (Heb 11:8-16).

It is this perspective that reveals the living God of the Bible to be a true missionary God. He wants to rescue all nations because of His mercy, His grace and His love for people (2 Peter 3:9). His desire is that every nation worships and honours Him as the only true God for what He does and who He is (Psalm 67:1f; 96:1f).

And from this perspective, there is only one appropriate response: *"Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus"* (Phil 1:1).

The word 'servant' can also be translated as 'slave'. Paul is specifying that he and Timothy are sold out to the ownership of Jesus Christ,

clearly expressed in Romans 14:8: *“If we live, we live to the Lord; and if we die, we die to the Lord, So, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord”*. They chose to give up their right to live for themselves with the aim to glorify God through their life.

This alludes to the OT where Abraham (Ps 105:42), Moses (Jos 14:7), David (Ps 89:3) and the prophets (2King 17:13) were called *“servants of God.”* Let us follow their example and surrender our lives to love and serve God with all our heart and with all our soul and with all our mind (cf. Deut 10:12).

## ***The purpose of the letter***

Most likely, Paul had two purposes in writing this letter.

➤ The first purpose was that the church of Philippi had sent him a gift to help him survive the harsh conditions during his imprisonment, and it had been delivered by one of their own church leaders, Epaphroditus (cf. 4:10ff. and 2:25ff). Now he wanted to thank them for their partnership in the Gospel (cf. Phil 4:10-19).

➤ The second purpose was to strengthen the faith of the Philippians (cf. Phil 2:1ff). Nevertheless, Paul’s letter to the Philippians is more than a letter between Christian friends. What we find in his letter is a wonderful guide on how a church should follow Christ and focus on God’s intention to reach the world. This focus is expressed in the keywords: ‘partnership in the Gospel’ (Phil 1:5; cf. section 3).



### ***Explanation***

V1) *“To all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi”*: Who are these saints? When we compare the verses in the NT where the word ‘saint’ is used, we see that the NT uses it to describe those who believe and follow the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. Acts 9:13; 9:32; 2Cor. 1:1; Eph 1:1). Paul does not address the Philippians simply as saints, but as saints ‘in Christ’ (cf. Phil 1:1; 4:21). This shows that the Philippians did not become saints through ‘self-effort’. Jesus met the

requirements for our sins on the cross and ascribes us His righteousness so that we are ‘in Christ’ (cf. 2 Cor 5:17+21; Col 1:12-13+22; chapter 6). Everyone whose sins are forgiven and who follows Christ can be called a saint because he is completely holy and righteous ‘in Christ’ and the title ‘saints’ points to that reality. Since God has washed our sins away, we cannot be more holy than what God has done for us. This involves that we should live out what we are in Christ. We are sanctified (1Cor 1:2), therefore we are supposed to live as sanctified people (1Thess 4:3f), like the son of a king is supposed to behave as the son of a king. It would have been possible for Paul to call the addressees just ‘Philippians’. But he wanted to emphasise what they are by grace and in the sight of God: *“to all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi”*.



## **Questions for group discussion**

- If a follower of Christ is called ‘servant of Christ’ because of Christ’s lordship, how do you think is he supposed to live?
- When you are called a ‘saint in Christ’, what impact does it have on your life?
- What are the consequences when God, who is a true missionary God with the desire that all nations should glorify him, lives in you and guides you?



## **Digging deeper**

- God does not leave us to guess His will for our lives. He decided to accomplish His mission in a very personal way. He involves His followers and works through them to accomplish His purposes. This plan must affect our lives. The closer we follow God the more we live for His glory. God’s love will stir up the desire in our heart to do His mission because the God who guides us and lives in us is a God of mission.

➤ God has promised to bless “*all the families of the earth ... through Abraham’s seed*” (Gen 12:3; 22:18). We are Abraham’s seed by faith (Gal 3:8), and the earth’s families will be blessed only if we go to them with the Gospel. That is God’s plain purpose. It is this expression that condemns all our racial pride, self-centred nationalism or restrictions to evangelise our parishes only. Christ expects us to live for Him and to serve only Him. We are His servants because He is our Lord.

➤ Since the Bible states that Jesus is the victor and that in the end a multitude of people from every ethnic group shall praise God - Islam, Secularism and all other philosophies can never be a serious threat to the ‘Church of Christ’ (cf. Rev 7:9-10). However, it is a threat to any Christian denomination that gets lukewarm and loses her love for Christ!

**“Cannot the love of Christ carry the missionary where the slave trade carries the trader?” (David Livingstone)**

**“We need to be global Christians with a global vision, for we have a global God.” (John Stott)**

# 2 Guided by the Spirit



## Focus

Paul sacrificed his life for God's plan and thereby set a good example. Whoever wants to be part of God's plan needs to know what God's plan is, to seek His guidance, and to see what God is doing so that he can get involved.



Apolo testified how God encouraged him to go to the forest people: *"Again in 1921 Christ appeared to me in the form of a man and stood beside me. It was as if I saw a man who was my brother. He said to me, 'Go and preach in the forest because I am with you'. I answered saying, 'Who is speaking to me?' He said, 'I Am That I Am; that is my name'. When I arose I started on the expedition. When I began they just looked at me. I did not know their language and they did not know mine. I just sat as if I could not do anything, because from of old they said to me, 'in the forest there are cannibals.' ... Looking round I saw a man coming who had been baptized as a captive. His friends said of him 'This man knows your language. Come and see him.' Then this man greeted me and I knew him. He was Yohana (John), and so I found an interpreter and I thanked Jesus."*

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<sup>7</sup> Luck, Anne: African Saint. The Story of Apolo Kivebulaya, London: SCM Press LTD, 1963, p. 123.



## **Testimony: Seven Years of Tithing a Month...**

The year 2006 will stay fresh in my memories for a long time. It was the year when I fell in love for the first time, miraculously joined Uganda Christian University to pursue my dream course on scholarship, but also the year when I joined the Diocesan Team in the very first schools' pilgrimage mission. At the time, of course, it didn't seem like a big deal. Part of it was a sense of adventure, the company of my worship team friends who were going along, but most of all was a desire to be of service to a God who had been so faithful thus far. Little did I know that it was an experience that would place my talents into God's hands, deepen my faith, and radically transform my life like nothing else before.

Instead of a Pilgrimage to the Uganda Martyrs Shrine in Namugongo to celebrate the martyred heroes of faith on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of June every year, the Youth Office of the Diocese of Kigezi engages young evangelists in a Schools' Pilgrimage Mission to introduce into the hearts of students the ultimate Hero of our faith, Jesus Christ. This unique evangelistic pilgrimage has happened every month of June for the last 8 years. Having participated in all but one of these missions, I can testify that it is a double-edged sword, sharpening both the evangelists and their eager hearers.

While in High School, I had read a small well-worn Festo Kivengere booklet called 'When God Moves'. One of the many privileges of participating in the Schools' Pilgrimage Mission is the opportunity to see God on the move. It's a beautiful thing to watch God turn a stammering Senior Six leaver into an eloquent proclaimer of the Word of God in under a month; to see a frightened young peasant emboldened by God's Spirit, speaking a message that cuts through all sorts of school intellectual pride and prejudice. It is the privilege of my life to have witnessed the beginnings of a student led, student-organized, student-funded ministry that is shaking the Kingdom of the devil at the roots.



During the Schools' Pilgrimage, I have seen God's move bring to the altar the most notorious students in tearful repentance. Some later have joined the team to testify to the transforming power of accepting Jesus as Lord and Savior. We have witnessed staff members make commitments to the Lord under the ministry of young people who are merely their students. A minister once advised someone to "stop praying that God blesses what you are doing, but get involved in what God is doing because it is already blessed." I have had to go again and again for this mission, year after year, to get involved in what God is doing in the schools in Kigezi. Seeing entire schools refreshed by the spirit is a perennial delicacy for the spirit.

A lot has happened since that first month of full-time ministry in the middle of my Senior Six vacation. I have since survived the first "cut" of love, the excruciating work of law school, and the financial strain of graduate school. How have I managed through it all? By the enabling grace of God. My best explanation is that having done God's work, he does mine to proportions greater than I expect. And here is the truth of my life; after seven years of "tithing" a month to full-time ministry per year, life can never be the same again.

**Paul Turyagumanawe**



**Text**

**Acts 16:6-15**



**Eye opener**

**Paul and his mission team**

Paul's vision and compassion for mission inspires us to reach and to be a blessing for all nations (cf. Ps 9:11; Gen 12:3). Especially in Romans 15:8-13, Paul uses Psalm 117:1 and Deuteronomy 32:43 to show us that salvation for the Gentiles is

God's plan, prophesied throughout the OT. As a consequence, he was eager to "bring the obedience of faith among all the nations for His name's sake" (Rom 1:5) in order that all nations might believe and obey Christ (cf. Rom 16:26).

Paul's desire was therefore to go where the Gospel had not yet been preached (Rom 15:20-29). He travelled with a team, supporting and caring for one another (cf. Rom 16:21f; Col 4:7f; Phil 2:19f). Whenever possible, Paul visited a synagogue and started preaching to the God-fearing people (cf. Acts 13:5; 14; 14:1; 17:1f). He and his team used the same method when they reached Philippi (Acts 16:13f).

When Paul proclaimed the Gospel, he did not restrict it to preaching, his focus was on discipleship.

- Whenever possible, he spent one or two years in a city to train the new converts (cf. his ministry in Corinth, Acts 18:11 and Ephesus, Acts 19:10).
- If he had to flee because of persecution, he left behind fellow workers, like Timothy or Silas, to nurture and disciple the new Christians (e.g. Acts 17:14).
- Furthermore, he wrote letters to the new churches as a way of 'follow up' and, if possible, he visited them again.

Paul's plan was to remain in partnership with these churches (cf. Phil 1:5) for further discipleship and involving them in outreach-missions. Through this partnership, new churches were able to support his mission team with manpower (Phil 2:25, Col 4:12), material aid (Phil 4:10f) and prayer (Phil 1:19; Col 4:2-3). Parallel to this, Paul and his team were working with their own hands to sustain the mission (Acts 18:3).

Paul's aim was to establish firmly rooted Christian communities from where the Gospel could spread further to the surrounding regions (Phil 1:27; 2:15-16). After that, he went on to reach those people who had not yet heard the Gospel.

## Paul's team reaches Philippi

During Paul's second mission expedition between 49-50 A.D., he and his team faced a serious challenge. They travelled throughout the region of Phrygia and Galatia but the Holy Spirit hindered them to preach the Word of God. They continued their journey through Mysia and tried to enter Bithynia – but the Spirit of God did not allow them. All these areas are in present-day Turkey. Desperately, they turned west till they reached the coast at Troas on the north-western Mediterranean tip of Turkey (see map). During the night, Paul had a vision of a man in Macedonia standing and begging him, “Come over to Macedonia and help us.” The next day Paul, together with Silas, Timothy and Luke, got ready to leave for the region of Macedonia. They first reached the city of Philippi and stayed there for some time.

Despite the many challenges Paul faced before reaching Philippi (cf. Acts 16:6-10) and in forming a group of believers there (cf. Acts 16:11-40), we will discover in section 3 that this church became one of Paul's strongest mission partner.



## The city of Philippi

Philippi was the first major city in Europe that Paul visited. It was situated in the north-eastern corner of Greece. This city had been accorded the highest possible honour in the Roman Empire: being made a Roman colony. This implied that citizens of Philippi became citizens of Rome (cf. “us Romans” in Acts 16:20-21) and their legal position in respect to payment of taxes, local administration and law became the same as for the citizens of Rome. There seemed to be great pride associated with this privilege because Paul used this in his letter as an illustration to emphasise the even greater dignity of ‘our citizenship in heaven’ (Phil 3:20).



### **Explanation**

V 6-7) V6 mentions ‘Holy Spirit’ while V7 states ‘the Spirit of Jesus’. Comparing these verses with Romans 8:9 and Galatians 4:6 helps us to understand that the Holy Spirit is actually the Spirit of Jesus. There are no details as to how the Spirit prevented the team from spreading the Gospel. However, the team was open for His guidance (cf. Acts 13:2-4). Whenever the Spirit hindered the team, they continued with their journey which involved seeking where other doors were opening and consequently new planning. They went on with their journey, trying to enter into new areas until Paul got a vision in Troas. The team interpreted this vision as an open door to enter Europe and they “immediately got ready to leave” (V10). This action was important for they needed to find out, whether this vision was part of God’s plan. Looking back on what God had done in Philippi (Acts 16:13-40), we see in this vision God’s clear guidance.

V10) The verses before talk about ‘Paul and his companions’ (V6) and ‘they’ (V7 & 8). From V 10 onwards, we read ‘we’ (cf. V11 until V17). This suggests that the author of Acts, Luke, has joined the team in Troas and left them after Paul and Silas have got imprisoned. He

might have joined Paul and the team again in Acts 20:5f *because we find “us” in V5.*

V14-15) The business woman Lydia was already “a worshiper of God” (V14). The Bible does not consider her faith as primitive but emphasises God’s continuing work: “*The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul’s message.*” In the following verse, Lydia practically applies Paul’s message of salvation through Christ equally for Jews and Gentiles: She invites Paul and Silas to stay at her house. Devoted Jews were not allowed to stay with Gentiles since they were considered as ‘unclean’. But Paul and his team accepted her offer. They were convinced: “*There is neither Jew nor Gentile ... for you are all one in Christ Jesus*” (Gal 3:28), and her home became a centre for the Christian faith in the city (Acts 16:40).



## **Questions for group discussion**

- You cannot expect that God answers you specific questions when you are not willing to follow His general guidance. As soon as you invite God to speak, He might not start with your questions but with His questions and His priorities. How is your relationship with your parents? What films do you watch and how do you spend your money? Do you really want to hear God’s voice?
- Silence is necessary for anyone in order to move from a life filled with noise, worries and busyness to a place where you can listen to your God. God enjoys speaking to His people when they pray (cf. Acts 10:9f; 13:2; 22:17). Have you ever tried to go out of your bed in the night to have some quiet time with your Lord?
- Paul was committed to remaining in touch with Christ and His Spirit in order to receive guidance. He emphasised in Romans 8:5: “*Those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires*”. He sensed that it was the Spirit who hindered them from spreading the Word of God in Asia. However, they did not go home frustrated; they remained expectant and went on with their journey to

see where God was opening a door for them. What can you learn from Paul's example?



## ***Digging deeper***

➤ Some people complain that they do not hear God's voice while they are not willing to spend time in prayer and silence before Him. When you go into a room and shut the door to pray (Mt 6:5f) you face your own person and gradually your focus can shift from yourself to God. In the quiet you can no longer avoid God's questions about the direction of your life.

➤ Sadly, the sentence: "God has told me..." is sometimes used by Christians who reject advice and guidance from fellow Christian. However, this sentence cannot be separated from God's character of humility and servant hood. A critical question concerning the voice of God is whether the action in question would glorify God and His plan, or our own plans and desires.

**"The core of all prayer is indeed listening, obediently standing in the presence of God." (Henry Nouwen)**

**"The spirit of Christ is the spirit of missions. The nearer we get to Him, the more intensely missionary we become."  
(Henry Martyn, missionary to India and Persia)**

# 3 Partnership in the Gospel



## Focus

Immediately after addressing the Philippians, Paul opens his letter with a prayer full of joy in the midst of his sufferings. He is glad because of his “*partnership in the Gospel*”. What does this imply and what can we learn from it? These are the underlying questions of this section.



Apolo mentioned one time: *“This I understood, the many things which I have prayed for were not lost. God has answered my prayers (I have seen them). I had been very troubled where I was sent to teach and said to myself ‘Perhaps they will not believe in Jesus Christ’, but whenever I prayed to the Lord they believed; when I did not continue in prayer they went back.”*<sup>8</sup>



## Testimony

Praise the Name of the Living God. At our Church, St Phillips Bugongi/Kabale we meet as believers every Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday at 6 a.m. to pray, read the Bible and

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<sup>8</sup> Luck, Anne: African Saint. The Story of Apolo Kivebulaya, London: SCM Press LTD, 1963, p. 78.

share. Different people preach and lead every day; they are inspired by the Holy Spirit.

We believe the promise of God in His word which says: *“If two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them”* (Mt 18: 19-20).

So we pray to God for preachers of the Word, that they may be filled with the Holy Spirit. We pray for the family because it is the nucleus Church. We believe Mission is the work of God, so we pray that God may raise inspired men and women to preach the Gospel.

We pray for countries where Christians are suffering, like Central African Republic, Congo, Northern Nigeria, Syria, Somalia and other areas of conflict or where we know persecution to be high, so that God may intervene and believers may be strengthened. We pray that God’s presence may be real among them and their families and that where imprisonment occurs, the rest of the family may be provided for.

We pray that situations of pain may draw the persecuted closer to God and that in His good time the suffering may end. We ask God to raise up missionary organizations that will give aid and have a testimony that can draw the suffering to God.

We always pray for the leadership of the church in Uganda, for the Archbishop, for the Bishops and especially for our Diocesan Bishop. We pray for our Parish Priest and his family. We pray for lay readers especially the one in our church, for all missionaries and all who advance the Gospel. The booklet “Ka Tushabire Miishani “ is a guide to help us pray sensitively for the work of God in the world. God has promised that He will build His Church and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it - and we believe Him. Glory be to his Name! Amen.

**Canon Mary Aliza Dutki**





## Text

### ***Philippians 1:3-8***



## Eye opener

Paul was in a difficult situation. He was again in prison (Phil 1:7, Phil 1:13-14). In this severe situation, he depended on support from churches and friends to help him survive the harsh conditions of imprisonment during those days. In spite of these sufferings, his mind was neither focused on self-pity nor on seeking help from others. His heart remained thankful and his focus was on blessing others (Phil 1:3+9): *“I thank my God every time I remember you... I always pray for you because of your partnership in the Gospel... And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight.”*

This prayer shows the strong relationship Paul has had to this church. He wrote a very personal letter that includes both joy and tears. He treated the Philippians not as clients or members of ‘his’ congregation. Their relationship is described in terms of partnership. They partner for the sake of the Gospel (Phil 1:5). The foundation of this partnership is the love of Christ: *“Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus”* (Phil 2:4-5).

The letter to the Philippians shows this partnership in mission in a wonderful way, marking the entire letter as a mission partnership letter. This is observed in the following:

- Paul and the Philippians remained in a close prayer partnership. Paul prayed for the Philippians: *“I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray...”* (Phil 1:4:9) and they pray for him: *“for I know that through your prayers and the help given by the Spirit...”* (Phil 1:19).
- They remained in a partnership by encouraging each other in

hardship: They remained in a partnership by encouraging each other in hardship: *“For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him, since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had...”* (Phil 1:27-30), keeping each other informed: *“I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you.”* (Phil 2:19).

➤ They remained in a partnership of witness for Christ: *“in which you shine like stars in the universe as you hold out the word of life”* (Phil 2:15-16).

➤ They remained in a partnership of giving and receiving: *“... not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need.”* (Phil 4:14-19).

Despite his imprisonment, his letter is a letter full of joy<sup>9</sup>. This joy is “in the Lord” (mentioned in Phil 3:1 and 4:4) and resulting from their “partnership in the Gospel” (cf. Phil 1:3-5; 1:18-19; 2:19f; 2:28f; 4:10f).

Through this “partnership in the Gospel”, the Philippians share “in God’s grace with me” (Phil 1:7). Whenever Christians work together to spread the Gospel through prayer, financial support, encouragement etc., they share God’s blessings, which produces joy within their hearts.

### **Paul’s partnership in prayer with churches**

Paul’s partnership in prayer is not only seen in this letter. He mentions it in almost all epistles.

➤ Paul reassures the church in Rome: *“I remember you in my prayers at all times”* (Rom 1:9-10) and adds: *“I urge you, brothers, by your Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, to join me in my struggle by praying to God for me”* (Rom 15:30).

➤ He writes to the church in Corinth: *“[O]ur prayer is for your perfection”* (2Cor 13:9) and requests: *“[H]elp us by your prayers”* (2Cor 1:11).

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<sup>9</sup> Joy, rejoice and thanks are mentioned 17 times within the four chapters of this letter.

➤ He confesses to the Ephesians: *“I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers”* (Eph 1:15-17) and requests them to *“pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the Gospel”* (Eph 6:18-19).

➤ He encourages the Colossians by saying: *“[W]e have not stopped praying for you ”* (Col 1:9) and requests them to *“pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ”* (Col 4:3).

➤ He writes to the Thessalonians: *“[W]e constantly pray for you, that our God may count you worthy of his calling”* (2Thess 1:11) and requests them to *“pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honoured”* (2Thess 3:1).

➤ He confesses to the Christians who meet in the house of Philemon: *“I always thank my God as I remember you in my prayers... I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith”* (Philemon 4-6) and hopes to be restored *“in answer to your prayers”* (Philemon 22)

These passages show clearly the importance of prayer for Paul in spreading the Gospel. Paul’s letter to the Philippians teaches us about this kind of prayer of intercession.

➤ We learn in Philippians 1:4 that Paul’s praying for them is constant (*“in all my prayers”*), comprehensive (*“for all of you”*) and cheerful (*“I always pray with joy”*).

➤ Paul intercedes for the Philippians to grow in love which leads to maturity (Phil 1:9): *“[T]his is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best”*. God wants to be glorified among all the people and the love of God leads us to love His people. As we learn to love people we desire to pray for them. We discover in Philippians 1:19f that the church was not only praying for Paul but with Paul so that Christ would be exalted (V20). Paul does not focus on his own person, but on God’s plan to spread the Gospel.

- Philippians 2:19 shows in a wonderful way that Paul was eager to receive ‘prayer news’. He wanted to be informed in order to pray as specifically as possible.
- Like Paul, the Philippians faced opposition in spreading the Gospel (Phil 1:30). Philippians 4:6 emphasises that the antidote to anxiety is to be found in prayer and petition combined with thanksgiving. In prayer and petition, our anxiety reduces since we hand it over to the almighty and trustworthy God. Through thanksgiving we remember His faithfulness in our life and His promises for our future.



## Explanation

(V4-5) “I always **pray with joy because** of your partnership in the Gospel”. Paul was in prison, but despite of this, working together for the Gospel gave him (and all followers of Christ) a deep joy.

V5) “Partnership in the Gospel **from the first day until now**” This shows, their partnership continued over the years through prayers for each other and the sending of gifts by the Philippians (Phil 4:14ff). They were co-workers of Paul to advance and spread the Gospel.

V6) “he who began a good work in you **will carry it on to completion**” Our Christian life is a process to grow deeper in the fruit of love (Gal 5:22-26). This grows takes time and patience.

V7-8) The fruit of love in Paul’s live is expressed in these both verses. Paul confesses that “I have you in my heart” (V7) and “I long for all of you” (V8; cf. Phil 4:1; 2:12). We sometimes struggle to produce a loving feeling from within ourselves, ending up finding some people difficult to love. However, this love is a fruit of God’s Spirit. As we allow the Holy Spirit to have greater control in our lives, He will do His work and increase love in our heart. This love is rooted in Jesus Christ: “I long for all of you **with the affection of Christ Jesus**”.



## Questions for group discussion

- When Christians stop praying, they stop believing. Do you agree with this statement?
- Missionaries from inside and outside our Diocese need our partnership in the Gospel. Whom are you partnering with in advancing the Gospel?
- Do you have a testimony that prayer increases our compassion and empathy for the people we are praying for?
- Do you have people or an area ‘in your heart’ where the Gospel has not yet been heard?



## Digging deeper

- Prior to Paul, Jesus emphasises in Matthew 9:37f that *“the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few”*. We would expect that He should continue with *“therefore go”*, but He emphasises *“therefore pray that the Lord sends workers in his harvest field”*. Our first task is to pray for these workers.
- Prayer changes yourself and your church. Instead of complaining here and there, let us spend this time in prayer, expecting a manifestation of God’s mighty power.
- Gathering together for prayer is one of the key criteria that show a lively Church. Let us learn from Paul and pray that we work together with our Mission Coordinators and form prayer groups to pray for mission and those who have never heard about Christ. Let us be men and women of prayer.

*“No human activity draws us more deeply into the heart of God than prayer” (Richard Foster)*

*“We can reach our world, if we will.  
The greatest lack today is not people or funds.  
The greatest need is prayer” (Wesley Duewel).*

# 4 God's love in us



## Focus

The German theologian Herman Bezzel emphasised: “The key to people’s hearts will never be our knowledge, it is always our love.” This love comes from Christ. We learn it from Him and it penetrates our lives to glorify Him.



Anne Luck reports about Apolo’s love for people: “*The Banyamboga heartily despised the forest people and would not eat their food. Apolo went among them as a friend, ate their food and slept in their homes; his young teachers often found this difficult.*”<sup>10</sup>



## Testimony

I accepted Jesus Christ on 12<sup>th</sup> June, 1995. The relationship I had with my Grandmother (Lydia Barore), my parish priest (Rev. Stephen Tabaro) and our local church lay reader (Mr John Bagamuhunda) helped me to grow up spiritually. These people corrected me with love whenever I went astray. Because of their love, I trusted them, had confidence in them and when I had a question, I could ask them without fear.

Love and relationships are vital in sharing the Gospel with people who are not yet followers of Christ. When I went for a gap year to the UK in 1997, I was not well equipped for that cross-cultural ministry from a human point of view. But I loved my British fellow workers and this opened the doors to their homes, which gave me an opportunity to

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<sup>10</sup> Luck, Anne: African Saint. The Story of Apolo Kivebulaya, London: SCM Press LTD, 1963, p. 124.

learn their culture. And because of my love for them, Christians and non-Christians alike began to give me their prayer requests. And this opened a way for the Gospel.

**Rev. Ambrose Kwesiga**



**Text**

***Philippians 1:9-11***



**Eye opener**

The Apostle John insisted that the love of God cannot be separated from the love of our neighbours (1John 4:7-12).

The reason for this is one of the greatest statements in the Bible: “God is love” (V8). This means more than ‘God is loving’. It means that God’s essential nature is love. He loves not because he finds some aspects of our character worthy of His love, but because it is His nature to love. Therefore, His love for us does not depend on what we do but on what He is.

This godly love is shown in Christ. God gave His Son, the very image of Himself, as a sacrifice to save the world (V9). This love draws us to God’s heart, penetrates and shines through us. It calls us to respond by offering our lives for His purpose and plans.

Loving our fellow men is the consequence of God’s love in us: “If we love one another, God lives in us” (V12). This love “comes from God” (V7) and we are able to love Him and others because he loved us first (V10). It is this love that gives humanity a deep satisfaction and heals our wounded hearts.

As God’s genuine love shines through us, it attracts people and draws them into His presence and His church. Mission is therefore not an additional duty someone is forced to do, it is a consequence of someone’s love-relationship with Christ.



This means, whoever separates love from mission actually destroys God's mission because God's character of love and of mission can never be separated.

Since God is love, Christian mission is always a result, or a fruit, of this love. As soon as our love for God and for people ceases, mission becomes a selfish business, done sometimes out of fear for the decline of someone's denomination.

There are two motives that should drive us constantly to mission:

- a) Our love for God and our concern for His glory (Mark 12:31; 1 Corinthians 10:31);
- b) our love for man and our concern for his welfare (Mark 12:31).

God's universal love for mankind and His sacrificial love to save the world cause us to get involved in God's mission.

However, the love of Christ is not the only motive leading us to offer our lives for God's plans. John Stott emphasised: "The Mandate for world evangelization is the whole Bible, because it is to be found in the **creation of God** (because of which all human beings are responsible to him), in the **character of God** (as outgoing, loving, compassionate, not willing that any should perish, desiring that all should come to repentance), in the **promises of God** (that all nations will be blessed through Abraham's seed and will become the Messiah's inheritance), in the **Messiah of God** (now exalted with universal authority, to receive universal acclaim/praise), in the **Spirit of God** (who convicts of sin, witnesses to Christ, and impels the church to evangelize), and in the **Church of God** (which is a multinational, missionary community, under orders to evangelize until Christ returns)".<sup>11</sup>



## *Context of the letter*

As we have seen in the previous study, Paul's mission team and the Christians in Philippi worked together as partners to advance the Gospel. We have also seen

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<sup>11</sup> Stott, in: Winter, Perspectives. Pasadena: William Carey Library, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. 2000, p. 22.

Paul's sincere love for the Philippians in the previous verses (V7-8). This love drives Paul to continue with his prayer for them. He prays that they may be well equipped for their calling - and the key to grow in Christian maturity and mission is to grow in sincere love. Paul used for this "love" the Greek word "agape". This is love that comes from God without any selfish intention (cf. Phil 2:1-2).

Especially in Philippians 1:16 Paul uses this agape love as a criterion in sharing the Gospel of Christ. However, he is also well aware that some preach Christ out of selfish ambitions (Phil 1:17).

Sincere love grows in us as we allow God to transform our hearts and lives (Phil 1:9f). It is seen in Christ's humility and His love towards us (cf. Phil 2:5f) which does not stop at national, tribal or economic backgrounds but binds us together in Christ (Phil 2:2).



## **Explanation**

V9) The key word in this passage is love. Once our love grows, true wisdom and spiritual insight increases. Guided by this deep love, we are able to discern what is best and to live a blameless life. Similarly, Paul emphasises in 1 Corinthians 13:1-3: whatever I say or do – without love it fails to fulfil its Christian purpose and seduces us to become proud (cf. 1Cor 8:1).

V10) "*Until the day of Christ*" emphasises in this context that as long as we live on earth, we need to offer ourselves to Christ so that His love can grow in us and shine through us. When either Christ comes back or we die, we will stand before Him (1Thess 4:16f). Then, this day appears, we will be transformed into his likeness and our imperfection comes to an end (cf. 1 Cor 13:9-12; 1Thess 3:11-13).

V11) The "*fruit of righteousness*" is an expression from the Old Testament (cf. Amos 6:12; Prov 11:30). In the OT, it is used in a similar way to the fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22f. This fruit "*comes through Jesus Christ*", produces in us deeds of

righteousness and is an expression of His love. Practising this “fruit of righteousness” leads to the life, we are called to life: “to the glory and praise of God”.



## **Questions for group discussion**

- What helps you to feel God’s love in your daily life?
- Have you ever experienced the love of God guiding you to love other people?
- Does the coming of “the day of Christ” affect the way you are living today?



## **Digging deeper**

- The appropriate response to God’s love is to love him back. As we love him, we get transformed and eager to love what He loves. This love drives us to participate in God’s mission because He loves sinners and His desire is that they turn to Him.

We need to open our heart for this love every day. The more we practice this love the more we experience its transforming power in our lives. Rainer Maria Rilke emphasised: “The more love you share, the more it increases within you.”

- Mission must hold a primary place in the life of the Church in every generation if the Church is to live, because every generation needs to be reached with the love of Christ anew.



## **Prayer**

Heavenly Father, we thank You because Your nature is love. We thank You that You loved us not because of who we are but because of who You are. And since Your love is in us, let this love guide us into mission so that we maybe found worthy to go and tell those who do not know how great You are. Amen.

*“The key to people’s hearts will never be our knowledge,  
it is always our love.” (Herman Bezzel)*

*“You can give without loving. But you cannot love without giving.”  
(Amy Carmichael,)*

# 5 Facing hardship



## Focus

No one likes difficult times in life. However, life also bears failures, challenges and hostility. Jesus told us plainly that when we work for God's glory, we *"will be handed over to be persecuted ... and you will be hated by all nations because of me"* (Mt 24:9). This study makes us aware that spreading the Gospel arouses opposition from the enemy.

However, the love of Christ in our hearts should drive us to accept hardship for His name's sake and to pray for those brethren who are facing persecution.



When Apolo went to Mboga/Congo he faced at the beginning much hardship and was even accused of murder. He wrote in his diary: *"I saw much sorrow that day. They came with spears and sticks and surrounded my house, and I was inside it. They stuck the spears through the walls, as a fisherman would spear fish in a basket trap. They were afraid to come into the house, in case I had a spear, but I had none. Then I started to pray. When they could not break through they left off."*<sup>12</sup>



## Testimony

I accepted Jesus Christ as my Lord and Saviour in 1961. The Lord has been faithful to me even in hard times. From the time I accepted Christ, I kept going with the brethren for mission. I faced a lot of challenges and persecution because of going for mission. My husband never wanted me to even go

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<sup>12</sup> Luck, Anne: African Saint. The Story of Apolo Kivebulaya, London: SCM Press LTD, 1963, p. 75.

for fellowship meetings. At times, he would beat me and this marked much of my early Christian life. I pressed on by God's grace. Some Christians also persecuted me and called me names because many on the team were priests and other young men. So they told my husband that the priests would take me for their sexual satisfaction while in the mission field. I thank God that before my husband died, he also accepted God's saving grace. I have been persecuted by some church leaders because God has gifted me with a healing and deliverance ministry. Some threatened to chase me away from the church. But I thank God that He has given me the grace to forgive and to go on with God's work despite what I have experienced in the ministry.

**Lydia Barore**



**Text**

***Philippians 1:12-18***



***Eye opener***

Jesus had prophesied to Ananias in Acts 9:15-16: *"This man [Paul] is my chosen instrument to carry my name before the Gentiles and their kings and before the people of Israel. I will show him how much he must suffer for my name"*. Paul was suffering in prison when he wrote this letter (Phil 1:13-14). He informed his friends in Philippi about his struggles for they were eager to pray for him (Phil 1:19). Hebrews 13:3 emphasises: *"Remember those in prison as if you were their fellow prisoners, and those who are mistreated as if you yourselves were suffering."*

The rise of Islamic extremists, aiming to centre all political and social life on Islam, has led to the persecution of Christians in many Middle East countries. But perhaps the biggest reason for the persecution is that the Church of Christ is growing. People are finding freedom and forgiveness, joy and a new life with integrity in Jesus Christ. And that is often the true reason for their persecution. The Church in Latin America

and Africa has doubled in size since the 1970s, and tripled in Asia.<sup>13</sup> Historically, we know that where persecution happens, it often strengthens the faith of believers. The Church is shaken in many countries by persecution. But the Church of Christ is growing, it is enduring, it is triumphant and alive.

The Congress on World Evangelization in Lausanne (Switzerland, 1974) emphasised in its 'Lausanne Covenant' in Section 13:

"It is the God-appointed duty of every government to secure conditions of peace, justice and liberty in which the Church may obey God, serve the Lord Christ, and preach the Gospel without interference. We therefore pray for the leaders of the nations and call upon them to guarantee freedom of thought and conscience, and freedom to practice and propagate religion in accordance with the will of God and as set forth in The Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We also express our deep concern for all who have been unjustly imprisoned, and especially for those who are suffering for their testimony to the Lord Jesus. We promise to pray and work for their freedom. At the same time we refuse to be intimidated [frightened] by their fate. God helping us, we too will seek to stand against injustice and to remain faithful to the Gospel, whatever the cost. We do not forget the warnings of Jesus that persecution is inevitable (1Tim 2:1-4; Acts 4:19; Acts 5:29; Gal 6:12; Mt 5:10-12)."<sup>14</sup>



## ***Context of the letter***

As we have seen in the last section, Paul was a man driven by God's love. This love guided him and his team to share the Gospel without selfish ambitions (V15-17), to the extent of being persecuted and imprisoned. This desire, to bring salvation to God's people reached its goal through both hardship and freedom.

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<sup>13</sup> Open Doors, A Handbook of Prayer for the Persecuted Church, UK, 2013, p 3.

<sup>14</sup> Lausanne Covenant, in: Winter, Perspectives, Pasadena: William Carey Library, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. 2000, p 763.

Paul's perspective on hardship can be best understood by considering Philippians 3:10f: *"I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death..."* Paul's desire to "know Christ" included not only His victory, especially as seen in His resurrection. He also identified with Christ's suffering and death (cf. Phil 2:5ff). He was very much aware that our Christian pilgrimage does not only move from glory to glory but loving Christ also includes hardship. This is especially true for those who spread the Gospel. James emphasised that some spiritual lessons can only be learnt through hardship, since suffering brings perseverance and strengthens our faith (cf. James 1:2f; 1:12; 5:10-11). In a similar way, Paul explains in his second letter to the Corinthians that sufferings urge us to trust God alone (2Cor 1:9) and that Christians experience His power and love especially in those situations (2Cor 4:7-12; 12:10). In this context, Paul encourages the Philippians in 1:29: *"For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for him."* It is important to mention that although Paul accepts hardship for Christ's sake, he does not seek or focus on it but on advancing the Gospel (V18). This perspective reveals his love for people and makes him glad even in the midst of hardship.

This joyous confidence was also evident when the Church in Philippi began. Despite severe beatings and imprisonment, Paul and Silas were praying and singing in the middle of the night. Then, a violent earthquake hit the prison. Supernaturally the cell doors were opened and the prisoners' chains came loose. The jailer, fearing all his prisoners would escape, decided to commit suicide rather than face the consequences. Paul prevented him from doing this, and as a result the jailer and his whole family surrendered their lives to Christ (cf. Acts 16:25-30).





## Explanation

V12) *“Now I want you to know, brothers”* - Paul knew that the congregation at Philippi would be concerned about him. He and his team were committed to keeping them informed, which enabled the Philippians to pray for them specifically and for their call to advance the Gospel (V18-19). Informing each other about our situation is important in the maintenance of a prayer partnership for the Gospel, like it existed between Paul and the Church in Philippi (Phil 1:5). Furthermore, it gives those who are on mission strength and courage: *“for I know that through your prayers and the help given by the Spirit of Jesus Christ, what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance”* (V19).

V13-14) Paul did not give many details about his personal situation in prison. His focus was not on how people treated him but on spreading the Gospel. This gave him joy even in this difficult situation (V18). We do not know how many people the *“whole palace guard and to everyone else”* included. However, his example encouraged and inspired *“most of the brethren”* to spread the word of God boldly.

V18) *“The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice.”* Paul is convinced that the Gospel is the power of God (cf. Rom 1:16; 1Cor 1:18) and that by it He establishes His kingdom (cf. Lk 13:18-21). Therefore, the Gospel has power in itself even if it is preached with wrong motives<sup>15</sup>. This gives Paul confidence while facing opposition and hardship in prison.

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<sup>15</sup> These people preached Christ out of envy, rivalry (V15), selfish ambitions (V17), and were in a position to stir up trouble against Paul while he was in prison (V17). We might not know anything more about them. Since Paul's words are not harsh in V15-18, whereas he uses very strong words against an opposition group in Philippians 3:2-6, it might not be the same group. It seems there is great wisdom in Paul's silence, in his decision not to spread more negative words about others than necessary.



## Questions for group discussion:

- V14 indicates that sharing the Gospel is not limited to a 'special group of people' while V15-17 mentions that some proclaim it with wrong motives. What are your motives in sharing the Gospel? Is it sincere love for God and people? Is it appreciation by your fellow Christians, the need to strengthen your denomination, the desire to be respected, etc.?
- What can you learn from Paul about facing difficult situations?
- Are we honest in evangelism and discipleship, informing new believers that following Christ also requires the disciples to “deny himself and take up his cross” (Mt 16:24)?



## Digging deeper

- God is never taken by surprise when bad things happen to His children. He is able to work for our good in 'all things' that happen to those who have been adopted into his family (cf. Rom 8:28).
- Let us pray for those who are persecuted because of their faith. Prayer enters locked prison doors and jumps over barbed wire fences; prayer reaches remote villages and areas where no visas are granted. Prayer strengthens, supports, encourages and, especially, changes situations.
- Let us remember those who are persecuted and pray for them, so that they do not respond to their enemies with the same method of hatred which originates from the evil one. God cannot respond to hatred with hatred because His nature is love. Since believers in Christ represent God – let us respond with love and be a blessing for our country even if people despise us.

*“The church is the church only when it exists for others...”*

*The church must share in the secular problems of ordinary*

human life, not dominating, but helping and serving.”  
(Dietrich Bonhoeffer, words written in prison in 1944)

## 6 Living for Christ



### Focus

There was once a young boy who was overwhelmed by the love of God. The boy asked himself: “What can I give God in response to His mighty love?”

He looked around and could not find anything that was valuable enough to thank God. Then he got an idea. On Sunday, he went to the service and waited for the time of the offertory. He went to the person holding the offertory basket and asked him to lower the basket. Suddenly, the boy jumped into the basket and said: “I give myself to God. This is the most valuable thing I have”. This section focuses on what it means to give ourselves to God.



Apolo wrote in the years 1898/99: *“I worried, but the Lord gave me strength and power and I overcame. I understand that God the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit are with me. I did not doubt at all that I was with God and He with me. I found it difficult to believe that God helped me until the Holy Spirit showed me, then I knew it was He who helped me. I had been very troubled, but the Lord heard me and saw my trouble and I never lacked anything, whenever I needed anything He gave it to me. My great need is to have power to bring people to Jesus Christ and to have the life which he gives. Now I have no more fear of Satan”*.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>16</sup> Luck, Anne: African Saint. The Story of Apolo Kivebulaya, London: SCM Press LTD, 1963, p. 84.



## **Text**

### ***Philippians 1:19-30***



## **Eye opener**

One of the key verses in this passage is Paul's statement: *"for to me, to live is Christ"* (V21). For this lifestyle, he often uses the phrase living 'in Christ'. Our example for living 'in Christ' is Jesus' oneness with His Father. Whatever He did, it was rooted in listening and remaining in the Father. Jesus prayed that we follow this example: *"just as you are in me and I am in you. May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me"* (John 17:21).

Jesus illustrated this with the example of a vine: *"remain in me and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me"* (John 15:4). This means, we are created to live in an ongoing connection and conversation with Christ. We are called to live lives of unceasing prayer (1Thess 5:16; Eph 6:18; Col 3:17). 'Unceasing' not because of the many prayers we say but because of our ongoing connection and conversation with Christ during the day. This is the meaning of a prayerful life. It is not a life in which we say as many prayers as possible. It is a life in which we try to relate everything we do, say and think with Christ.

Paul emphasises: *"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come"* (2Cor 5:17; cf. Gal 2:20). This means Christians are called to evaluate their surroundings no longer according to a worldly perspective but according to Christ's perspective (Rom 12:1-2). This renewing process enables us to see the people around us with Christ's eyes, to listen with Christ's ears, to evaluate our thoughts from Christ's perspective and the feelings in our heart with Christ's love.

It helps us to react with love and peace during the day, to respond with kindness when challenges confront us and to say aware of our sins.

When we live “in Him” we are able to relate whatever we see, hear or feel with Christ. This implies self-examination on how we think, speak, feel and act from hour to hour, day to day and week to week.

Further, this connection does not disturb or delay us in our daily work. On the contrary, it helps us to act and react according to Christ’s example since His love remains in our heart.

Henry Nouwen emphasised: “Service and prayer can never be separated because service is prayer and prayer is service”<sup>17</sup>.



## **Context of the letter**

In Philippians 1:12-26, Paul demonstrates by his own life what it means to live “in Christ”. This makes him ready to accept even some hardship for God’s glory. In the following verses, from 1:27 to 2:18, he encourages the Christians to follow this example.

As we have seen, living “in Christ” enables us to see the people around us with Christ’s eyes, to listen with Christ’s ears and to evaluate our thoughts from Christ’s perspective.

This is what Paul expects the Philippians to practice. Therefore, he addresses them as people “*in Christ*” (Phil 1:1; 1:26; 3:14; 4:7; 4:21), “*in the Lord*” (Phil 1:14; 4:1; 4:2), “*in Him*” (Phil 3:9) or “*united with Christ*” (Phil 2:1).

Paul’s life demonstrates in Philippians 1:12-26 that human life finds direction, purpose and harmony, when we live “*in Him*” or in other words, when we live in Christ’s presence.

Let us follow the footsteps of Jesus and the example of the apostle and apply this in our daily life.

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<sup>17</sup> Nouwen, Henri J.M.: The living Reminder: Service and Prayer in Memory of Jesus Christ, New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1977, p. 28.



## Explanation

V20) *“Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death”*. Like the Psalm writers, Paul’s purpose was to glorify God without being ashamed of backsliding since he puts his hope in him (cf. Ps 25: 2-3; 20-21; Ps 119:31; 80). This made Him able to surrender his whole life and death for God’s purpose and glorification.

V21-23) Paul explains V20 with V21: *“For to me, to live is Christ and [therefore, even] to die is gain”*, emphasising that even death is gain because he will continue living a better life with Christ when he *“departs”* (V23). Both lives, here and there, have one single purpose: to glorify Christ (cf. Rom 14:7-8). Although he emphasises *“for to me”* - in his second letter to the Corinthians he applies this to all Christians: *“for Christ’s love compels us... that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again”* (2Cor 5:14-15). The implication of this Christ-centred life is described in V 27-28: *“to conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ”*. This includes to *“stand firm in one spirit”*, to *“contend as one man for the faith of the Gospel”* and not *“being frightened in any way”*.

V26) Paul expresses with *“your joy in Christ Jesus will overflow on account of me”* that his visit will make the Philippians glad and give them reason to glorify Christ for keeping him safe, when he returns to visit them again.

V27) Since Philippi was a Roman colony, many citizens were proud of this and tried to ‘conduct themselves in a manner worthy of a Roman citizen’. Paul might have used this as an example to point out that when you are ‘in Christ’, you should *“conduct yourself in a manner worthy of the Gospel”*. What this means is practically described in the following verses and seen in the example of Christ (Phil 2:1-11). Jesus’ example shows clearly how He stood firm without giving up. He helped, healed, comforted and was concerned about the needs of people while sharing the Gospel.

V28) Paul emphasised “*without being frightened*”. Fear is one of the great enemies of the Gospel. It destroys the ability to witness, the loyalty to Christ and the fellowship with our brethren. When the Philippians read these verses, they must have remembered the situation in which their Church started. Paul was caught up in a mob attack, illegally flogged and put in prison. But Paul and Silas were not “*frightened by those who opposed*” them. They were singing in the middle of the night when a violent earthquake hit the prison and they were “*saved – and that by God*”. Their ‘un-frightened-ness’ is especially seen in the fact that the magistrates ordered their release on the following day. But Paul protested that his rights as a Roman citizen had been violated. The magistrates had not realized that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens. The implications were very serious. Beating a Roman citizen in public was illegal, yet they were beaten without any proper trial. “*They will be destroyed*” might also allude to their destroyed plans. The magistrates themselves had to come to the prison apologizing and escorting them out (cf. Acts 25-40).

V29) This verse is explained in section 5 (Phil 1:12-18) under ‘context of the letter’.

V30) Paul reminded the church with “*since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had*” about his former sufferings in Philippi and encourages them to remain strong like he. He and Silas were caught up in a mob attack sparked off by Paul’s exorcism of a young slave-girl. Her furious owners stirred up a crowd against them because they used that evil spirit in the girl for divination and now realised their financial loss. The result was that the city magistrates were called in. Ignoring the need for a fair trial to get to the root of the riot, they ordered that Paul and Silas should be publicly flogged and thrown into the jail at Philippi (cf. Acts 16:16-40). With “*and now hear that I still have*” he alludes again to his imprisonment while he was writing this letter (Phil 1:13-14).

## Questions for group discussion



➤ What disrupts you during your day from seeing the people around you with Christ's eyes, listening with Christ's ears and evaluating your feelings with Christ's love?

➤ Paul's priority to live for the glory of Christ had the consequence of accepting hardship and giving everything else a lower priority (cf. Phil 3:8). Are you keen enough to apply this standard to your life?

➤ *"Conduct yourself in a manner worthy of the Gospel"* means learn from Jesus, from His unity with His Father, in witnessing and caring, helping and listening, comforting and challenging people. In what areas are you facing most difficulties as you *"conduct yourself in a manner worthy of the Gospel"*?



### *Digging deeper*

We are created to live in conversation with Christ.

Seek His presence in the morning and try to remain in the awareness of His presence during the day. Try to worship Him in your mind and relate the experiences of your day with Him. Reflect upon your day in the evening: Was there anything that hindered or disturbed your conversation with Christ? What helped you to come back into His presence? Did it strengthen your relationship with God? You can also put a reminder (e.g. a cross) at your work place that will help you to keep evaluating everything you see, hear and feel from Christ's perspective.

*"Our Christian life contains two duties only: going to Christ every day and remaining in Christ every day." (Hans-Peter Royer)*

*"Love God and you will always be speaking to him. The seed of love is growth in prayer" (Jean-Nicholas Grou).*



# 7 Jesus Christ

## - our example



### **Focus**

Each one of us has people who influenced his/her life. We try to learn from them and imitate them. Even if these people pass away, they remain alive in our minds. Since they have an impact on us, we often try to behave according to their example.

Sadly, this applies also for negative role models. If someone admires people who succeeded with bad behaviour, it influences him/her to practice or tolerate the same.

As Christians, we need a role-model that encourages us to glorify God and to focus our life on God's selfless love. Jesus Christ became this example for all of us.



Dr. A.T. Schofield wrote about Apolo: *"My greatest memory of Apolo is that everyone, no matter of what colour, creed or race, seemed to feel better and happier in his presence. No one could ignore him, however quietly he came in, and no one seemed able to frown or to be unkind in his presence. I cannot remember anyone else who so radiated joy and love."*<sup>18</sup>



### **Testimony**

Role models are everywhere. You can choose your role models easily through television, movies, books, sports, schools, churches, social media, military services, etc.

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<sup>18</sup> Luck, Anne: African Saint. The Story of Apolo Kivebulaya, London: SCM Press LTD, 1963, p. 163.

Let me talk about my experience with the only perfect role model you can have. His name is Jesus Christ. I accepted Him as my personal Savior, having seen the state I was in and heading to death. After surrendering my life, confessing my sins and turning to God, I got peace in my heart. This peace is so comforting, so strong, and so awesome that it shines through us. It is a peace that someone cannot hide, a peace that needs to be shared with others.

I thank God because after my encounter with Him, my thoughts, habits, and goals started to be focused on pleasing Jesus. I want to honor Him with how I live my life, to act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with my God (Micah 6:8). He has made me pure in the midst of impurity, compassionate in the midst of people who are hard-hearted, generous in the midst of people who are greedy. When the light of Jesus shines on me, I become a 'generator' of His light to others. I have seen people admiring Jesus in me for that. Jesus says, "No one lights a lamp and hides it in a jar or puts it under a bed. Instead, he puts it on a stand, so that those who come in can see the light" (Luke 8:16-18).

When I joined my high school, I had a lot of fear that I was joining a school which had a bad history because many boys were badly behaved. Considering a Rukiga saying that 'When a good goat is tied beside a bad one, the good one turns bad', this danger was real. But by the grace of God, I decided to reverse the saying. I was determined to live a life worthy of Christ, no matter what would happen. In the end, some students changed their way of life, turning to God because of my living testimony.

In conclusion, as believers, wherever we go, our way of life should provide illumination and clarity for those around us. In our leadership positions, homes, fellowships and workplaces, we need to copy the example of Jesus and this will give us peace and joy. He helps us to live with confidence, with a sense of who we are in Jesus Christ, not forgetting the eternal rewards in Heaven if the Light of the world lives in us!

**Johnson Byamukama**



## Text

### **Philippians 2:1-8**



## Eye opener

As we have seen in the ‘Eye opener’ of section 1, God called Israel to be a blessing for the nations (cf. Gen 12:3). However, the prophet Isaiah emphasises that Israel as a nation failed to fulfil this call (cf. Is 42:18-25) and God promised to do a new thing (Is 43:18-21; 48:1-8). He calls again ‘his servant’. But this servant is different. He is full of humility (Is 42:1-4; 53:7) and God made his mouth like a sharpened sword (Is 49:2; cf. Rev 1:16; 19:15). Further, He is called to bring Israel back to God (Is 49:5) and to be “... *a light for the Gentiles, that you may bring my salvation to the ends of the earth*” (Is 49:6; cf. Is 49:22-23; 11:10; 51:5). When Jesus was brought in the temple, an old man, called Simeon, took him and prophesied: “*my eyes have seen your salvation... a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel*” (Lk 2:30-32). But Isaiah continues that Israel will despise and reject him (Is 53:3-4) and finally kill him (Is 53:5; 8-9). However, the servant’s death is not the end. God will raise and exalt him (Is 53:10-12).

The identity of this servant will not be fully resolved until the coming of Jesus Christ. The Gospel emphasise very clearly that Jesus is this ‘Servant of God’. At Jesus’ baptism “*the Spirit of God came on Him*” (Mt 3:17; Is 42:1), “*He did not quarrel or cry out*” (Mt 12:15-21; Is 42:1-4), “*took up our infirmities and carried our diseases*” (Mt 8:17; Is 53:4) and brought “*justice to the nations*” (Mt 28:19f; Is 42:1).

Our text builds on this understanding of the Messiah and Paul draws the application for our lives. He understood Christ’s call of serving in love and humility, as Jesus commanded: “*I have set you an example that you should do as I have done for you*” (John 13:15).



## Context of the letter

The key components in following the example of Christ are humility and love with a passion that the world should glorify God (V6 – 11). Paul instructs the Philippians to imitate this humility when he says: *“Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus”* (V5; cf. 1John 2:5-6), following Jesus’ words in Matthew 11:29: *...learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.”* Christ gave this example of *“taking the very nature of a servant”* and Paul focuses on this attitude, calling himself a *“servant of Christ”* (Phil 1:1)

The hymn in V6-11 makes clear that Christ’s humility is not only a single act in His life. The whole life of Christ is permeated by this character, tracing the life of Jesus from eternity past (the position Jesus had, V6), through his birth (the position Jesus took, V7), death (V8), resurrection and ascension (V9) to eternity future (V10-11). Christ’s sacrificial love and humility, *“being in very nature God”*, is seen in His movement from heaven to earth, from glory to shame, from power to servant hood and from life to death,<sup>19</sup> *“even to death on a cross”*!

This character should be reflected in everything we do, say and think, including even the acceptance of hardship (Phil 1:29).

Paul starts this teaching section in 1:27 by urging the Philippians to live in *“a manner worthy of the Gospel of Christ”*. This context is important in helping us to understand that true Christian Mission is always based on selfless love that results in humility, as Phil 2:5ff shows. Humility and love portray the image of Christ and enable us to be part of God’s mission. If we fail to reflect it, our behaviour becomes contrary to the Gospel we preach.

Jesus remained fully God and yet became fully human: *“Who, being in very nature God ... being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man...”* He adopted a particular (Jewish) culture which affirms that God values cultures. Jesus identified with the Jewish people, without surrendering His godly identity. Those who live in *“a*

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<sup>19</sup> Cash, Wilson: *Helps to the study of Philippians*, London: Hunt, Barnard & Co, 1939, p. 48.

manner worthy of the Gospel” are called to remain fully ‘in Christ’ while becoming part of the host culture. This principle of ‘identification without loss of Christian identity’<sup>20</sup> is Christ’s example for all cross-cultural evangelism. Some missionaries refuse to adapt and identify with the new culture because they cling to their own culture or religious traditions, like the false teachers in Philippians 3:2-7. However, this approach treats the cultural heritage of the addressees without the respect and love they deserve. This was not the way of Christ. Paul emphasises that “*to the Jews I became a Jew ... and to the Gentiles I became a Gentile*” (1Cor 9:19f). This identification takes place only when the addressees become part of the circle of people we think of as ‘ours’.

Only if people trust us will they listen to what we have to say! However, others make the opposite mistake. They identify with the people to the extent that they surrender even their Christian standards and values, or their unauthentic ‘native’ behaviour becomes just ridiculous. Again, this was not Christ’s way. He became human and remained truly divine.

It seems this selfless love of Christ was one of Paul’s key points against his opponents who preached Christ out of “*selfish ambitions*”, “*envy and rivalry*” (Phil 1:15-17).



## Explanation

V1) This verse is connected with the previous verses. Paul reminded the Philippians (and us) that they are united with Christ (cf. section 6). He describes now the results of being “in Christ” in a very practical way. It produces in us: *encouragement from being united with Christ; comfort from his love; fellowship with the Spirit; tenderness and compassion*. Since we are united with Christ, His power enables us to bear these results.

V2) Building on this foundation, Paul continues with “*then make my joy complete*” by growing in Christ’s attitude (V5) of humility and selfless love (V7-8; cf. Phil 3:10). It takes humility and love to agree

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<sup>20</sup> Stott, John: The Bible in World Evangelization, in: Winter R. ed: Perspectives on the World Christian movement, Pasadena: William Carey Library, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. 2000, p. 23-24.

wholeheartedly with each other and to love each other despite cultural, social and personal diversity.

- V3) It takes humility and love to avoid working for selfish ambitions or trying to impress others but to respect and value them higher than oneself. This ideal opposes any human perspective that considers oneself either inferior or superior. It focuses on servanthood and true love for each individual, which is a fruit of God's love in our life (cf. Gal 5:22).
- V4) It takes humility and love not to limit our focus on personal interests only but to consider also the interests of others and to have an eye on how other people are getting on as well. *"Each of you"* is supposed to develop this sensitivity to other people's needs. Without Christ's love and humility, no one can put V2-4 into practice.
- V6) Paul emphasised that Christ is *"in his very nature God"*. This implies an understanding of God's nature as self-giving love. While Adam and Eve wanted to seize an opportunity to be like God (Gen 3:5; cf. Is 14:13-15), Jesus was God from the beginning but did not see that *"equality as something to cling on to"*. He demonstrated His true godly nature of self-giving love through his humility. Furthermore, Jesus demonstrated that true humility does not take away one's position. Christ remained fully God. True humility enables one to exercise selfless love and yet remain in one's position.
- V7) Christ *"made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a human servant"*. Jesus willingly became a servant of God and of man, having come *"not to be served but to serve"* (Mt 20:28), by surrendering his own will to God's plans.<sup>21</sup> In this way he demonstrated the Gospel both in word and deed, challenging the disciples that when they are doing missionary work, they should not seek to be served but to reflect Christ in love and humility (cf. John 13:13-17). Christ *"made himself nothing"*. This includes His humility as all-knowing God to listen to people on earth. When we conduct ourselves in a *"manner worthy of the Gospel"* we need this humility to listen to people from the host culture and to learn from them, fighting against our deep-seated inner feelings of superiority. Jesus identified with Jewish

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<sup>21</sup> *"Father... yet not as I will but as you will"* (Mt 26:39)

people, ate their food, understood their needs and challenges, their traditions, etc. He became like a Jew, showing them God's salvation in a way they were able to understand. This example must affect our lives. Ambassadors of Christ who come with the expectation to teach and lead, thinking they know already, fail to reflect Christ's humility. It is only by active, loving engagement with the people, learning to think within their thought patterns, understanding their world-view, listening to their questions and burdens that we are able to reflect Christ's selfless love.

V8) *"he became obedient to death – even death on a cross"*. Human beings have no choice about whether to die or not to, for they cannot escape death. But Christ was different. He became obedient to death by laying his life down *"on the cross"*. This is obedience, humility and unselfishness at its very limits. He chose to accept death on our behalf to free us from the powers of sin and death. The cross marks the turning point, it is *"foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us... it is the power of God"* (1Cor 1:18). It is the symbol of a lifestyle different from the world's.



### **Questions for group discussion**

- Paul's lesson on servanthood begins with a call to a radical self-examination (V1-4). Are you willing to live according to these standards, 'worthy of the Gospel'?
- What can you learn from Christ's selfless love, humility and boldness in relation to sharing the Gospel? Chose one attitude of Christ and share in your group how you would like to apply it in your life.
- Focusing on *"looking...also to the interests of others"* (V4): Is there any rivalry between churches where you live? If yes, how can this be overcome?



## Digging deeper

➤ Jesus is the perfect model for His followers. This includes learning from Jesus' humility (cf. John 13:1ff), from His unity with the Father (cf. John 17:21; 23) and from His love for people of other cultures

(cf. John 13:35).

➤ Jesus said: *"for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted"* (Lk 18:14). Even if we are not putting people down with our words, we can do it by our inner attitude towards them. Paul tells the Philippians to *"consider others better than yourselves"* (V3).

*"God had only one Son and he made that Son a missionary."  
(David Livingstone)*

*"Our faith is a person; the gospel that we have to preach is a person; and go wherever we may, we have something solid and tangible to preach, for our gospel is a person. If you had asked the twelve Apostles in their day, 'What do you believe in?' they would not have stopped to go round about with a long sermon, but they would have pointed to their Master and they would have said, 'We believe him.'...He is our example.' 'What then do you believe?' Hear the glorious answer of the Apostle Paul, 'We preach Christ crucified.' Our creed, our body of divinity, our whole theology is summed up in the person of Christ Jesus." (C.H. Spurgeon)*



# 8 Let every tongue confess



## Focus

This section allows us a glance beyond our human horizon. It compels us to change our narrow perception, focused on a single church, diocese or denomination. It opens our hearts for all people: “Every knee ... and every tongue”, puts us in the midst of God’s present mission while focusing our perspective on its final triumph: “every knee shall bow...and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord”. This final triumph is already present and assured – but not yet fully revealed. Therefore God commissioned His followers to go and make disciples of all nations.



When Apolo went to spread the Gospel among the Bambuti, he said: *“The chief of the Bambuba did not like my teaching them. He said they [the Bambuti] were not worth teaching because of their wandering habits and primitive way of life. For my part I was interested to hear what they would have to say for themselves. After talking to them I found them clever and wise. They marry only one wife, they know God as a creator, they know that Eve was taken out of the side of Adam and how they both ate the forbidden fruit and how death came, but they know nothing about a Saviour. It was great fun to stay with these Bambuti people. We ate meat and sweet bananas.”*<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Luck, Anne: African Saint. The Story of Apolo Kivebulaya, London: SCM Press LTD, 1963, p. 129.



## Testimony

When I was a student, we went with a team from BBUC to Kinkiizi Diocese. We did a follow up on the mission outreach among some Batwa communities that had taken place the previous year. Each team visited a different community. I was posted to one of the farthest Batwa settlements in Kanungu district. Some people from the church discouraged us from going to them, saying: “You are just wasting your time.” However, we were determined to share God’s love with them. As we arrived, many Batwa welcomed us very warmly and opened their homes. We did not treat them as beggars, but sat down with them, showed them respect and valued them like every other person. We ate with them and shared as friends about our lives. More and more Batwa began to appreciate us.

We discussed and shared with them God’s love. Later we made an altar call. It was amazing! God’s love had penetrated the hearts of many and so they stood confessing Christ after confessing their sins. They were filled with joy, dancing and praising God. It was almost unbelievable.

There was also one home of a Mutwa, who was very unfriendly. He was much feared by members of that village. We had an opportunity to share with him about God’s love. At first he kept silent, but later he spoke to us. I believe Jesus’ love had broken his stony heart. On the next day, he came to attend Sunday service in the Church for the 1<sup>st</sup> time in his life.

However, God commanded us to “make disciples”, which is much more than making altar calls. We are responsible to counsel, encourage and train those who show interest in following Christ – and this is often a long process. The next day, we invited the Batwa to come to the parish for discipleship training. Many came and we started teaching them how to pray, to grow in love, to practice faith in Christ, etc. Since we had to go back to BBUC, we requested committed Christians to continue with this discipleship training. It is God’s desire that all people should know that Jesus Christ is Lord! But sometimes we do not care enough about the marginalized.

**Judith Atwongyeirwe**



## Text

### **Philippians 2:9-11**



## Eye opener

Again, the prophet Isaiah directs our thoughts. He described a vision in which God's plan for the world is marvellously presented (Is 66:18-23). God will send missionaries out, even to the farthest outposts of Isaiah's world, Tarshish and Libya, in order to proclaim God's glory. Since it extends to the entire world, God's mission will have no racial, national or geographical boundaries. Both believing Jews and converted Gentiles are described as brothers in one family (V20) and united in a new ministry (V21). In V22, He refers to the new heaven and the new earth that will come at the end and then: *"all mankind will come and bow down before me"* (V23; cf. Ps 22:27-28). This final end is also described in the Book of Revelation: *"there was a great multitude that no-one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb... they fell down on their faces before the throne and worshipped God"* (Rev 7:9-11; cf. Dan 7:14 and section 1).

Being aware of God's mission and His final triumph, Jesus gave His followers the commission in Acts 1:8 to be witnesses in their own town/village (Jerusalem), and in their region (Judea), and among the people who live around them but have a slightly different culture (Samaria), and to the ends of the earth. As followers, we are not called to be witnesses either in 'our Jerusalem' or in 'our Judea'. The Bible does not say finish first with Jerusalem and then go to Judea. Jesus emphasises 'and' – this means we are called to minister to all: Jerusalem and Judea and Samaria and the world.

If a church focuses on itself only, it becomes self-centred. We are praying every Sunday: "Your Kingdom come, Your will be done." Ours is to focus on the King and on His kingdom - which is bigger than our parish.

The Congress on World Evangelization in Lausanne, Switzerland, in 1974 emphasised at the end, in its ‘Lausanne Covenant’ in section 9:

“More than 2,700 million people, which is more than two-thirds of all humanity, have yet to be evangelized. We are ashamed that so many have been neglected; it is a standing rebuke to us and to the whole Church. ... We are convinced that this is the time for churches and para-church agencies to pray earnestly for the salvation of the unreached and to launch new efforts to achieve world evangelization. A reduction of foreign missionaries and money in an evangelized country may sometimes be necessary in order to facilitate the national church’s growth in self-reliance and to release resources for unevangelized areas. Missionaries should flow ever more freely from and to all six continents in a spirit of humble service. The goal should be, by all available means and at the earliest possible time, that every person will have the opportunity to hear, understand, and receive the good news... (Mk 16:15; John 9:4; Mt 9:35-38).”<sup>23</sup>



## Context of the Letter

As seen in the previous section, the servant’s humility and death in Isaiah 52:13f was not the end. Isaiah went on to say that God would raise and exalt Him (Is 53:10-12). The verses in Philippians 2:9-11 emphasize this exaltation. It is the second part of the whole picture: by becoming nothing (V6-8), Jesus gained everything (V9-11).

This lifestyle is deeply rooted in the Old Testament: “*The fear of the Lord teaches a man wisdom, and humility comes before honour*” (Prov 15:33; cf. Prov 22:4; Prov 3:34) and the New Testament: “*For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted*” (Mt 23:12; cf. James 4:6; 1Pet 5:5). This truth is especially seen in Christ’s life. He proved that humility does not lead to failure but is blessed with God’s promises.

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<sup>23</sup> Lausanne Covenant, in: Winter, Perspectives, Pasadena: William Carey Library, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. 2000, p 761-762.

Paul practised this lifestyle. He had the humility to become a prisoner *“for Christ”* (Phil 1:13-14) and received it as a blessing, as he said *“I hope that I ... will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain”* (Phil 1:20-21). Similarly, he humbled himself by considering his former Jewish achievements as a *“loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things ... that I may gain Christ and be found in him”* (Phil 3:8-9).



## Explanation

V9) God raised Jesus from the dead and *“exalted him to the highest place”*. The meaning of this picture is clarified by the next sentence. God *“gave him the name that is above all names”*. In the OT, the name stands for the whole person, his power and authority (cf. Ps 99:2-3; Deut 28:58). Therefore, both expressions emphasise the superiority of Jesus Christ (cf. Eph 1:20-21). While Jesus laid down His own interests, His honour and His life, God exalted Him with the highest authority (cf. Mt 28:18-20). Similarly, the Philippians are encouraged not to strife for their own interests (cf. Phil 2:2-4) but for God’s reward (Phil 3:14-15).

V10-11) The phrase *“at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow”* refers to Isaiah 45:22-24: *“Turn to me and be saved, all you ends of the earth; for I am God, and there is no other... before me every knee will bow; by me every tongue will swear. They will say of me, ‘In the Lord alone are righteousness and strength’...”* Paul knew this ‘mission context’ and he knew that at the end, God’s mission is successful and therefore every being *“in heaven and on earth and under the earth”* – whatever exists and wherever it exists – every being must not only confess that God exists but especially that *“Jesus Christ is Lord”* (V11). The previous verses point to this statement. Confessing that Christ is “Lord” includes accepting that He is the supreme ruler who deserves worship and adoration. From this perspective, we see that faith in Christ cannot be reduced to one religion among the world’s

religions, as if it were one option among many. Nor is it valid to speak of ‘the Christian God’ as if there were many Gods who created this universe. There is only one Creator. He has revealed Himself fully in His Son Jesus Christ.

V11) The final conclusion: “to the glory of God the Father”, points to God’s final intention that He be glorified by all creation and that whatever is done, it is supposed to glorify Him (cf. Ps 66:1-4; Mal 1:11).



## **Questions for group discussion**

- Do you think the following statement is true: If the Church of Christ stops sharing the Gospel with those who do not know Christ, it fails to fulfil its purpose?
- It is true to say that God’s mission is successful despite Islamic extremism and secularism because God has promised that in the end “every knee shall bow and every tongue confess...”. How does this perspective affect your ministry?
- What Christ has already done in world history is much greater than the task that is still ahead. Are you committed to praying that God arises a generation of great missionaries from our midst, who are willing to go into the world and share God’s blessings with those who do not know Christ?



## **Digging Deeper**

- In the world around us, there are people living in areas where the Gospel has not yet reached. Whether they are near or far away, the selfless and sacrificial love of Christ urges us to reach these people, inviting them to experience God’s love and forgiveness. God calls us to be His ambassadors. This urges us to answer the following questions: Which people groups are not yet able to glorify God? How can we help them?

### People with no access to Christian witnesses



This picture<sup>24</sup> shows the countries where people have no or less access to meet Christian witnesses. ‘Unreached people group’ means a society where there is no native community of believing Christians able to evangelize their fellows.

➤ Fact is that many unreached people will only be reached if Christians cross cultural barriers and engage in mission to establish churches among them. It is our blindness that prevents us from noticing the groups and sub-groups within our own country (e.g. different tribes in Karamoja, people from North African in Kampala, etc.) and our neighbouring countries in South Sudan, DRC Congo, etc.

➤ If you have access to the internet, visit [www.prayafrica.org](http://www.prayafrica.org) or [www.unreachedoftheday.org](http://www.unreachedoftheday.org) You will find information to help you pray for groups of people in Africa and outside, among those no Christian witnesses exist. *“Therefore pray that God sends workers in His harvest field”*. There is power in united prayer.

*“His authority on earth allows us to dare to go to all the nations. His authority in heaven gives us our only hope of success. And His presence with us leaves us no other choice.” (John Stott)*

<sup>24</sup> Map from Mandryk Jason, in: Winter, Perspectives, Pasadena: William Carey Library, 4<sup>th</sup> ed. 2009, p 366.

“Lost people matter to God, and so they must matter to us.”  
(Keith Wright)

## 9 Be part of God's master plan



### Focus

The last section has shown us God's plan: “Every knee shall bow ... and every tongue confess...” This section starts with “therefore” and shows us the consequences.

We are challenged to surrender our lives to God's plan. He wants to use us as a blessing for the nations.



Apolo wrote in his diary in 1924: “7 April: I left Mboga to explore a new area to take the name of Our Lord there. Thus it was that God sent me to Bulega country. 9 April:

*There I preached to the Balega... I was very pleased as many people wanted to hear about the name of Jesus ... chief Kamachi and his people agreed to have a teacher so I left Levi Balengura to teach them ... When we found we had been accepted by the people, we prayed the Creator of all things that He would indeed open the door of that country.”<sup>25</sup>*

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<sup>25</sup> Luck, Anne: African Saint. The Story of Apolo Kivebulaya, London: SCM Press LTD, 1963, p. 128.





## Testimony

On 19th October 1980, I had a personal encounter with Jesus Christ who changed my life and gave me a new perspective on life. Since then, life has never been the same. I now have a life of purpose, an assurance of hope for a future here and hereafter. Christ has given me a life of abundance. And I know that one day I will be given a crown of glory in His heavenly Kingdom. I have that assurance because the Word of God tells me so.

Before I surrendered my life to the lordship of Jesus my Lord, I had always desired to control my life, and to control it particularly while I was still young. I thought that enjoying my life with my peers was the best thing to do then. I knew that Jesus saves and He that wanted me to give Him my heart. But I thought that was too early for me. But when I finally surrendered my life to Him, He gave me the full meaning of life. Then there was the challenge of my peers and colleagues who thought I had gone crazy. I ignored them because I had discovered in Jesus what I had all along missed in life – the inner joy and sure hope for the future. I had to determine to work out my salvation with fear and trembling lest I miss the mark.

Furthermore, I discovered, to my joy, that He would be the one to enable me, for on my own, I would not manage the walk of salvation. I claim righteousness, not of my own, but that which He gave to me. It is in this perspective that I strive to live a pure and blameless life, obeying His master-plan for my life in this crooked generation. I have learnt to obey His guidance and to depend on Him on my spiritual pilgrimage. I am convinced I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. In all the 34 years I have walked with Him, I have never regretted having accepted Him as the Lord of my life.

**Rev. Canon Gideon Kwizera**



## Text

### **Philippians 2:12-18**



## Eye opener

Most of us have memorised John 3:16: “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.” And most of us have heard: “God has a wonderful plan for your life!” Of course, he has - however, we sometimes refuse to see God’s wonderful plan with us as a subset of His master plan to bring His love and goodness to the people. God’s plan is clearly stated:

*“Your ways may be known on earth, your salvation among all nations.*

*May the peoples praise you, O God; may all the peoples praise you.*

*May the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you rule the peoples justly*

*(Ps 67:2-4).*

Since Christ called us to serve him, obedience places us into His master plan for the world. Our Chief Commander will never change His plan, whatever the opposition. He will neither shiver nor turn back. But are we following Him to declare His glory in sacrificial and selfless love?

Paul sacrificed his life for God’s glory (V17) and he encourages the Philippians to obey, aiming to follow Christ with sincerity and passion (V12-13); offering their lives for God’s master plan without complaining or arguing (V14) so that they shine like stars in the universe (V15).

God knows there are multitudes that have no knowledge of His Son. Those have no one near them, explaining to them the wonderful news of salvation. But God refuses to leave earth’s people in this hopeless condition. God has His master plan and gives us a part to play in it!

Wherever you go to reach people - there is no place where He has not gone ahead of you. He sets the stage for your arrival before you get there and he works through you as you speak and serve in His name.



## Context of the letter

Paul addresses the Christians in Philippi very warmly as “my dear friends”. He wants them to know that the instructions in the following verses are spoken with

love.

“Therefore” in V12 indicates that Paul is going to state what ought to follow practically from having the attitude of humility, obedience and servant hood as he recommends them in V 1-11.



## Explanation

V12) “Continue to work out your salvation” emphasises the **aim** of our Christian journey namely to become more like Jesus Christ in our attitudes, actions and behaviour (cf. V5). This does not mean the salvation Jesus made possible on the cross is in some way incomplete. Paul encourages the Philippians to “work out” the implications of this wonderful gift in their daily lives without stopping half-way (cf. Phil 1:6). Salvation must be applied each day in our lives.

“With fear and trembling” gives us the **attitude** we should adopt in our Christian journey. Changing our behaviour so that our attitudes can become more like Christ’s (V5) demands our full attention. It is important to mention that Paul, who was influenced by the Old Testament, understands “fear and trembling” in that context as a healthy, motivating fear, not a destructive one: “serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling” (Ps 2:11; cf. Prov 1:7).

- 13) “...for it is God who works in you, to will and to act”. “For” indicates the reason by which we are able to work out salvation in our daily lives: “for it is God who works in you”. This perspective is necessary if we want to understand the whole truth. At the beginning and on our journey of salvation, we depend fully on God. We are called to be active but God’s dimension infiltrates, penetrates and makes our

acting possible since He has promised to assist us with all we need (cf. Phil 1:6; 28; Heb 13:21; Gal 2:20). Paul encourages us to become more Christ-like, and to recognize that behind it all, God is willing and acting to achieve His ‘good purpose’ with us in his master plan.

V14) “Do everything without complaining or arguing” does not mean that we should close our mouth when we see injustice – this is not the example of Christ. This phrase is in the context of obeying God’s plan and alludes to the Exodus. The Israelites repeatedly complained about God’s good plan with them and the negativism of a few members destroyed the faith of many in God’s provision and care (cf. Ex 15:24; Ex 16:2-3; Ex 17:2).

V15) Similar to Philippians 1:10, “so that you became blameless and pure”, is the focus of “work out your salvation” without complaining or arguing against God and His plans. In a crooked and depraved generation Christians are “shine[ing] like stars” because Christ guides and dwells in them (cf. Is 49:6). The phrase alludes also to Daniel 12:3 where “those who lead many to righteousness [will shine] like stars.” In the same way as stars stand out against the dark sky, so the Philippians were called to live holy lives in their society and show by word and action that there is a better way to live. We have a story to tell about how Jesus Christ changed our life. We are witnesses (cf. Acts 1:8), reflecting God’s love and holiness. As witnesses, we neither accuse others of their faith nor do we force them to convert. The reality of Christ that shines in love and holiness through us will draw people into His presence and bless the whole society. Ours is to reflect the love and humility of Christ (V6-8) in “hold[ing] out the word of life” (V16).

V17) Paul uses a second picture which he used only twice in his letters. It is in this passage and in 2 Timothy 4:6. In both passages he emphasises that even if he dies for the Gospel, his death will be like a “drink offering” that is “poured out” to glorify God. This obedience to the point of sacrificing even his life for God’s plan emerges from his deep love of God and His Kingdom. Human beings find their deepest pleasure in glorifying God.

Paul's joy comes from his confidence that even if glorifying God demanded his death, the Gospel would continue through the "[priestly] service, coming from your faith" and therefore "I [Paul] am glad and rejoice with all of you".



## Questions for group discussion

- Are there specific areas in your life where you are struggling to become more like Christ in your attitude?

Choose people to join you to pray for character change.

- Do 'fear and trembling' have any part to play in your worship and prayer? Can you share a testimony on this topic in your group?
- Though every Christian is called to be involved in Christ's master plan, some are not as active as God intended. Can your fellow Christians testify to your involvement in God's master plan?
- Jesus was obedient to the extent of taking the way of the cross (Phil 2:8). Paul was willing to be obedient, sacrificing his life for God (Phil 2:17). What about us?



## Digging deeper

- We do not try to obey any 'missionary vision'. We obey Christ and He has a good plan for us *and* all nations. That is why he called us and blessed us with opportunities to be involved in His mission. This means also ensuring that those groups of people who have never heard the Gospel are able to hear and receive it.
- Taking the Gospel of Jesus Christ to different people in the world today will need individuals who are ready to go as ambassadors of Christ, following the example of His selfless love at any cost (V17). In this challenging task, we focus on Christ as our Teacher who prepared and sent His followers to go and make disciples of all nations.

*“God loves His Son and has a wonderful plan for Him, to bring all the nations to His feet as Lord of all, and He loves you and me enough to give us a place in it” (David Bryant)*

*“I have but one candle of life to burn, and I would rather burn it out in a land filled with darkness than in a land flooded with light.”  
(John Keith Falconer)*

# 10 How can they preach unless they are sent?



## Focus

Emil Brunner emphasised that "the Church exists for mission as a fire exists for burning. Where there is no mission, there is no church."<sup>26</sup>

Paul's example of the body of Christ in 1 Corinthians 12 shows that every believer has a part to play in God's plan for the world. While all Christians are called to participate in blessing the nations, only some are sent out. It is like a fire brigade. Only some go to the frontline, while everyone is needed to support those on the frontline and supply the necessary resources.



In September 1907 Apolo recorded: *"They sent me to Mboga. I found very few people reading. God gave me great strength to give myself to prayer, because my custom is to pray a lot secretly in my house and in the church, thus I prayed. I feel God calling many. Let us start slowly and afterwards more quickly."*<sup>27</sup>



## Testimony

I was called to serve as Mission Coordinator for the Diocese of Kigezi in 1992 and served in this position for a period of 5 years. I was a young and energetic clergyman with passion for evangelism. I felt I needed to have a team to

<sup>26</sup> Emil Brunner, *The Word and the World* (London: SCM, 1931), 108

<sup>27</sup> Luck, Anne: *African Saint. The Story of Apolo Kivebulaya*, London: SCM Press LTD, 1963, p. 111.

do the work of mission with me. For those five years I focused my work on training Christians in evangelism, equipping them with skills of preaching and counselling and then sending them out to preach. I teamed up with the Life Ministry Uganda, an organization that preaches the Gospel using the method of one-to-one evangelism. I mobilized and trained young people and sent them out to bring others to Christ, following the Great Commission (Matthew 28:19). I chose to work with young people because they are energetic, available and quick to learn. They are not conservative but are always ready to learn and implement new things. Some of the young people I trained are now church ministers! Many people are ready and willing to do mission but they need someone to equip them with knowledge and skills for the ministry and involve them in the work. Once this is done they will go wherever they are sent and will do wonderful ministry.

I had a mission truck which I used to transport young people to go to different places for mission and wherever they went and preached many people believed the Gospel and accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Saviour. This caused transformation in people's lives and new life in the church. I agree with Emil Brunner and his statement quoted above that where there is no mission there is no church.

I remember a time when we had mission in one of the churches in Kigezi. During this mission a middle-aged man came in the evening and gave his life to Jesus Christ. He was under the influence of alcohol, but Jesus touched him and he confessed that he had accepted Jesus Christ to be master of his life. He had wasted his money in alcohol and witchcraft and his relationship with his wife and neighbours was not good. He told us that he had paid a lot of money to a witchdoctor who had given him a charm that he was wearing under his clothes. He surrendered it to us and we burnt it. He became a changed man! When we went back on a follow-up mission, he was serving on the team that was in charge of this mission. He looked younger and very clean. He had reconciled with his wife and neighbours. We trained him in methods of evangelism and recruited him into the team of missionaries in this church. The church in this area became very strong because of the work of mission that transformed many people's lives. The same happened in



many churches as a result of the preaching of many people we trained in methods of evangelism and counselling and sent out for ministry.

**Rev. Canon Jovahn Turyamureeba**



**Text**

***Philippians 2:19-3:1***



***Eye opener***

The word ‘sending’ is a key word in this passage and appears 5 times. It gives us insights into the commitment of the early Church in spreading God’s salvation. It seems almost every church was involved in sending people for mission. This is obvious when we study where Paul’s fellow workers came from. Timothy came from Lystra (Col 1:1; Acts 14:1f), Aristarchus came from Thessalonica (Col 4:10; Acts 20:4), Tychicus came from Asia (Col 4:7; Acts 20:4), Epaphroditus came from Philippi (Phil 2:25f), Epaphras came from Colosse (Col 1:7; 4:12), Mark came from Jerusalem (Col 4:10; Acts 12:25), etc.

Most of these churches had been planted a few years earlier. Each church could have said: ‘There is too much work in our neighbourhood! We do not have the capacity to send members out.’ But it seems these early Christians did not focus on their own region only. Their perspective was broader. They focused on the Kingdom of God in this world - and that made them willing to be part of God’s master plan.

The New Testament gives us some wonderful examples:

**The Church in Lystra** was involved when Paul “wanted to take [Timothy] along on the journey” (Act 16:1-3). 1Timothy 4:14 emphasises: “Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you.” One of Timothy’s special gifts was to leave his home and minister with Paul to foreign people (cf. Phil 2:20-23). The New Testament uses for the gift of being sent to a foreign area to preach the Gospel, the Greek word “apostelos”, which is

translated in English as “apostle”. Consequently, Paul calls Timothy and Silas apostles (1Thess 1:1 & 2:6-8).

**The Church in Philippi** sent Epaphroditus, who did not only bring gifts from the church (Phil 4:18). He also helped Paul as a “fellow worker” and “fellow soldier” (Phil 2.25). Paul valued the Philippians’ partnership in mission very much (cf. section 3).

**The Church in Antioch** sent Paul and Barnabas out. They became part of this mission team through the act of identifying and delegating by laying hands on them (Acts 13:3). Consequently, Paul’s mission team remained in contact with the church in Antioch and gave reports whenever they returned (Acts 14:26-28; 15:35-40; 18:22-23).

God wants each believer and every church to live in the joy of fulfilling His global purpose. He wants to include all of us with our different gifts in fulfilling His master plan. Paul asked in Romans 10:14f: *“How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can they preach unless they are sent?”*

Sending requires as much commitment as going. Sender and the ‘sendee’ work together as a team to enable mission through pray, care and mobilization of support.

The Congress on World Evangelization in Lausanne, Switzerland, in 1974 emphasised at the end in its ‘Lausanne Covenant’ in section 6: “... We as the church need to break out of our church ghettos and influence the society. The Church’s mission is sacrificial service that requires the whole Church to take the whole Gospel to the whole world...”<sup>28</sup>



## **Context of the letter**

At this point in the letter, Paul appears to change the subject, and passes on some information concerning the travel plans of the two people who were with him:

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<sup>28</sup> Lausanne Covenant, in: Winter, Perspectives, Pasadena: William Carey Library, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. 2000, p 761.

Timothy and Epaphroditus. However, it is quite possible that Paul wanted to use these two men as good living examples for following the attitude of Christ, described in chapter 2.

Furthermore, *“every knee shall bow... and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord”* (Phil 2:10-11) was introduced without any role model. The example of Timothy and Epaphroditus, who were both sent to support God’s mission, gives us a hint on how God fulfils His plan that *“every knee shall bow ... and every tongue confess”*.



## **Explanation**

V19-23) Paul talks first about his precious fellow worker Timothy and Timothy’s love for the Philippians because he *“takes a genuine interest in your welfare”* (V20). He knew the Philippians because he was one of Paul’s team members who arrived with him in Philippi to spread the Gospel (cf Acts 16:1ff and section 2). His love is seen by what Paul urged the Philippians to become: *“Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others”* ((Phil 2:4; cf. 1Cor 13:5).

Furthermore, Paul commends him for his service *“in the work of the Gospel”* (V22; cf. Phil 1:1). He would like to receive good news from the Philippians, following the example of Christ as described in Chapter 2 and is planning to send Timothy to encourage them in that lifestyle.

V25-30) While Paul emphasised that Timothy still needed to remain with him (V23), he planned to send Epaphroditus back. Paul must have had a close relationship with Epaphroditus, since he calls him *“my brother, fellow worker and fellow soldier”*. *“My brother,”* suggests that Epaphroditus did not come just as a visitor to deliver a gift; rather, both felt united in Christ. Paul uses the word *“fellow worker”* normally for Timothy (cf. 1Thess 3:2; Rom 16:21) and other people who helped him in spreading the Gospel (cf. Rom 16:3; 9). Epaphroditus was sent by the Philippians as an ambassador to *“take care of [Paul’s] needs”* (V25), *“for the help [they] could not give*

[him]” (V30). This shows that he joined and worked together with Paul.

3:1) It seems that Paul wants to come to a conclusion with “*finally*”. He mentions the same things again: “*rejoice in the Lord*”. He has already mentioned this joy in his letter in 1:25; 2:18-19; 2:28-29 because it is a “*saveguard for you*”. This invitation to rejoice in the Lord is not simply a call to happiness. The ability to rejoice is a result of being united with Christ, which gives us strength. This is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22) and a sign of God’s Kingdom (Rom 14:17). ‘In Christ’ we get confidence that His good plans with us may be challenged, but they will never fail (Phil 1:6). This assurance empowers and protects Christians against negativism and pessimism in their daily life, for Christ is risen, all-powerful and on our side.



## **Questions for group discussion**

➤ Paul gave reports (Phil 1:12f) and received reports from the worldwide church (Phil 2:19f). How can you follow this example of remaining informed in order to pray intelligently for God’s mission in the world?

➤ Christian mission is not limited to attending conferences and to sharing it with neighbours. It means also ensuring that those who have never heard the Gospel are able to receive it. Churches during the time of Paul were eager to send some of their members out. How can you, your mission coordinator and your church apply this passage and join hands in reaching those who have not yet heard the Gospel?

➤ Are you willing to risk your life for God’s mission, like Ephaphroditus (V30)?



## **Digging deeper**

➤ Mission is not only the responsibility of a few individuals: the whole Church is called to participate. Local churches that are not committed to spreading

the Gospel are failing to reflect an essential part of their God-given identity either due to blindness or to disobedience. John Stott emphasised: “The church of God is a multinational missionary community, under orders to evangelize until Christ returns”.<sup>29</sup>

➤ Basing on the NT understanding of Christian mission, one of the main responsibilities of Mission Coordinators is to encourage people to pray for mission and to plan with the church as to how to reach those who have never heard the Gospel.



## Prayer

Almighty and everlasting God, we thank you for having chosen us to be your people. Father, we pray for forgiveness where we have failed to do your will, more especially in fulfilling your great commission. Forgive us, o Father, and renew us. Put into our hearts a desire to do your will. Give us ability, focus and vision to participate in your mission work. Send your Holy Spirit upon your church to wake her up and cause her to listen to your command of love for mankind. We pray all this through Jesus Christ our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

*“Mission is the very lifeblood of the Church. As the body cannot survive without blood, so the Church cannot survive without mission. Without blood the body dies; without mission the Church dies... A Christian fellowship without mission loses its vitality. Mission is the force that gives the body of Christ vibrancy, purpose, and direction. When the Church neglects its role as God’s agent for mission, it is actually neglecting its own lifeblood.” (Gailyn van Rheene)*

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<sup>29</sup> John Stott: The Bible in World Evangelization, in: Crossman, Meg, ed.: Perspectives Exposure: Discovering God’s Heart for All Nations and Our Part in His Plan, Seattle: YWAM Publishing, 2003, p. 4.

# 11 The Gospel and our cultural identity



## ***Focus***

Once people from another cultural background are open to accept the Gospel, there is need to disciple them as believers. The following passage warns us that we as missionaries need to help new converts to follow Christ, focusing on Him and not on our own cultural ways of living or our Christian traditions. Accepting Christ does not mean destroying the cultural identity of the convert.



## ***Testimony***

First time in an aeroplane going to a very different culture in Germany to preach Jesus there was an experience that I will never forget all my life. Basing on the preparatory lessons I had had and what I had heard about the Germans, I went with an open heart and mind, ready to embrace whatever I would meet. Now that really helped me to find a way to set aside my cultural and traditional beliefs. I often wonder what would have happened if I had worn my traditional and cultural beliefs as a garment together with the salvation of Christ.

The very first evening that I arrived, the youth pastor and I had to go to the home of one of the church members for a meeting to discuss certain things. The meeting took some time and I had to endure all the speeches in a language I did not understand. In my culture, when we come to such a meeting, we do more praying than discussing and planning. Was I to stand up and tell these youth to stop discussing and start praying instead?

Then came my first youth fellowship, and we had to play a game, each person having to talk about how he or she is doing and then 20 or fewer minutes listening to the Word of God and 20 or fewer minutes worship reading from hymn books, sitting comfortably. Well, that is totally different from how we do it in Uganda; but to make it even more different, after the fellowship we went into a nearby bar, not to preach but to drink. That was a perfect time for a religious traditionalist to make a sermon, “Thou shalt not joke while in fellowship, thou shalt not give God’s Word just a few minutes, thou shalt stand, dance and clap when worshipping and thou shalt not drink alcohol.” I could have done that, but I believe that God’s grace helped me not to and I am happy that I did not.

What would have happened if I had done it? Being of a different skin colour and coming from Africa might have been strange for some already; now pushing my beliefs that hard on them would have made it worse. Who would I tell of God’s love to if no one even wanted to be close by? Later I realized that some of the members of the group were not yet Christians by that time, and I am glad that one of them came to Christ towards the end of my two and a half years there. Would she have stayed that long if I had chosen to preach my culture and traditions rather than the Gospel of Christ?

From my experience, I believe that it is important to know what our Christian cultures and traditions are and try to separate them from what the Gospel is. When a missionary goes to preach Jesus in a foreign country, neighbourhood or village, he better knows the difference and puts the Gospel of Christ at the forefront and not his culture and traditions. Or else he might lose the only bridge that he or she has to reach over and touch anyone’s heart for his Master.

**Daniel Irankunda**



**Text**

***Philippians 3:2-8***



## Eye opener

While Paul emphasised in the previous verse rejoicing in the Lord (V1), the situation now changes completely. Suddenly, Paul uses very harsh words: *“Watch out for those dogs!”* (V2). To understand these harsh words, we need the background of those days. At the beginning, the Gospel was almost entirely within the Jewish community. Acts chapter 2-12 describes mainly ‘neighbourhood evangelism’. The first believers understood the Gospel as the fulfilment of messianic prophecies, and it fitted well into their existing Jewish tradition. Most of them held to the Jewish customs while adoring Jesus as Messiah (Acts 2:46).

With the outbreak of persecution, many Jewish Christians were forced to flee, but most of them continued to share the Gospel only with their fellow Jews (Acts 11:19). Yet some of them *“began to speak to the Greeks also”* (Acts 11:20). But this caused serious tensions and conflicts in the Church. During that time, God confronted Peter three times with the same vision, preparing him to go to a Gentile centurion. However, Peter at first refused (Acts 10:9-23). Finally, he accepted and confessed in that home: *“You are well aware that it is against our law for a Jew to associate with a Gentile or visit him. But God has shown me that I should not call any man impure or unclean”* (Acts 10:28). After preaching to them, he confessed: *“I now realize how true it is that God ... accepts men from every nation who fear Him”* (Acts 10:34-35). But Peter found himself in trouble when he returned to Jerusalem! The Jewish believers criticised him seriously and Peter had to justify his behaviour (Acts 11:2f).

The greater trouble, however, was still ahead of them. God had chosen Paul to take the Gospel to the Gentiles! Yet some Jewish Christians, probably from Jerusalem and Judea, did not agree with Paul’s message. They emphasised: *“Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved”* (Acts 15:1). So they went out to ‘correct’ the Gospel Paul was preaching. They were convinced that Paul had left out some of the most important teachings (cf. Acts 15:5). They insisted that circumcision for men, and observing other Jewish food laws and customs were required to make a person acceptable to God. They may have started with ‘good intentions’: however, their message



meant in effect that faith in Jesus alone is not sufficient to save a person! In Acts 15 we find Paul arguing fiercely for the right of Gentiles to follow the Gospel of Christ without foreign (Jewish) traditions. This was the first serious culture clash in the NT.<sup>30</sup>

Paul emphasised that faith in Christ does not require Jewish traditions but can be ‘clothed’ in Greek language and customs as well as any other language and culture. Greeks do not need to become Jews, undergoing circumcision, taking over the Jewish calendar of festivals or observing Jewish food taboos (cf. Rom 14:5; 17; Col 2:16f; 1Cor 7:18f; Gal 6:15). He based his teaching on the Old Testament prophesy that it is the ‘circumcision of the heart’ that counts (cf. Jer 9:23-26; Dt 10:16; Dt 30:6; Rom 2:29; 1Cor 7:19). As a consequence, believers from other cultures are allowed to experience the forgiveness of sins and obedience to Christ while finding appropriate ways to worship and glorify God in a manner meaningful to their culture. They are neither bound to follow Jewish traditions nor the traditions of the missionaries who brought the Gospel to them..

In the council at Jerusalem (Acts 15), the elders of the church allowed the Gentiles to worship God without following foreign Jewish traditions. Therefore, conversion should not ‘de-culturize’ the converts! However, in those churches where different cultures exist side by side, as it was the case in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia (Acts 15:23), Christians needed to respect in love the cultural traditions and taboos of one another which would help them to live together in harmony (cf. Acts 15:24-29; Rom 14:1-23).

Paul continued to live with Jews according to the Jewish traditions: *“to the Jews I became like a Jew, to win the Jews. ... To those under the law I became like one under the law”* (1Cor 9:20). However, *“to those not having the law I became like one not having the law”*, with the purpose of spreading the Gospel of Christ in a way that was applicable in their particular culture (1Cor 9:21). This shows Paul’s concern for the Gospel and his respect for everyone’s culture. When he was with the Gentiles, he easily dropped those Jewish customs that would have hindered the

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<sup>30</sup> Most likely, Paul alludes in Philippians 3:19 to the consequences of adding to the faith in Christ Jewish food laws and other regulations when he stresses: *“their god is their stomach... their mind is on earthly things”*.

acceptance of the Gospel and marked it as foreign. He became *“all things to all men so that by all possible means I might save some”* (1Cor 9:22). Paul’s spirituality and humility is seen in his willingness to sacrifice his rights for the sake of the Gospel. This does not mean that he abandoned his Christian principles. His freedom was bound *“under Christ’s law”* (cf. 1Cor 9:21). He was demonstrating his willingness to love and enter other people’s lives by sharing their circumstances and traditions. Like Jesus, Paul identified with people, without surrendering his own Christian identity. And this principle of ‘identification without loss of identity’ is the model for all evangelism, especially cross-cultural evangelism.



## **Context of the letter**

It seems, after Philippians 3:1 comes something completely new. Paul continues with harsh words: *“Watch out for those dogs”*. However, there are some connections to the previous passage.

Timothy and Ephaphroditus were portrayed as good examples according to Christ’s attitude of love and humility. Then, Paul describes a group of people that live contrary to Christ’s example (Phil 2:5-11).

The basic meaning of the verb in Philippians 2:7a is that Christ *“emptied himself”*. This is shown in the way He came as God, emptying himself in order to adjust to human life on earth. Out of love, Jesus came as a servant, in humility. He identified with people, ate their food, understood their needs and challenges, their traditions and culture (John 1:1-14). He came into the Jewish culture not in order to belittle it but to enrich it by showing God’s salvation in cultural forms that Jews could understand and, as a result, come to know God better (e.g. He used symbols and parables fitting in the Jewish worldview).

This gave us God’s example for how mission should be done. We are called to remain fully ‘in Christ’ while becoming part of the new culture as Jesus did. The apostle Paul is an example of someone who ‘emptied himself’. Jesus first stripped him of pride in his own cultural forms (Phil 3:4-9) and then taught him to adopt the cultures of others, becoming

*“all things to all men ... to save some”* (1Cor 9:22). On the contrary, the false teachers in our passage were not willing to take Christ’s attitude of humility and love, of emptying oneself. They felt some of their Jewish traditions and laws were superior and necessary for each one’s salvation. In their cultural pride, they ‘misused’ the Gospel to impose their customs and traditions on others. As a consequence, they undermined the teaching of salvation by God’s grace through ‘faith in Christ’. Since those ‘works’ or ‘deeds’ were the Jewish laws, the false teachers failed to enable and empower the Philippians to glorify God in their own cultural identity.



## **Explanation**

V2) Paul calls his opponents “*dogs*”, which was a very insulting word for Jews in those days (cf. Ps 22: 17; 22; Ps 59:7; Rev 22:15). He continues with two additional negative descriptions: “*evil workmen*” and “*mutilators of the flesh*”. The latter is not even the proper usage of the word for circumcision but a negative ironic allusion.

Why such strong language? Paul saw the immense damage these people could cause to the Gospel. Their rules and regulations asserted that salvation through Christ is not enough, and this identified them as “*enemies of the cross*” (Phil 3:18).

V3-4) Paul points out that the true circumcision God seeks is of the heart, which is characterised by three qualifications:

- a) “*We who worship by the Spirit of God*”: The Spirit of God dwells in followers of Christ. True worship is not an empty ritual, based on observing human traditions – it is a life guided and directed by the Spirit of God (Gal 5:16; 25; Rom 8:14).
- b) “*Who glory in Christ Jesus*”: It is a life that glorifies Christ with all we have, all we say and all we do (cf. 1Cor 1:31; 2Cor 10:17).
- c) “*Who put no confidence in the flesh*”: It is a life that does not put confidence in our own actions, lineage or traditions – but in Christ

alone. Trusting in what He has done on the cross is sufficient for salvation.

If someone could save himself, Paul would surely qualify: *“If anyone else thinks he has reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more... (V4)”*

V5-6) Paul points out his tradition: *“circumcised on the eights day”*, his lineage: *“of the people of Israel...”*, and his own commitment: *“a Pharisee, as for zeal...”*

The aim of the Pharisees was to keep the laws of Moses in every single detail. They considered themselves as the spiritual elite and Paul had studied this under one of the most respected rabbis of his days (cf. Acts 22:3). He was eager to guard the faith of his forefathers against the so called ‘Christian heresy’: *“as for zeal, persecuting the church.”*

*“As for legalistic righteousness, faultless”*: Paul was not claiming that he used to be sinless, but that as far as the Pharisees’ code of conduct was concerned, from a ‘legalistic’ perspective, no one could accuse him.

V7-8) *“I consider everything a loss compared to the greatness of knowing Christ”*: Paul’s encounter with Christ (Acts 9:1ff) made him realise that he had tried to serve God to the extent of persecuting God’s own followers. Then he understood the words: *“the righteous will live by his faith”* (Hab 2:4; cf. Rom 1:17; Gal 3:11). God’s righteousness is received by faith in Christ, not by someone’s lineage or efforts. This faith in Christ includes knowing Him, loving Him and serving Him. It is not based on someone’s own efforts – it is based on relationship with Christ.

Therefore, he continues: *“I consider them as rubbish that I may gain Christ.”* Paul used for the word that is translated into English as ‘rubbish’, an expression meaning ‘dung’ or ‘muck’ to show how worthless all these things had proven to be for his salvation.



## **Question for group discussion**

Paul identified himself with people. He became a Jew to the Jews and a Gentile to the Gentiles without surrendering God's standards. How can you apply this approach when you share Christ with people from other cultures?



## **Digging deeper**

➤ If a man is to be reached, he must be reached within his own culture – that is why Christ became man. People who become Christians must be allowed to have expressions of worship, leadership, theology, and practice that reflect their own culture. Conversion does not require the converts to follow the customs of those who brought the Gospel. Once the foundation of the Gospel is laid, local Christians should be free to determine appropriate ways to worship God within their own culture.

➤ Jesus' incarnation affirms that God values every culture. He remained fully God and became fully human, too. This example shows how we should do mission. The addressees will see through our sincere love that we are identifying with them. Especially when we are seeking to reach communities who are likely to be hostile to Christianity. Particularly in areas of Africa where Islam is strongly interwoven with people's culture, ambassadors of Christ need to be sensitive to portray Christ – not, for example, the Christian traditions of a western culture. As soon as some of the people begin to love Christ and serve Him in obedience, they will find their style of following Him within their own cultural identity.

*“Do not bring us the Gospel as a potted plant. Bring us the seed of the Gospel and plant it in our soil.”  
(Mr. Murthi, Indian evangelist)*

*“Many people today are being turned away from the Gospel, not by Christ or by the repentance that He calls for. They are turning away because some Christians have demanded obedience to so-called “Christian traditions”. Matters such as diet, music, family names or worship style are not what the Gospel is all about. If we insist that these kinds of things are essential, we may have to recognize that we are pressing for a ‘Christian circumcision’ that God has not really required. We must do all that we can to welcome people to Christ through the door of faith, helping them to follow Christ in obedience and faith.” (Steven C. Hawthorne)*

# 12 Gaining Christ's righteousness



## Focus

What do you need to do to inherit eternal life? This question was once given to students. Most of them answered: “To follow God’s laws”. But is this true? Are we saved through observing God’s laws? A rich man asked Jesus the same question. After Jesus’ answer, people recognized: It is impossible to keep the laws of God. They continued: “*Who then can be saved?*” Jesus replied: “*What is impossible with men is possible with God*” (Lk 18:26-27). It is impossible to inherit eternal life through keeping God’s laws. Inheriting eternal life is only possible by God’s grace through faith.

*“For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith – and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God –not by works, so that no-one can boast. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Eph 2:8-10).*

Eternal life is God’s free gift out of His grace. While Paul warns us in the previous verses not to promote our own culture as “Gospel”, he explains in V7-11 that the Gospel of Christ means God is merciful to everyone who puts his faith in Christ.

Obeying God’s commandments is the consequence of our loving relationship with Him. Once we love Christ, we are willing to follow Him because true love is only true love if it is active.



## Testimony

In June 2013, a Bismarkan bus from Kisoro picked me up from Kabale and we headed for Kampala. We left Kabale exactly at 7:30 p.m. I sat at the very back of the

bus where there was only one empty seat. The middle part of the bus was filled to capacity by standing passengers. The Ntungamo-Mbarara highway was and still is a pot-holed and accident-prone road.

I could see our driver struggling to avoid the pot-holes and yet at the same time speeding. After some hours he was overpowered and he lost control. The bus crashed through a forest of trees, planted by the road side. The metallic body of the bus was torn off from the engine in front, the driver's screen was destroyed and both sides of the bus were destroyed. Only the back where I was seated remained intact.

The passengers erupted into screams, shouting, "The engine is on fire. Somebody save us." Then the bus stopped suddenly, just only three feet from an electricity pole. The frightened travellers took this opportunity to jump out through the torn up windows. Some windows were kicked open by the men, and together with the women carrying babies on their backs, they landed in the dark outside.

But as for me, I watched all this undisturbed, unshaken. However, I stood up to help the kids to join the men and women outside, who were desperately grabbing the children with dexterity. After about 30 minutes everyone was out of the bus – except me. The men used sticks and stones to open the door of the bus, which had been locked up.

When the people outside saw me – the only passenger who was still in the bus – getting out, they shouted emotionally: "Why are you not bothered at all?" I replied calmly that I really did not know why I was in that state. When we assembled together by the road side, we found that no one had died and no one was injured, not even slightly.

After one year, I asked God to tell me what had exactly happened that day. He spoke to my heart: "The three years you had spent reading and studying Paul's epistles changed your life. What you were actually studying and coming to terms with were my grace and your faith."

The definition of the term "grace" is what God had done through His Son Jesus Christ two thousand years ago when He was crucified on the cross, taking onto His body all humanity's sins. Faith simply means our positive response to what God has done to reconcile us to Himself. Ephesians 1:3 says: "God has blessed us [those who have faith in Him]



with all spiritual blessings in Christ.” Through the death, the burial and the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, God has provided everything we would ever need.

Hebrews chapter 4:10 talks about ‘labouring to rest’: “For he who enters into God’s rest, has already ceased from his own works as God did from His”. My appropriate response to what Christ did for me is to say: “Father, I thank you that I am healed; I thank you that I am forgiven; I thank you that I am accepted; I thank you that I am blessed; I thank you that I am anointed; I thank you that I am your child.”

If you have entered into His rest, then you have ceased from your own works and effort. It is no longer you doing something to make God move. It is you learning to trust and rely on the truth that God has already done it. This gives you the right perspective to serve Him with all our heart, all our soul and all our mind.

So when the passengers of the Bismarkan bus were screaming at the top of their voices and running around in futility, as for me I rested in God.

**Ben Bella Ilakut**



**Text**

***Philippians 3:7-11***



***Eye opener***

The Bible has one unifying theme: the promise of God that man can enter into relationship with Him and gain salvation. The critical question is, however, how man can enter a relationship with God, since human sinfulness separates him from God’s holiness. Paul shows in Romans 1:18 – 3:8 that good deeds cannot compensate for our sinfulness and therefore he concludes: “*There is no-one righteous, not even one... therefore no-one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law*” (Romans 3:9-20; cf.

Gal 3:22). So he continues that either Christ gives us His own righteousness or we are lost (Rom 3:21-31; Phil 3:9).

Paul shows that the laws in the OT emphasise what man should do to glorify God, not what he is able to do. Their purpose is to show us our sinfulness, persuading us that we depend on God's grace and mercy (cf. Rom 7:7f).

Furthermore, a man who focuses on his personal achievements is in serious danger of becoming proud. This tarnishes God's glory (Phil 3:4-9), since we live every minute by His grace and He enables us for everything we do. As a consequence, our good actions are sometimes a hindrance for salvation. They make us feel proud of what God enabled us to do. Paul emphasised this fact in Philippians 3:7-9 like Jesus taught it with the parable of the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Lk 18:9-14).

On the cross, Jesus paid for the sins of the whole world (1John 2:2; 2Cor 5:19) and he did it when we were still enemies (Rom 5:10). This saving act becomes reality for everyone who accepts God's offer in faith (Phil 3:9). Then, Christ ascribes us His righteousness because we are „found in Him” (Phil 3:9; cf. 2Cor 5:17+21; Rom 8:1). From a legal perspective, God now sees and judges Christ because we are 'in Him'.

This means that as believers we remain sinners in our own nature (cf. Rom 6:12; 1John 1:8) and are at the same time righteous 'in Christ' (cf. 1Cor 1:30; Rom 3:24). Sin and righteousness co-exist in us as long as we live. Once we enter heaven, perfection comes and sin is no longer coexisting (Phil 3:12; 1Cor 13:10).

By loving God and confessing our practical sins, we remain in this right relationship with Him.

Growing in faith does therefore not mean keeping more commandments but coming closer to Christ himself. We are not righteous because we do right. We are aiming to do right because we are already righteous "in Christ". Consequently, our Christian identity comes from what God has done for us, not from what we have done for God.

People who try to concentrate on the laws of their Church tradition, instead of concentrating on Christ, fail to glorify Him, just like the

Pharisees did. We are to focus on Him and to live a ‘Christ-centred’ life. This is a life in union with Him (John 14:15; 15:14), guided by the Spirit of God (Gal 5:16; 25; Rom 8:14).

From this perspective, Paul was seriously against his opponents who wanted to add Jewish laws as a precondition for salvation. He understood clearly that once someone adds any laws or deeds towards salvation, it spoils God’s saving grace and reduces Christ to the rank of a Jewish prophet. If man can achieve his own righteousness, Christ’s death on the cross is no longer needed and the promise that salvation comes through faith turns out to be a lie (Gal 3:6-14; Gal 2:21; Phil 3:18).



## ***Context of the letter***

Paul emphasised in V4-6, that salvation in Christ means to stop relying on someone’s own lineage, tradition or ability to save himself. If someone could have saved himself, Paul would surely qualify. But as a result of his encounter with the risen Christ on the road to Damascus, he realized that all his efforts were to be considered as nothing (cf. Rom 10:1-4).

He realised the importance of ‘who Christ is’ and ‘what Christ did for him’. It was this knowledge that changed Paul’s life completely and therefore he wanted to “*know Christ*” (V8 & V10).

Since keeping the OT laws had lost its priority in Paul’s life, he focused on Christ in his behaviour and decisions. The central role of ‘knowing Christ’ is already seen in:

Philippians 1:21: “*For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain*”,

Philippians 1:27: “*conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ*”,

Philippians 2:5: “*Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus*”,



## Explanation

For V7 and V8 see the explanations in the previous section. Both verses are necessary for one to understand both sections.

V9) ‘Righteousness through faith’ is connected with having a loving relationship with Christ. This is expressed with “*be found in him.*” For more information see the ‘Eye opener’ of this section and of section 6.

V10) “Knowing Christ” is seen in a) Christ’s victory and in b) identifying with His suffering.

a) Knowing “*the power of [Christ’s] resurrection*” refers to Christ’s victory and to “*all authority*” He has (Mt 28:18f). Therefore, Christ is able to give us strength to overcome the attacks of the evil one, like He overcame the attack of death through His resurrection. Paul refers to this power also in Ephesians 3:20: “*to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work within us...*” and Colossians 1:11: “*being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience...*” (cf. Col 1:29).

b) Paul is very aware that a Christian journey moves not only from glory to glory but also includes “*the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings*”. James emphasised clearly that suffering brings perseverance and strengthens our faith (cf. James 1:2f; 1:12; 5:10-11). In a similar way, Paul states in his second letter to the Corinthians that sufferings drive us to trust God alone (2Cor 1:9) and we experience his power especially through hardship and temptation (2Cor 4:7-12; 12:10). These hardships shape us in such a way that our attitude becomes more like that of Christ (Phil 2:5-8; Rom 8:17).

V11) The foundation of salvation is not our own work but Christ’s and He did everything that was necessary. Therefore, once we have ‘faith in Him’, we have full assurance of His salvation (cf. Rom 8:1; 16; 1John 5:11f). This assurance is grounded upon the faithfulness of God towards His own promises. Paul’s phrase “*somehow to attain to the resurrection*” astonishes many, since Paul emphasised full

assurance of salvation in other passages. It seems this verse reminds us that there is full assurance of salvation – but only if we ‘remain in Christ’ (cf. John 15:5-6). Christians who intentionally stop living according to Christ’s guidance can lose their salvation. According to 1Thessalonichans 4:13-18, the resurrection in V11 will take place when Christ comes again.



## **Question for group discussion**

Today, we may not face exactly the same false teaching as mentioned in V2-4, but there are people also among us who preach a ‘Jesus and...’ message. Any view that adds to Christ’s death and resurrection human rules and laws as necessary for salvation is following the same destructive path. Do you know any group of people who try to add human rules and regulations to Christ’s salvation?



## **Digging deeper**

➤ Notice how many times Jesus is referred to in the verses V7-11. Then, by contrast, look at how much of Paul’s life had been self-centred in V4-6. This helps us to understand what ‘Justification by faith’ implies. We stop trusting in ourselves, focus on Christ and put all our faith in Him.

➤ Some people are so eager to practice a ‘Christian lifestyle’ that they forget Christ. They focus on Christian behaviour but no longer on Christ. But faith is a relationship with Christ while the result of it is Christian behaviour.

*"I also saw, moreover, that it was not my good frame of heart that made my righteousness better, nor yet my bad frame that made my righteousness worse; for my righteousness was Jesus Christ himself, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."*

*(John Bunyan)*

*"My hope lives not because I am not a sinner, but because I am a sinner for whom Christ died; my trust is not that I am holy, but that being unholy, HE is my righteousness. My faith rests not upon what I am or shall be or feel or know, but in what Christ is, in what He has done, and in what He is now doing for me!"*  
(Charles Spurgeon)

## 13 Living a holy life



### **Focus**

Some believers take it almost for granted that Christ has washed their sins away. Their main focus is on 'living a holy life' (sanctification). This leads to the piercing question: What needs to be done to live holy? Many Seven Day Adventists point to the Old Testament, emphasising the Sabbath and some food taboos of the Jewish culture. Others point to special signs of the Holy Spirit like speaking in tongues, shaking or shouting. And other groups emphasise a specific dress code, reject a certain hairstyle, certain drinks or jewellery.

How can people live a holy life? During the time of Jesus, the Pharisees tried to observe many OT laws in order to live a holy life (cf. Luke 18:9f). However, Jesus was not pleased with that kind of holiness.



## **Text**

### ***Philippians 3:12-16***



## **Eye opener**

Since we remain sinners as long as we are in this world, the humility to confess and repent ought to remain part of our life (1John 1:8-10). Through this, we grow in sincere love and gentleness. We also recognise our own sinfulness and long to live a different life.

What a wise method God uses, bringing about growth in holiness only through humility, honesty and repentance. This transformation is a continuous process that includes our whole being (1Thess 5:23). A “perfect” (or mature) believer (compare the explanation of V15) is therefore someone who accepts his imperfection (Phil 3:12). He learns to depend on God’s grace and forgiveness.

Consequently, there are no ‘higher steps’ to sanctification. We remain sinners in our own nature and are sanctified in Christ. But since true faith cannot exist without action, living a holy life is the inevitable consequence of our faith (cf. James 2:26; Eph 2:8-10). Our faith is like a tree, it either grows and bears fruit or it dies (cf. Mt 7:15f; John 15:5f). It is not possible to adore God without putting His love into action (cf. Gal 5:6; 1John 4:8; 1John 4:20). Both, faith and true love, can never remain theoretical - they are either active or dead.



## **Context of the letter**

Paul emphasised in the previous verses that Christians are completely righteous in God’s sight through faith in Christ (V8-9). In V 12ff he continues to say, “*I have not been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that*”. How do these statements fit together?

Paul clarifies in V8-11 that once people are completely righteous in Christ, their life remains on a journey to become more like Christ (cf. Phil 2:5f). This transformation is actually the work of the triune God in the life of believers (Phil 1:6; Phil 2:13; Eph 2:10).

Paul's conflict with his opponents makes clear that growing in sanctification does not mean keeping more commandments but coming closer to Christ himself and focusing on Him.

As soon as someone concentrates on his personal holiness, he is in danger of becoming proud and selfish (cf. Phil 3:4-9). People who focus on laws and traditions, instead of Christ, lose the right direction, since regulations do not bring righteousness whereas Christ does. Our holiness shines through our life if and only if we focus on knowing and serving Him (Phil 3:8f.).



## **Explanation**

V12) *“Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on...”* What does *“all this”* mean? It seems that it goes back to knowing Christ in V8 & V10, who is the perfect image of God (cf. Col 1:15; 2Cor 4:4).

Although we are completely righteous in Christ through faith (V9), we remain on a spiritual journey on which our faith grows. We are *“pressing on”* as long as we live. This progress will stop in heaven when perfection comes (1Cor 13:8-10). *“I press on to take hold of that for which Christ took hold of me”* Our focus on this journey is Christ and to live for and under Him. The starting point of this journey is not our own effort - it is Christ, since he *“took hold of me”* and therefore provides for me. This enables us to *“take hold of that”*. As Christians we no longer live our own lives. We are able to live what we already are in Christ (cf. Gal 2:20). Once we have faith in Christ, we are the children of our God and King. Therefore, we should live lives worthy of Children of a King. This truth is described with many pictures in the Bible:



➤ We are already the light of the world (Mt 5:14) and as a consequence, we should live as light (Mt 5:16; Eph 5:8).

➤ We are already sanctified in Christ (Phil 1:1; 1Cor 6:11) and therefore we should live as sanctified people (1Thess 4:3-7; Heb 12:14).

We are not righteous because we do right. We are aiming to do right because we are righteous through Christ. Our behaviour is a consequence of our being “in Christ”.

V13-14) “*I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it*” goes back to V12 where Paul confirms that he is on a journey and has not yet reached perfection, but he is “*pressing on towards the goal to win the prize*”. “*Forgetting what is behind*” does not mean Paul wants to forget his past or he does not mind about it. A few verses before, he shared about his past (Phil 3:4-6) and the impact of it on his present life (Phil 3:7 & Acts 9:1ff). But Paul refuses to be stuck in the past, either by glorifying or by regretting it. With Christ, there is a future that focuses us with self-discipline forward to His goal “*aiming to win the prize*”. Like a sprinter, we need to learn the lessons from our past, but we cannot win any race when we are caught up in our past, always looking backward. Christ urges us to look forward to what God has called us for, “*heavenwards in Christ Jesus*”.

V15-16) Paul emphasises that “*all who are perfect*<sup>31</sup> *should take such a view*”. Most likely Paul is pointing to the believers who are righteous (perfect) in Christ (V9) and at the same time remain sinners without being perfect on their own<sup>32</sup> (V12; cf. section 12). In this situation we are called to focus “*heavenwards in Christ*”.

These two verses help us in dealing with conflicts, like what happened between Paul and some people. Not everyone needs to have the same opinion as long as we are willing to stand honest before God, asking Him for His guidance in love. This makes us able to thank God together for how far He has brought us in unity (V16)

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<sup>31</sup> The Greek word which is translated in the NIV translation as ‘mature’ comes from the same word as ‘perfect’ in V12.

<sup>32</sup> Other interpreters understand V15 to mean that Paul was addressing his opponents in an ironic way like: “You who are perfect, should also take such a view”.

and to request Him for further guidance and wisdom in our diversities (V15b).



## **Questions for group discussion**

- Do you remember unresolved past experiences that hinder you in your spiritual journey? Seek advice from your friends so that they do not remain a stumbling block in your faith.
- Doing good makes no one holy, but Christ does. Therefore, we are what we are, because of what Christ did for us. How can you apply this truth in your daily life?
- Some Christians try to appear as if they live a higher level of spirituality where sin has faded. How can you keep yourself from falling into the trap of this kind of spiritual pride?
- What helps you in your daily life to focus 'heavenwards' (V14)?



## **Digging deeper**

- Living a holy life includes separation from evil (James 1:27; 2Cor 6:17f), but not separation from everything and everyone in the world. No one can be the light of the world when he runs away from it (Mt 5:13f). The light of Christ is especially needed where the darkness is.

*"The growth of trees and plants takes place so slowly that it is not easily seen. Daily we notice little change. But, in course of time, we see that a great change has taken place. Sanctification is a progressive, lifelong work (Prov 4:18). It is an amazing work of God's grace and it is a work to be prayed for." (John Owen)*

*"Great winds and storms help fruit-bearing trees. So also do corruptions and temptations help the fruitfulness of grace and holiness. The storm loosens the earth round its roots so the tree is able to get its roots deeper into the earth, where it receives fresh supplies of nourishment. But only much later will it be seen to bring forth better fruit. So corruptions and temptations develop the roots of humility, self-abasement and mourning in a deeper search for that grace by which holiness grows strong. But only later will there be visible fruits of increased holiness." (John Owen)*

## 14 Paul's example



### **Focus**

Hudson Taylor, who was a missionary in China, observed one time: *"We did not come to China because missionary work here was either safe or easy, but because He has called us. We did not attain our present position under a guarantee of human protection, but relying on the promise of His presence. The 'accidents' of ease or difficulty, of apparent safety or danger, of man's approval or disapproval, in no way affect our duty. Should circumstances arise involving us in what may seem special danger, we shall have grace, I trust, to manifest the depth and reality of our confidence in Him, and by faithfulness to our charge to prove that we are followers of the Good Shepherd who did not flee from death itself..."*

Paul was called to spread the Gospel of Christ that brought him several times into dangerous situations. Nevertheless he encourages us to *"join with others in following my example"*.



Ruben Kakonge remembered that Apolo always said: *“If there be difficulties it means that there is plenty of work to be done, for that is the work God has called us to do. Let us put all our effort into it, for where there are not difficulties, there is no work at all!”*<sup>33</sup>



## Testimony

I grew up in a semi-pagan family because only two of our family members were baptized, namely my grandmother and my father. However, when we joined school, we were registered in Sunday School as it was compulsory for all school children to attend Sunday services. On 26<sup>th</sup> December 1964, I was baptized. On 19<sup>th</sup> November 1972, I was confirmed in Bunyoro-Kitara Diocese at Masindi C.O.U. Though I became a Christian, baptized, confirmed and married in church, I joined the youth group and the church choir, and worked as a verger in our church, I was not at all a committed Christian but just a nominal one. I thought I was going on well with my God because I was no longer drinking alcohol, I had even stopped smoking.

I want to praise God for the wife He gave me. I married her when she was already saved. She introduced prayers in our family, for we had never prayed at home before she came into our family. She played a big role in my Christian life because her testimony led to my encounter with Christ.

On the 28<sup>th</sup> of May 1980, on my way from the parish where I was working as a verger, I realized that I had always disobeyed God’s voice. Straight away, I committed my life to Christ and went to my home church where there was a mission. My wife and other Christians received me with jubilation. From that night, my life changed for the better. I started testifying for Christ and He guided me and led me through many challenges, and I have never regretted.

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<sup>33</sup> Luck, Anne: African Saint. The Story of Apolo Kivebulaya, London: SCM Press LTD, 1963, p. 161.

I started as a verger, then became a catechist, an organist, a curate, an archdeacon, a Diocesan secretary and now I am a Lecturer at Bishop Barham University College. It is my desire to continue serving the Lord with all my heart, all my soul and all my mind and to follow His example even when hardships arrive.

**Revd. Adonia Bahuguukire**



**Text**

***Philippians 3:17-4:1***



**Eye opener**

*“Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you”* (Phil 3:17). Paul encourages the Philippians to follow his example. What example did he give them? In 1Corinthians 11:1 he writes: *“Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ”*. His example is to know and imitate Christ (Phil 3:8 & 10).

This includes spreading the Gospel of Christ. This Gospel does not focus on people’s good deeds but on Christ’s righteousness, given freely to everyone who puts his faith in Him (V9; cf. section 12). The consequence of having faith in Christ is to live according to His will (V12-14; cf. section 13) even to the extent of facing hardship for His name’s sake (V10).

After Christ destroyed Paul’s self-righteousness on the way to Damascus, Paul set an example of someone who was willing to be sent and spread the Gospel where it has not yet reached: *“It has always been my ambition to preach the Gospel where Christ was not known”* (Rom 15:20). His focus was no longer on personal property, worldly security or comfortable life but on being obedient to God’s Word and His calling.

The challenge of Paul’s testimony is whether we are willing to take a risk for Christ.

Following the example of Christ and of Paul includes following their example in spreading the Gospel.

But what exactly can we learn from them in spreading the Gospel?

a) We come as learners. Missionaries are often very eager to preach the Gospel as soon as they arrive. However, each one who enters a foreign culture should ask himself in the beginning: What role is best for me as an ambassador for Christ? Like Christ understood the Jewish culture, we need the humility of Christ (Phil 2:5-11) to learn the host culture. It is only by active, loving engagement with the local people, learning to think in their thought patterns, understanding their world view, listening to their questions, feelings and their burdens that we are able to understand their challenges and share the Gospel meaningfully.

Furthermore, we have to wrestle with the reasons why some people reject the Gospel. Some do not perceive it to be false, but to be foreign. Therefore, we are not only responsible for what we say but also for how people perceive it. When Paul entered Corinth, he decided *“to know nothing while I was with you, except Jesus Christ and Him crucified”* (1Cor 2:1-4). This statement points to his willingness to learn from the Corinthians and their situation.

b) Jesus gave us the example of coming as a friend. This means we need to identify with the people and the extent of identification shows the intensity of love for the people.

Jesus identified with people, without surrendering His godly identity. Some people refuse to identify with people because they cling to their own culture (like the false teachers in Phil 3:2f). However, this approach treats the cultural heritage of the addressees without the respect it deserves. True identification takes place only when ‘they’ become part of the circle of people we think of as ‘ours’. People can trust our message, only if they have learnt to trust us.

Others make the opposite mistake. They identify with the people to the extent of surrendering even their Christian standards and values, or an unauthentic ‘native’ behaviour becomes just ridiculous. Again, this was not Christ’s example. He became human and remained truly divine.

To test the degree of our identification with people, we can ask ourselves how far we feel that we belong to them, and even more, how far they feel that we belong to them.

c) Like Jesus, we come as witnesses. The starting point in spreading the Gospel is not to question, threaten or offend people. Offence creates defence by the addressees. We have a testimony on how Jesus Christ took our guilt away and changed our life (Phil 3:4-9). As witnesses, the reality of Christ shines in love and holiness through us and draws people into His present.

At the same time, we are aware that people do not always embrace the Gospel, even if we understand the culture and our love is sincere. Jesus Christ was fully at home in the Jewish culture, yet He and His message were despised and rejected by many. While communicating the Gospel in love and faithfulness, we place the results of our ministry into the hands of Him who sent us.



### ***Context of letter***

The whole passage from Philippians 3:2-4:1 is written to guard the addressees against wrong teaching. It opens with “*watch out for those dogs*” and concludes with “*stand firm in the Lord*”.

One of Paul’s main critics against the wrong teachers is that they did not practice Christ’s example (Phil 2:5-11; 3:18-19). Consequently, their additional demands spoiled the Gospel of faith and grace. This identified them as “enemies of the cross”.

Paul opposes this wrong teaching, explaining that true Christian lifestyle focuses on Christ (Phil 3:8; 10) and His grace (Phil 3:9), looking heavenwards where our true citizenship is, while living here on earth (Phil 3:14; 20).



## Explanation

V18) Paul's conflicts with those who wanted to compel the Gentile Christians to follow Jewish customs and laws affected his heart and emotions. He confessed "with tears" in his eyes that "*they are enemies of the cross of Christ*". If man is supposed to work out his own righteousness, God's grace will be null and void, Christ's death on the cross is no longer sufficient and the OT promise that salvation comes through faith turns out to be a lie (cf. Gal 2:21; Gal 3:6-14).

V19) Paul described the "*enemies of the cross*" with the following words:

"*Their destiny is destruction.*" Since they reject the 'message of the cross', they reject God's offer to receive salvation by grace.

"*Their god is their stomach.*" This might be an allusion to the Jewish food laws. Once someone focuses on what he is allowed to eat and to drink for the purpose of remaining clean, his focus is no longer on Christ but it easily shifts to "*the stomach*".

"*Their glory is in their shame.*" This seems to be a continuation of the previous characterisation. Once we focus on earthly and perishable things, we will feel ashamed when we stand before Christ (2Cor 5:10).

"*Their mind is on earthly things*" seems to be the conclusion. Once someone focuses on what he is allowed and not allowed to do, his focus is no longer on Christ but has shifted to "*earthly things*". Knowing much about Christianity and Christian behaviour without knowing Christ personally contributes nothing towards our salvation.

V20) In contrast to those false teachers who focus on earthly things, followers of Christ are called to focus "*heavenwards*" (V14). As a Roman colony, the citizens of Philippi had the same great privileges as the citizens of Rome and it seems there was great pride among Philippians in this privilege. Paul used this as an illustration to emphasise the even greater dignity of "*our citizenship in heaven*". Although we are living as 'colonists', like the Philippians, we enjoy



the authority and security of our citizenship in Heaven and are subject to these laws. As citizens of Heaven, we look forward to the coming of the king of Heaven, *“the Lord Jesus Christ”*.

V21) With this perspective, we treat our *“lowly bodies”* as good stewards, but not like the false teachers whose *“god is their stomach”*. We focus *“heavenwards”* where our lowly bodies will be transformed to be *“like his glorious body”*.

V4:1) Again, Paul emphasises his strong relationship with his mission partners in Philippi: *“My brothers, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown ... dear friends”*. Why is he using so many laudatory words? These words come from his sincere heart. They bind together and strengthen their relationship. And they open their ears for his emphasis. Paul has explained in chapter 3 what it means to focus on Christ and concludes now: *“that is how you should stand firm in the Lord”*. The *“crown”* refers to 1Thessalonians 2:19-20, where Paul looks forward to being able to take pride over their faith when Christ comes back (cf. Phil 2:16).



## **Questions for group discussion**

- God did not send us into the world to guess what He wants. He expressed His purpose clear: All people are created to worship and adore Him for who He is and has done for us. How does this calling affect your life? When we stand before God on judgement day and He looks in our eyes and tells us, 1/3 of all people in the world were not able to glorify Him, simply because they have never heard about him. What shall we say?
- Christ and Paul gave us an example: Both were willing to take on a self-sacrificial lifestyle! Are we willing to sacrifice for the sake of Christ?
- How can we express God's love and our love to the people we want to minister to?



## ***Digging deeper***

➤ If we do not take Christ to those people of our Generation who have never heard about him, who will do it? We cannot push this responsibility to our children and grandchildren! Once our children are old enough to go, many of our present generation might have already died. We cannot push this responsibility to the past generation because many of our grandfathers are no longer strong enough. Each generation is responsible to spread the Gospel among its own members.



## ***Prayer***

Dear Lord, thank you for your love for all nations. Make us your willing servants, like Paul. We are praying for all the unreached people in Africa and the whole world. May you use us through the power of the Holy Spirit to spread your Gospel. In Jesus' Name we pray.

*"If you found a cure for cancer, wouldn't it be inconceivable to hide it from the rest of mankind? How much more inconceivable to keep silent [about] the cure from the eternal wages of death."*

*(Dave Davidson)*

# 15 Culture and conflicts



## Focus

There was a Muhima man in Ankole, in Kiruhura District, named Oinebye who had 500 cows. Oinebye was a neighbour to a cultivator called Katsigazi. Oinebye used to call him 'omwiru' and considered him as nothing because he was poor. He had only a banana plantation and other small gardens. Oinebye could not even greet him because of his poverty. But when the war between Obote and Museveni broke out, all of Oinebye's cattle were stolen and he remained with nothing.

However, the family of Katsigazi had compassion and provided food for Oinebye's family. After that terrible experience, Oinebye repented and he advised his children not to be like him but to love one another despite cultural differences.



Dr. A.T. Schofield reported how Apolo addressed the problem of tribalism and racism: *"No one will ever be able to know the love of God and teach it to anyone – to the heathen, to the sinner – until he is himself reconciled with God and everyone else. And when you have these thoughts [of tribalism], there is only one thing to do. Enter into your inner room and pray, pray, pray – pray all night long and don't leave off until God has shown you your true self, what you are and what are your faults, and the Holy Spirit has shown you what is this 'ministry of reconciliation' that St Paul writes about [2Cor 5:18-20]."*<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup> Luck, Anne: African Saint. The Story of Apolo Kivebulaya, London: SCM Press LTD, 1963, p. 165.



## Testimony

22<sup>nd</sup> March, 1981: I was on a path leading to Nyamba Village on the foot of Mount Rwenzori, where my parents had migrated to in January 1980. They had left my native village in Kigezi and moved to Tooro region, hoping to find an easier life as small-scale farmer. I was stopped by three men with spears whose fierce, unanticipated action rendered me totally helpless. They came towards me with their spears pointed at me. I just stood there with my little luggage, petrified, thinking this was perhaps the end of me, young as I was, married, with one child. I believe God just saw my total perplexity and surrender and regarded it as prayer. I couldn't have prayed with words – I was mentally too paralyzed to do it. Then, when they saw I was at their mercy, their leader asked me in the local language, “Who are you?” I told them my names. He asked me where I was coming from and where I was going. I told them – in my native Rukiga – that I was coming from Kampala and was on my way to Nyamba Village where my parents had settled after their immigration into Tooro in the previous year. They looked at me carefully, and eventually their leader asked me, “What tribe do you belong to?” I told them I was a Mukiga. Then again they looked at me closely for some minutes. Eventually the leader said, “What has saved you is that you are a Mukiga. You may now go!” I told them “Thank you, sirs!”

Minutes after, as I walked on along the path, happy to be alive, I began to understand what was going on here, basing myself on the scant knowledge I had of this region. I realized the two major ethnic groups of this region were at war and it was very serious business. I understood that “what had saved me was that I was a Mukiga”, not a member of the tribe the three spear-wielding men were hunting. As I reflected on my good fortune, at the same time a question came up in my mind and it troubled me: What wrong would I have done if I had been a member of the tribe that was being hunted? I would have been speared to death – but why? It was an extremely painful question. At a very safe distance from those three men, I found a tree with some nice grass under it and sat there. It was a nice, sunny afternoon, around 3 p.m. The thought “If I had been a member of the hunted tribe, what wrong would I have done to deserve death?” made me realize what a problem my country

Uganda had, with her many tribes. What kind of a future did we have as a country and nation? I shed some tears as I thought about what had happened to me, imagining myself to be the young man from the hunted tribe who would now be dead. I remembered the title of a book we had attempted to read in secondary school English class fourteen years earlier, Alan Paton's novel "Cry the beloved country". I realized I, and indeed all of us Ugandans, needed to cry for our country and to pray for it. With this kind of interethnic hatred, what kind of future did our motherland have? That was the question.

**Rev. Prof. Manuel J.K. Muranga**



**Text**

***Philippians 4:2-9***



***Eye opener***

As children, we learn from our parents and the society what 'normal' and 'un-normal' thinking and behaviour is. Every society belittles what is in their eyes 'un-normal' with the aim of orienting the young generation on what is 'normal'. Although we do not learn this 'normal' behaviour and thinking as 'culture', it actually becomes each one's culture.

People from Kabale would most likely laugh if they saw someone roll a big leaf into shape to drink his 'obushera' from it. Everyone knows that we use cups while some tribes in the Tropical Rain Forest prefer leaves; they are cheaper and always available.

We find it funny if someone washes his face with some sand. Everyone here is used to water - while bathing in sand, by rubbing his face with it, is normal for some people in the deserts of Africa.

Because of these influences in our childhood, everyone naturally assumes that what is culturally normal to him is best for everyone. We are tempted to evaluate the behaviour of people in other cultures as

strange and inferior to our own, which leads to cultural misunderstanding, prejudices and poor relationships. Those are based on a lack of knowledge of the beliefs, feelings and values of other cultures. The solution is to learn how other cultures operate. The first task for anyone entering a new culture is to be a student of that culture. We need to listen before we speak (James 1:19f). Whenever an expression in a certain culture ‘makes no sense’ to you, assume that the problem is yours, because people’s behaviour makes sense to them.

Without this, the result is premature judgement, which may lead not only to tribal conflicts. This is a serious challenge for all who want to serve as missionaries in another culture and partner with native Christians.

Jesus shared God’s love with all social classes and tribes without segregation. He went to the people in Galilee, Judea, Samaria, Syria, into the Decapolis, etc. and treated everyone with respect, sympathy and compassion. As ambassadors working under His authority (Mt 28:19f), He is our example in the attitude of genuinely seeking to understand other cultures. Despite our differences, the process of seeking to understand and appreciate the culture of others breaks down our biases and enables us to experience our unity in Christ.



## ***Explanation***

In our passage, Paul gives us an example of how to deal with broken relationships (V2-3), emphasises the importance of right reactions when confronted with difficulties (V4-7) and alerts us on how our attitude governs our behaviour (V 8-9). These tips are especially helpful when someone is confronted with different cultures:

1. By studying Paul’s method of dealing with disagreements among Christians we discover in V2-3:

- a) Paul does not confront Euodia and Syntyche<sup>35</sup> without first teaching them how focusing on Christ's attitude helps to overcome disagreements (Phil 2:1-5).
- b) We notice that Paul tackles the relationship rather than the issue. His primary interest is not to judge who was right and who was wrong – especially in cultural conflicts, this might not be possible. He pleads with both to restore their broken friendship.
- c) Paul urges these two women “to agree with each other in the Lord” (V2). Christians can have different opinions, influenced by different cultures and experiences, but without a break in their relationship - since Christ unites them.
- d) Paul appeals to others<sup>36</sup> in the congregation to help them – not to side with one party and fuel the conflict. Like Paul, we should not ignore problems but contribute towards the healing of broken relationships.

The “book of life” (V3) includes all those who are God's redeemed and faithful servants (cf. Ps 69:28; Rev 3:5; 13:8; 17:8; 20:12; 20:15; 21:27).

## 2. Paul's advice on facing cultural and non-cultural challenges:

V4) His first reaction is to “*rejoice in the Lord always*”. This joy is God's gift for redeemed people (cf. Ps 16:11; Rom 14:17; 1Thess 5:16-18). It is not connected with someone's circumstances but with his/her relationship with the Lord (cf. 3:1), even present in challenging situations such as Paul's imprisonment (cf. Phil 1:3-4 & 13-14). It reflects a Christian lifestyle that is deeply rooted in God's promise that God “*who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion*” (Phil 1:6). To rejoice over the goodness of God is a decision of our mind, irrespective of whether we feel ‘up’ or ‘down’. If we fail to do it, we easily get ensnared into a negative view of our

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<sup>35</sup> Both were once contending at Paul's side for the Gospel. They are not mentioned anywhere else in the Bible

<sup>36</sup> “Loyal yoke fellow” can either be an expression or a real name. In case it is a real name, it would read “loyal Syzygus”.

surroundings and then do not evaluate them from God's perspective (cf. Ps 107:1f).

V5) Secondly, he reminded Christians to let their *"gentleness be evident to all"*. We are called not to side with one party or tribe but to treat *"all"* equally with the same respect, patience and graciousness.

V5) Thirdly, we need to be reminded: *"The Lord is near"*. Focusing our life on the perspective that the Lord is near, is a sobering reality which puts some of our cultural prejudices, painful memories and disagreements into a proper perspective (cf. Jas 5:8-9).

V6) The fourth advice is: *"Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God"*. Since God is all-powerful, we do not need to fear – ours is to lift *"all"* our problems through prayer and petition into the presence of God. Peter emphasises: *"Cast all your anxiety on him for he cares for you"* (1Pet 5:7). The result is a lifestyle of thankfulness which is a key criterion for everyone who wants to reflect Christ.

V7) The advice to present all challenges in prayer to God has a wonderful promise. If we apply it, we experience God's peace which is far beyond the capacity of the human mind to understand. This peace will guard our thoughts and hearts against all sorts of anxiety and timidity as we trust in Jesus Christ.

3. Overcoming deep-seated negative feelings against other people or cultures is often a process which must begin in our minds.

V8) We need to reflect on our negative thoughts in the light of God and replace them with positive thoughts: *"whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right ... think about such things"* – focusing our thoughts on what is true, right etc. according to God's standards (cf. Phil 1:9-10), is the antidote to fixing our thoughts on negative things.

V9) Paul is aware that positive thinking alone is not enough: *"Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me – put it into practice"*. Positive thinking habits must eventually produce positive behaviour. This breaks tribal barriers down and makes us willing to go to those people who are despised and neglected. People need to see what we are, not just listen to what we say.



Again, this advice has a wonderful promise (cf. V7). If we put it into practice, we discover that indeed: *“the God of peace will be with [us]”*. In the context of different conflicts (cf. V2-3), initiating a peaceful resolution among people is possible for those who have *“the God of peace”* in their hearts and minds. Jesus reminds us: *“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God”* (Mt 5:9).



### **Questions for group discussion**

- As you think about your neighbours and other tribes, are there broken relationships or deep-seated negative feelings towards them? God calls you to work for peace and reconciliation.
- There is something wrong in our lives when we complain from Monday to Saturday but we preach on Sunday: “God cares for us”. Trusting in God’s goodness gives us confidence and thankfulness, which shine through our lives (V6). Does your life reflect this confidence and thankfulness?



### **Digging deeper**

- Our tribes are important because they strengthen our God-given cultural identity. However, our cultural identity becomes dangerous when someone feels his tribe is superior to other tribes and puts his cultural identity above his Christian identity. In God’s eyes, everyone is a sinner; everyone deserves God’s punishment and everyone who accepts God’s grace gets saved. Therefore, the Bible tells us in Romans 10:12-13 that there is no difference between Jews and Gentiles since God is the Lord of all and Christians are supposed to reflect Christ’s love towards all people.
- Followers of Christ need empathy, humility and willingness to understand and appreciate the cultural behaviours of others before they evaluate or judge them. The following can help us:

- ⇒ Whenever something is strange to you, try to assume that it was done with good motives.
- ⇒ Discover the cultural expressions of friendship. Friends from the host culture can help you to interpret confusing situations.
- ⇒ Communicate the desire to learn and share challenging situations in the host culture at first with your friends from that culture.
- ⇒ Withhold criticism until there is cultural understanding.

*“Acceptance begins when we love people as they are,  
not as we hope to make them.” (Ted Ward)*

# 16 Caring and sharing



## **Focus**

While Paul urged the Philippians in the previous passage to solve some conflicts, he appreciates in this passage their commitment to expressing God's love practically. This is one of his main reasons for writing the letter: to thank them for their support. As we have seen, Paul's aim was to "*preach the Gospel where Christ was not known*" (Rom 15:20) and therefore he appreciated their contribution in support of this ministry.



## **Testimony**

In January 18<sup>th</sup>, 2008, I was sent by my Bishop as a missionary to plant churches in the Anglican Diocese of Kivu (Rwanda), Kibuye Archdeaconry, which was the one most affected by the 1994 genocide in Rwanda. I went with my wife and six children, without any money for the work. We only trusted that God would provide what we needed, and indeed He did, even beyond our expectations. After reaching there, we first gave ourselves to Him and used the little we had to launch the mission work there. After two months of service, what we had got finished and we began to starve, not knowing when this situation would end. The only thing we did was to pray that God intervenes and saves us from this situation.

When we had lost hope, our God the Provider brought up two Christian families, one from within my congregation, another from outside the congregation. Those two families were greatly

used by God to support the mission work in Kibuye Archdeaconry. They helped us with food and money to take care of some of our basic needs. After recovering, we began to do evangelism, focusing on the neediest in the community such as orphans, street kids, widows, genocide survivors, and other vulnerable people. We preached the message of a living hope through Jesus Christ who bears our grieves and carries our sorrows (Is. 53:4-5). Through this, the wounded, stressed and depressed people recovered. They got healed and regained their value and identity as human beings, created in the image of God. As the mission work grew in the Archdeaconry, God increased the mission supporters in number, and they came from within and outside the congregation.

I encourage all true Christians to do whatever they can to support mission work all over the world, for many people made in God's image are perishing. I am quite sure God will reward them in due time, they will not be working in vain (1 Cor. 15:58). This is the promise of God *"Give generously to Him and do so without a grudging heart; then because of this, the Lord our God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to"* (Deut. 15:10). God has promised to bless all who give themselves to the Lord and then generously support God's mission work to save the lives of those who are perishing in sin and are trapped in its consequences.

**Rev. Ven. Justin Zigiranyirazo**



**Text**

***Philippians 4:10-19***



## Explanation and Context

There are two key issues for churches who mind about mission:

- a) intercessory prayer (see section 3)
- b) generosity

Paul teaches us in this passage a lesson on generosity.

V19) The foundation of this generosity is in the promise that “*my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus*” (cf. 2Cor 9:7-8; Ps 23:1). First, God will meet their needs rather than their wants. There is often a significant difference between the two. Some Christians might fear to trust in this promise. However, the same Lord who provided food and water for thousands of Israelites in the wilderness is the same God who provides today. He questioned His servants several times: “*Is anything too hard for the Lord?*” (Gen 18:14; Jer 32:17+27) and promised to care for those who fear him (1Pet 5:7). The more we understand our position as stewards, trusting that God will meet all our needs, the less we feel greedy or envious.

Secondly, God will meet these needs according to His riches. God’s giving is in proportion to his infinite resources! He is the real owner of all the riches since everything belongs to him (Ps 24:1ff). The “*glorious riches*” are His blessings for us (cf. Eph 3:16-18; Rom 2:4).

V18) Paul mentions that their gift is “*a sweet-smelling offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God.*” He used a language connected to the temple worship since their sacrificial giving is an expression of their true worship. Giving is a reflection of what we see in Christ’s character (Phil 2:5f). We are able to give ourselves and contribute generously because God sacrificed even His Son for us. Some Christians cannot give generously because they have not given themselves with all they are and all they have to the Lord (cf. 2Cor 8:5). Yet, we are not the true owners of our property. We are just stewards, using the resources which God entrusted to us (Lk 16:10-

12). Since Christ gave and continually provides for us, our life reflects Him when we walk in His footsteps of generosity and hospitality.

Furthermore, the Philippians did not know Paul's actual needs, but this did not lead them to give a bare minimum. Their generosity was a precious sacrifice, an act of devotion to God Himself.

V17) Giving is a blessing especially to the one who gives: *"I am looking for what may be credited to your account"*. This verse has its roots in the Old Testament where God promised: *"Give generously to Him and do so without a grudging heart; then because of this the Lord our God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to"* (Deut 15:10; cf. Prov 11:24-25; Prov 22:9; Is 58:7-11). Because of this promise, Paul wrote to the Corinthians: *"Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly and whoever sows generously will also reap generously... your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God"* (2Cor 9:6-11). The generosity of a church always indicates the spirituality of its members. A low level of generosity towards God's mission reflects sadly a low level of spirituality (cf. 2Cor 8:7-8). In our passage, Paul seems to emphasise more his joy about the giver than the gift itself (V10) because he is convinced that the reward of his work is a reward for all his mission partners who shared with their various gifts in this activity<sup>37</sup>.

V16) *"When I was in Thessalonica"* refers most likely to Acts 17:1-9

V10) The picture we get from the Philippians here is that of a caring and sharing church expressing their fruit of a spiritual life (cf. Mt 25:37-40). The motivation for Christian giving is sincere love towards God and His kingdom. It is a practical expression of our genuine thankfulness for what Christ did and does for us. Paul testified about the Philippians as part of the Macedonian churches that *"out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability ... they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints"* (2Cor

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<sup>37</sup> People who support a project get special interest in that project. It promotes a sense of ownership and active participation which is very necessary for outreach-mission.

8:2-4). This portrays Christian giving not as a duty but part of our worship to express our thankfulness to God.

This fruit is also seen in an honest motive of giving: *“for if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have”* (2Cor 8:12; cf. Mk 12:41-44). There are always limited resources. But despite this, the Christians in Philippi are a wonderful example on how poor people were sincerely committed to supporting missions and received God’s joy and blessing for their generosity.

Much as Paul appreciates Christian giving, he carefully guards against dependency. He was aware that donations with “negative attached strings” could easily destroy his mission.

V13) Therefore, Paul puts his entire trust in God, not in people’s support: *“I can do everything through him who gives me strength”* (V13). Since God has promised to care for His people, Paul proves that God can be relied on (Mt 6:25ff). This faith triumphs over anxiety, worry, want and even poverty (cf. Phil 4:6-7 + V12). Christians can hardly reflect Christ when they behave like ordinary beggars, failing to trust in a God who cares (cf. Heb 13:5-6).

V11-12) Secondly, Paul emphasises: *“I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty.”* It is very difficult to corrupt someone’s decision with money when the person is not money-minded. If someone is content with what God has given him, money loses its power. Paul allowed Christ to transform his life because he understood that *“godliness with contentment is great gain”* (1Tim 6:6-11).

V15) Thirdly, he testifies that the Philippians shared in the *“matter of giving and receiving”*. Both sides were able to contribute something and both sides received. This respects both as equal partners, while a person who only receives can never be an equal partner. Since God has blessed every believer and every Church, everyone is able to contribute to the benefit of others (cf. 1Pet 4:10; 2Cor 8:13-15). People who are blessed with spiritual gifts cannot say: We have

nothing! There is something wrong, when a Church depends on support from outside without sharing their own gifts.

Fourthly, Paul gave a testimony in Acts 20:34-35 on using his own skills: *“You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”* Receiving support cannot be detached from our own personal hard work. Some Christians may be needier than others, but this does not give them the right to be idle, depending on the welfare of others (cf. 2Thes 3:6-15).



## **Questions for group discussion**

- Many people believe that more property will make them happier. Paul discovered that the secret of happiness does not come through property or money, but through a relationship with Jesus Christ. His own testimony shows that he was willing to lose all things in order to find Christ (cf. Phil 3:8). Can you identify some of the obstacles in your life that hinder you from discovering Paul's secret of contentment?
- Since the love of money leads to all sorts of evil (cf. 1Tim 6:9-10), you need to ask yourself whether your motives to gain money are honest?
- The love for people is practically reflected in the commitment to support and sacrifice for God's mission. Paul saw faithful and compassionate giving as an indicator for spiritual health. Are you willing to develop this “*grace of giving*” in your life (2Cor 8:7-8) and do you have any testimony towards that?
- “Giving Christians grow, and growing Christians give.”<sup>38</sup> Is this statement true according to your experience?

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<sup>38</sup> Coffey, Ian: Discovering Philipians, Leicester: Crossway Books, 1999, p. 138.





## ***Digging deeper***

- A church needs to balance its commitment and support for mission inside and outside the diocese. Without mission inside – the life of a church dies; without mission outside – we disobey God’s commandment to spread the Gospel to all people.
- Adjust your lifestyle so that you have something to give for God’s mission. Generosity comes from a life-style of simplicity, not from abundance!
- Many people in the world are unhappy because they spend all their time and strength trying to please themselves. However, God created us to find our highest pleasure in pleasing Him and in loving/supporting others (Mt 22:37f). God wants us to be responsible as good stewards in regard to our means, our time and our talents.

*“Why do we insist on building the largest and most impressive structures in our city when people on the other side of the town are hungry, jobless and worshipping in storefronts?” (K.P. Yohannan)*

*“God’s work done in God’s way will never lack God’s supplies.”  
(J. Hudson Taylor)*

# 17 Living for God's Glory



This prayer, written in Luganda, was found after Apolo's death on 30<sup>th</sup> May 1933, at the back of his small pocket diary for that year.

*“O God our Father, and His son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, may you give me a blessing while in this world, while you lead me through the forests, through the lakes and the mountains, so that I may do your work among your people, grant that I may be loved by you, and by your people. Amen.”<sup>39</sup>*



## Testimony

Living for God's glory means that someone represents God in whatever he thinks, says, does, and wherever he goes. Colossians 2:6-7 says: *“So then, just as you received Christ Jesus as Lord, continue to live in him, rooted and built up in him, strengthened in the faith as you were taught.”*

I received Jesus Christ as my Lord and Saviour in 2005, when I was in senior two at Bukinda Secondary School. From that time on, students started abusing me, saying that young girls cannot be saved because they have not experienced anything. Also boys from upper classes came, trying to have sex with me. But God gave me the strength not to give in.

Some teachers were against born-again Christians and they stopped us even from playing drums, whenever we met for fellowship. Other students had the slogan that believers are the poorest academic performers. But despite of all this, I had decided to live for Christ and to

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<sup>39</sup> Luck, Anne: African Saint. The Story of Apolo Kivebulaya, London: SCM Press LTD, 1963, p. 137

please Him. We attended fellowship meetings and prayed without beating the drums. We prayed for God's favour upon us so that the negative slogan may be reversed at the end of the year.

Then, some of those who were against us saw God's miracles, their attitude changed, and even the head of the school bought us drums for our fellowship meetings.

Living for God's glory means a lot for me. Praise be to God that He has enabled me to pass through these challenges. Things have not been easy. But in those difficult situations, He has always been my Comforter and my Helper.

Glory be to Him forever and ever! Amen.

**Annah Kobusinge**



**Text**

***Philippians 4:20-23***



**Eye Opener**

The last section ended with the promise: *“my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus”* (V19). The appropriate response to this wonderful promise is to worship God: *“To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever”* as Paul usually does at the end of his letters. He praises God - and it seems in the context of his letter he uses this phrase as a reminder. God desires that His glory is praised. This alludes to Psalm 96:3-4:

*“Declare his glory among the nations, his marvellous deeds among all peoples. For great is the Lord and most worthy of praise; he is to be feared above all gods”.*

As we studied this letter, we recognized God's master-plan for the world. The Church of Christ is challenged to train, prepare and send

ambassadors of Christ to spread God's glory to those who have never heard of Christ's salvation.

Let us remember all that God has been doing throughout world history. It is much greater than the work that is still ahead. And let us be willing to listen to His voice. He wants to use us in His master plan.

There's a difference between going out for a walk and setting out on a journey. When someone sets out on a journey, he packs up and pulls things together. He chooses a course and moves with focus. God has given us direction about His will – but He will not rob us of the faith-building experience of obeying Him, based on what He says, not on what we see. He will not give us all the detailed instructions for His good plan before we start this journey. However, He has promised that he will never leave us nor forsake us (Hebrews 13:5). When fear and worries are crouching at the door of your heart, we focus on Christ.

The following questions may help us to get the right focus:<sup>40</sup>

1. Who is God?
2. What is God doing in the world?
3. How does God invite us to participate in His redemptive work?
4. Are we willing to “take our cross” and follow Him?

Mission is ultimately not a human response to human needs. Mission is the work of the triune God in this world, inviting His followers to be a blessing for the nations (cf Gen 12:3). This is a joyous, life-giving privilege.

If a church lacks interest in God's mission, it is not cured by more shocking statistics or more emotionally manipulative commands to obedience. It is best treated by focusing the members on Christ, so that Christ's passion for the lost can warm our cold hearts for His mission.

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<sup>40</sup> Cf. Dearbone, Tim: *Beyond Duty*. In: *Winter, Perspectives*, Pasadena: William Carey Library, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. 2000, p 90.



## Explanation

V21) “Greet all the saints in Christ Jesus” Final greetings are a typical feature of Paul’s letters. We are reminded that churches are people, not only buildings, and people are individuals, each one special to God and therefore special to us (for an explanation of “saints” see section 1).

V22) “those who belong to Caesar’s household” Caesar’s household includes all slaves and freeman who are employed in or around the palace and the administration of the Roman Emperor Caesar (cf. the palace guard in 1:13). Since Philippi was a Roman colony which had many connections to Caesar’s workforce, this special greeting is plausible.

V23) Paul ends with the grace of Jesus Christ. He has made it plain in His letter that there is no one like Christ (cf. 2:5f; 3:10) and the greatest gift he can send is that the grace of the Lord Jesus may be poured out into their lives. God’s unmerited favour, which is especially seen in His salvation, “*be with your spirit.*” In this context, the word “*spirit*” stands for the whole human being, including someone’s willpower, character and feelings. It is commonly mentioned in Paul’s conclusions (cf. Gal 6:18; Philemon 25). This blessing is also expressed in the beginning and embraces the letter (cf. Phil 1:2).



## Questions for group discussion

➤ “To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever” (V20). God desires that we live for His glory. What can be your contribution to ensuring that God’s glory spreads to the nations? In what area has God gifted you and what burden has the Lord put on your heart?

➤ Where are those tribes or communities that are not yet reached with the Gospel? Do you have a heart for certain people, tribes or a certain country? All of us can join in prayer for them, and God will call some of us to go while others send and support them.

➤ How can our churches and our mission coordinators join hands to reach people in this needy world? Let us form a team of intercessors. Let us give people a vision to reach those who do not know Christ and include them in our intercession prayers on Sundays. Let us use methods to collect money the way others do it when they build churches, etc. ... because the harvest is plentiful but the workers are few.



## ***Digging deeper***

➤ Whether you are a teacher, a social worker, an environmentalist, a theologian, etc., God has given you gifts for one purpose: to empower the world-wide Church of Christ. You are responsible for the use of your talents. Do not bury them into the soil like the lazy servant of Jesus' parable. When the Lord comes back, he will judge us according to the opportunities he gave us and according to our talents. (Mt 25:14f). Start right where you are to use your gifts. If you are called to be an intercessor, start right now to pray for God's mission. If God moves your heart to support mission work, do not wait until you are rich. Use some of your 'copper coins' like the poor widow (Mk 12:41). If God has blessed you with two hands and your church with land, cultivate the church land with your friends and offer the harvest for outreach mission. Your unique contribution will depend on your talents, your situation and what God has put on your heart. Whether you go to reach other tribes for Christ, enable someone else to go, mobilize your Church, welcome those that God brings to your home area, or intercede for the nations: you have a special part to play in God's master plan.

➤ Mission was never intended to be an exhausting human enterprise. Mission is our privileged participation in God's work. But without a focus on His Kingdom, mission mutates into competition within our own programs and denominations. When the Kingdom of God is the goal of all we do, then, competition fades under the overall command of Christ. God is building His Kingdom. If we allow Him, He will use us. If we refuse, He will call others.

➤ God does not need your capability (how gifted you are) as much as he needs your availability. If you make yourself available, God will show you your part and make you capable for that: *"I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, 'Whom shall I send and who go will for us?' Then I said, 'Here am I; send me'"* (Isaiah 6:8).

A boat is very safe at the landing dock, it can neither drown nor get lost. But boats are not created for remaining at the landing docks. They are created to carry people even if the waters are deep and the storms are rough. And they can only be a blessing to the people if they are willing to go out.

In the same way, the love of Christ urges us to leave our safe landing docks and go out as fishers of men - to be a blessing for the nations (cf. Lk 5:10).

*"Even when I am old and grey, do not forsake me, O God, till I declare your power to the next generation, your might to all who are to come" (Psalm 71:18).*

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