

[getting philled]

:: philippians // misc ::

In the last few years here on Wednesday mornings we've covered a lot of ground. We've studied the Sermon on the Mount, the Olivet Discourse, Romans 6, 7 & 8, 9, 10 & 11, various battles of the Old Testament, the Christophanies and ten one-verse-wonders, to name a few.

Each look into God's word reveals to us who we are as Christians. We see what Christ has won for us and the kind of life He wants us to have in His will and in His Kingdom. It's this amazing relationship He has constructed for us that we might know Him and know His plan for our lives and it's all summed up in His simple statement:

Follow Me and I will make you fishers of men.

And as we study God's word we learn more and more about what it means to actually follow Jesus. To take up the call and to receive the life He's made for us. It's detailed and explained and presented to us, complete with FAQs and examples.

The idea of our gathering each week is that all of us would look into God's word, see who we are as believers and then to carry out the things God is speaking to us. To move from simply **listening** to actually **doing**. To not only be a **believer**, but to actually be a **follower**, a disciple.

The Bible says even the demons believe. Our purpose is not to stop at *belief*, but to pair our beliefs with action, with discipleship. The actual motion of being who God wants us to be, living how God wants us to live, doing what God wants us to do. That's the purpose. And the more we discover about who God is and what He has done for us, our hope is that it would then cause you and me and all of us to want to follow Him more closely, more intimately, more intensely.

So today we embark on a study of the book of Philippians. It's an incredible epistle, written by Paul very near the end of his life. In fact, we know that it was very close to his execution for a couple of reasons.

One - in chapter 2 he talks about waiting to hear from Caesar what his fate is going to be, whether death or freedom.

And two - he speaks in this book about his chains. Now, we know from the book of Acts that during much of Paul's time in Rome as a prisoner he was free to stay in his own house and had a certain amount of liberty. However, in this book, he speaks of confinement and chains and palace guards. He was at the end of his time there, just before being sentenced to death.

This is Paul at the culmination of his life on the earth. Some of his final teachings, preserved and delivered to us to learn from.

It shouldn't surprise us then that this book is full of what we might call Bible sound bytes. Really incredible, memorable statements that many of us started learning right at the beginning of our

Christian lives. This book has all sorts of verses that we put on our walls and commit to memory and print on keychains and use as mottos.

Verses like:

Philippians 1.21 - For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

Philippians 2.5-8 - Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men. And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

Philippians 2.10-11 - That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven and of those on earth, and of those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Philippians 3.8 - Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ.

Philippians 3.14 - I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4.4 - Rejoice in the Lord always, again I say rejoice.

Philippians 4.7 - The peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4.8 - Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy—meditate on these things.

Philippians 4.13 - I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.

This is a discipleship book. It's not aimed at people who need to *meet* Jesus, though you do find Him in these chapters. Instead, this letter is directed to people who love the Lord and who want to actively follow Him day by day in their lives.

For those disciples, this book explains the result of following God, which is *fullness*. Godly fullness.

Throughout the Scriptures we are given this idea of Biblical, heavenly fullness **from** God, **for** His people.

Psalms 16.11 - You will show me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.

Ephesians 3.17b-19 - ...that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height— to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.

John 1.16 - And of His fullness we have all received, and grace for grace.

Philippians details to us how to have lives filled with God's fullness. It won't happen by itself. It *can't* happen if we're unwilling to step forward as disciples. The Christian life is wonderful, but we must receive it and engage in it in order to be in the place where God can do all the work He began at our conversion.

In Philippians, Paul comes at us on all sorts of levels. He explains how God's fullness is applied to our thought life, our worship, our rejoicing, our knowledge and discernment, our service, our sacrifice, our love, our future hope and our spiritual fruit. Paul's taking the time to write to us as Christian men and say, "Ok, *this* is the Christian life and *this* is what you have to look forward to as God continues to complete you."

Philippians 1.6 - Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.

Paul then gives himself as an example. He explains his life and how he determined to actively follow after Jesus and that he was full of God's provision and plan.

Philippians 4.18a - Indeed, I have all and abound. I am full.

And he instructed the Philippian Christians, and us as well, that we should imitate him, that we should follow in the pattern that he followed, that we should engage in our faith, not stopping at belief, but becoming disciples of Jesus. And, if we are willing to do that, then we will receive the fullness that our hearts desire so dearly and the Lord has supplied so plentifully.

Of course, in this great discussion of God's completion, God's fullness, Paul invites us to look within. Because when we look within, we will find that naturally we are full of attitudes and habits and characteristics that are incompatible with discipleship. Within ourselves, even as Christians, we find arrogance and selfish ambition. We find pride and complaining. We find disputing hearts and discontent. We find that we are full of ourselves. And in these 4 chapters Paul sets us straight. He sets us on the track to run the race to *win* the race. He puts us on the path toward a dynamic Christian life that is continually perfected and continually filled by God as He draws us nearer to Himself.

That's where we're going with this study.

We're calling this series **Full Of It**, because our desire is to not only evaluate what our hearts are filled with, but also to step into that life of discipleship so that we can receive the fullness that God is offering.

What is determining my decision-making? What's determining my thought life? What determines my choices for the future? What determines my attitudes? Because whatever we're filling our lives with will determine those things and many other things. Whatever we're full of will determine the fruit that is produced in our lives.

Kelly and I have a number of fruit trees at our house. grapefruit trees, pomegranate trees, a tangelo tree, a lemon tree, a fig tree.

And then we have 2 orange trees. One in the front, one in the back. The one in the back produces these great, big oranges. A lot of them get eaten by the local wildlife before we would get a chance to get at them. The fruit is regular and desirable and full.

But the tree in the front is a different story. The tree in the front is wasted. You see, before we moved in, the owners of the house used a chemical fertilizer in that area of the yard that isn't safe to ingest. This tree became full of toxins that then affected the fruit and made it unsafe to eat.

The tree in the back is full of God stuff. Dirt, water, air, sunlight.

The tree in the front has a bunch of man stuff added in, and it's ruined the fruit.

The fullness of those trees determine what kind of fruit is produced.

This is what Paul is saying in Philippians. As Bible commentator HA Ironside puts it:

"The book of Philippians speaks of Christ, but not in a doctrinal way. It describes the walk and the life of the believer who has apprehended his position in Christ.

Paul shows what manner of lives should be lived by those who are saved by grace and who are waiting for glory.

*This [is the] true Christian experience."
{HA Ironside // Philippians pg 9}*

If we desire to follow God as disciples, then we're ready for Philippians. And if we're tired of being full of it as fallen human beings, then it's time to discover the fullness of God in a life lived stretched out toward Him.