CAPITOL® COMMISSION
Gospel Hope & Spiritual Strength for Government Leaders

Welcome!

January 9, 2024

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Weekly Bible Study Schedule
Tuesday, January 9, 7:00-7:45 AM
SENATE LOUNGE
All Welcome!
Capitol Commission is NON-PARTISAN and NON-DENOMINATIONAL

Introduction
The recent trend that men think about the Roman Empire more than their counterparts emerged in September 2023 from a conversation on the TV show, The "View". The question went viral as wives asked their husbands if they think about the Roman Empire, husband's answered, mostly weekly, and for reasons ranging from its military and engineering prowess, to power, to hope and legacy.

My wife asked me the same question, I said yes. However, I'm required to because I teach a college course on critical thinking and ancient philosophers. So, the Greco-Roman rhetoric is on my mind. We both laughed.

How about we continue the 102nd Session Bible study set in the context of Roman culture? Our legislator's Bible study is from the book of Philippians. I hope we learn together, encourage each other, know God more and experience a personal relationship with God.

Let me first acknowledge that legislators, staff, judiciary, statewide governing leaders, our Governor, and Capitol employees approach spirituality from different religious convictions, and some none at all.

It is fine to not agree, and I would love to listen to your story of faith. Disagreements do not need to lead to assassinations of one's character or aggression against one's belief system. Please reach out to me, let's journey in friendship.

Some consider the Apostle Paul second to only Jesus in Christian history. Prior to his conversation to faith Paul was a member of the Party of the Pharisees, who trusted in the Judaic laws for right standing with God. Following his redemptive encounter with Jesus he is best known for traveling throughout the eastern Roman Empire sharing the gospel (meaning good news) that Jesus would return from heaven to earth bringing healing, justice, and love, redeeming the earth.

Background
In 50-52 AD Paul's second missionary tour located him in the city of Philippi in Eastern Europe where he started the first Jesus community of believers (Acts 16 – a biblical reference to support narrative).

The letter to the Philippian church was written in 61 AD from a Roman prison by Paul.

Paul was headed to Asia, the city of Ephesus (modern-day Turkey), when in a dream he saw a man calling him to Macedonia (modern-day Greek region). This dream was given by the Holy Spirit of God guiding Paul to stop going one way, listen for directions, and follow God's will into a new region. He met Lydia in the city of Philippi who was instrumental, along with others starting the Jesus community of believers.

Founded by Philipp of Macedon in 358 BC Philippi was located on the strategic Via Engnatia (modern-day Albania) a route that facilitated easy travel and commerce. Philippi was a Roman Colony (under the Roman ruling government in Italy). They enjoyed all the legal status of Roman citizenship (no taxation, economic and political gain). The Roman government populated Philippi with army veterans who were committed to nationalism – a people group fully devoted to the king and his governing rule.

Paul preached the King of the world is Jesus. Paul's intent was not to bring a revolution against the Roman government, rather a revelation of Jesus to the heart and mind of people and culture. Thus ensued persecution against the community of Jesus followers in Philippi. The proclamation of Jesus as Lord was interpreted by the Romans as a threat to the Roman religious system of Emperor worship, specifically, king Caesar's lordship.

Purpose
Paul wrote the letter to thank the Philippian church for their financial support when he was in prison.

Epaphroditus (member of the Philippian church) was sent to give Paul financial support. He became ill and almost died on his way to Rome. After a time, Paul sent Epaphroditus back to the Philippian church as they were concerned for his well-being. Paul wrote the letter to the Philippian church from a Roman prison. The letter was not

to correct doctrine, or to discipline, it was a letter of friendship, affection, and gratitude. It was a letter which expanded their understanding of the Kingdom of God and the rule of Jesus.

Teaching
The letter to the Philippians chapter 1 verses 1-9.

1:1 – This letter is from Paul and Timothy, [servants] of Christ Jesus. I am writing to all [believers] in Philippi who belong to Christ Jesus, including the church leaders and deacons.

Unlike the letter to the Galatians when Paul declared his apostolic authority, this letter leads with humility. His address is to all followers of Jesus in the church: pastors, bishops, deacons, volunteers and such.

1:2 – May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.

Paul blesses the church with grace and peace. God is the source of our well-being. God has good will toward you. Grace is His favor for you. It is an unearned gift. God is for you. What is it that you need? Talk to Him about your situation. His peace brings tranquility to you. In the midst of turmoil His peace calms the storm. What storm is pounding you? The world is full of unrest. God's will is for peace, peace for you.

> **John 14:27 -** *"I am leaving you with a gift—peace of mind and heart. And the peace I give is a gift the world cannot give. So don't be troubled or afraid."*

1:3-5 – Every time I think of you, I give thanks to my God. Whenever I pray, I make my requests for all of you with joy, for you have been my partners in spreading the Good News about Christ from the time you first heard it until now.

Paul thinks, thanks, prays with joy for the Philippians generosity to financially support him; for Epaphroditus who almost died to ensure Paul was cared for and encouraged; and for loyalty to friendship and faithful partnership in the testimony of the gospel of Jesus. From when Paul started the church more than 10-years prior to writing the letter, they continued to share a sincere love. Moreover, they shared in suffering from persecution because of their faith.

1:6 – And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.

God started the work God will finish the work. It is spiritual formation. The Holy Spirit is forming you into the likeness of Jesus. He enables us to talk and treat others a little more like Jesus every-day: good, kind, merciful, loving, generous, forgiving, blessing, grace filled, healing, just, humble and such. Spiritual formation is a process. The Christian Ethic is more than an Aristotle philosophy, it is anchored in Jesus. Paul taught spiritual formation is complete once you have apprehended the fullness of Jesus. One day Jesus will come from heaven to earth to finalize our journey of faith.

1:7 – So it is right that I should feel as I do about all of you, for you have a special place in my heart. You share with me the special favor of God, both in my imprisonment and in defending and confirming the truth of the Good News.

A Roman prison was underground, filthy, hot with poor sanitation, and lacked food and water. In addition, Paul was bound by hand to the guard day and night. When the guard moved Paul moved. Whatever the guard did Paul was forced to do. However, because of the solders proximity, he heard the good news of Jesus from Paul. From suffering in prison to suffering in Philippi they shared God's grace.

Paul understood suffering is embedded in God's sovereignty. Suffering is a part of living on this side of heaven. It is part of the brokenness of humanity. Suffering creates space for one to fellowship with Christ as He suffered on the cross for you and me. One can embrace suffering accepting it as part of life, or decry "unfair" as though raising one's fist to God.

How one engages suffering determines whether they experience the power of the resurrected Christ. Our hope in Jesus as King and Lord transcends all suffering depositing peace into our heart and mind, and affirming the promise of a perfect place, one where we fully apprehend Christ in all of His glory. We call that place heaven.

1:8-9 – God knows how much I love you and long for you with the tender compassion of Christ Jesus. I pray that your love will overflow more and more, and that you will keep on growing in knowledge and understanding.

Good News!