

# **S**ession 12—The Last Chapter of the Letter to the Philippian Church! Wow!!

**An uplifting, informative and heartfelt letter to those you love is a rewarding act for both the writer and the recipient.**

## **What is in a letter?**

A **letter** is a written message from one party to another containing information. Letters guarantee the preservation of communication between both parties. They bring friends or relatives closer together, enrich professional relationships and provide a satisfying mean of self-expression. Letters contribute to the protection and conservation of literacy, which is the ability to write and read. Letters have been sent since antiquity and are mentioned in Biblical times often.

According to the testimony of ancient historian Hellanicus the first recorded hand written letter (epistle) was by Persian Queen Atossa daughter of Syrus, mother of Xerxes around 500 BC.

**Despite email, letters are still popular, particularly in business and for official communications. Letters have the following advantages over email:**

- No special device is needed to receive a letter, just a postal address, and the letter can be read immediately on receipt.
- A letter in the sender's own handwriting is more personal than an email.
- Letter writing leads to the mastery of the technique of good writing.
- Letter writing leads to the mastery of punctuation and paragraphing.
- Letter writing engages in reading and self-improvement, getting better at creativeness and originality.
- Commitment to reading and thinking.

- Letter writing can provide an extension of the face-to-face therapeutic encounter.
- Letter writing can acknowledge special, unusual or challenging situations.
- Letter writing can help students in reading and writing procedure.

**There is something about writing and receiving a letter that is therapeutic and self-satisfying.**

**Philippians 4:1-5,** “Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends! I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life. Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! <sup>5</sup>Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.”

Previously on “24”...Previously on A.D...Previously on THE GREEN HORNET!

I’m just kidding!

You missed it...so here is where we are!

Paul has written to the Philippians to encourage them in joy and provoke them to growth.

**We saw in last week's study that there are:**

- Bad examples in the church,
- Abusers of grace, who are caught up in the things of this world.

**But he reminded the Philippians:**

- Not to fall into that trap
- That their citizenship is in heaven, and
- That Jesus Christ was coming soon to take them there.

**Philippians 4:1, Paul stated to the Philippian church members... "My Joy and Crown"**

It is clear that Paul loves these people. He calls them "my beloved brethren," and tells them that they are his joy.

**But one description he uses here is strange: he calls them "my crown."**

The word crown here is the Greek word "STEF-an-os." That is the wreath that would be placed on the heads of those who were victorious in the Olympic Games. It describes a reward or prize given for winning. Paul saying, "You guys are my Olympic Gold Medal. You're my reward."

**The Bible tells us that, in heaven, there are actually four different rewards available to the believer, each described as crowns. These crowns are awarded for different behaviors on this earth.**

**They are:**

**1. The Crown of Life; given to all who love God.**

**James 1:12**, "Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which {the Lord} has promised to those who love Him."

**2. The Crown of Glory (1Pe 5:4); given to those who are examples to the church and who lead by serving.**

**1Pet. 5:1-4**, "Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as {your} fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to {the will of} God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory."

**3. The Crown of Righteousness (2Ti 4:8), given to those believers that do not get caught up in the cares and desires of the world. Those who live righteously, because they know the Lord is coming back any minute.**

**2Tim. 4:8**, "...in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing."

#### 4. **The Crown of Exultation (1Th 2:19), the reward for leading people to Jesus Christ and discipling them.**

**1Thessalonians 2:19-20**, “*For who is our hope or joy or crown of exultation? Is it not even you, in the presence of our Lord Jesus at His coming? For you are our glory and joy.*”

This is the crown Paul was referring to here.

There is a tremendous reward in heaven waiting for those who lead people to salvation and discipleship. The angel Gabriel said to Daniel, *Dan. 12:3 “...Those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever.”*

**Our reward in heaven will be greatly increased by those that we shared the gospel with, those we led to Christ, and those we taught and encouraged in the ways of God.**

***Paul would say here, "You guys are my crown. It is your new life in Christ that will increase my reward from Christ."***

#### **Philippians 4:2-3, Live In Harmony with Each Other**

Two women (*Euodia and Syntyche*) were at odds with one another. We don't know what the division or disagreement was about. We do know that they were not living in harmony with one another.

**Paul indicates that each of them had a different understanding about something.**

**It wasn't a matter of one of them sinning against the other - they were just on opposite sides of the fence over an issue.**

**Paul's command to them publicly is that they need to be united in the Lord.**

Notice that he does not say, "Let's get them into long-term counseling. Let's have a public forum for them to air out their differences. Let's get down to the heart of the matter and see which one of them is really right."

**No, he simply tells them to live in harmony in the Lord.**

We can live in harmony without seeing eye-to-eye.

We can live in love if we're living in the Lord.

**The way to bring peace is not to go back to the argument, but to go back to the cross. Not to look at the source of the fight, but to unlock the secrets of forgiveness.**

**The key to bringing disagreeing Christians together is to remind them that they are supposed to be like Jesus.**

If we weren't so busy sticking up for our rights and trying to convince people that our perspective is the right one, we could be busy forgiving people and loving them.

And it is our place as Christians to not only practice this, but to encourage others to do it as well.

**Paul makes an individual reference to his "true comrade/companion," asking this person to help these women.**

**But who is it?**

Some have suggested that it is everyone in the church, individually.

Remember that this letter was written, Philippians 1:1 "...to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons."

Each person in the church could have, and should have, felt that it was their obligation to help these two women live in harmony in the Lord.

**Who was this Clement Paul mentions? We don't know.**

**If you had to have your whole life summed up in one sentence, would you like it to be summed up like Clement or like Euodia and Syntyche?**

**Philippians 4:4-5...Rejoice In The Lord Always...Be Gentle in Forgiving!**

**Once again in this letter, Paul emphasizes the need for joy.**

**It is not based on life's circumstances.**

As a matter of fact, notice how much of a necessity the Lord is in every aspect of life. Just in these four verses, Paul has said,

Philippians 4:1...stand firm in the Lord.

Philippians 4:2...live in harmony in the Lord.

Philippians 4:4...Rejoice in the Lord.

**Apart from the Lord, we cannot stand firm. Apart from the Lord, we cannot live in harmony with others. And apart from the Lord, we cannot have permanent joy.**

**What about this “gentle (forbearing) spirit?**

Paul tells them to let their forbearing spirit be obvious.

This is a word that describes someone who is gentle when they are wronged. Someone who is patient when they didn't get what they deserved.

**Why should I be like that? Paul tells us: "The Lord is near."**

***This world is passing away. It is only a matter of time before it is consumed in fire. Note:***

- ***Every dollar that we deserved to be paid will be destroyed.***
- ***Every argument that we should have won will be forgotten.***
- ***Everything that was stolen from us will cease to exist.***

***None of it will matter.***

**Do these things still matter to you?**

***Be reminded that the Lord is near, He's coming soon. Learn to be patient and gentle when you get the raw deal, when you get shorted.***

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