

## Group Study Outline

### Launching

A current bit of jargon describes churches as in 'Maintenance Mode' or in 'Mission Mode'. Actually it's probably rarely an either/or. But where would you put Emmanuel on a line between these two extremes? Where should we be?

### Questions

Recap the first two studies:

What is 'partnership in the gospel' (1:5)? what are Paul's ambitions?  
How do you expect Paul might now apply 1:1-26 to the Philippians?

Read Phils 1:27-2:5.

How does Paul apply 1:1-26 to the Philippians?

What does he want them to do? What is it that they may do instead?  
What does Paul expect us to do as we stand firm?

What will it be like for them if they follow Paul's lead and live a gospel-centred life?

Why might Christians chuck in the towel and give up living like this?

What does it say if we don't chuck in the towel, but keep going?

Why is it encouraging to be told that suffering (as well as belief) is God's gracious gift to us (29)?

What kind of opposition intimidates us so we don't stand firm?

Re-read 2:1-5

In verse 1, Paul is really saying 'If you are genuine Christians ...'

What does Paul want genuine Christians to set their minds on?

What did Jesus set his mind on?

What is really 'in the interests of others'?

When is a Christian guilty of being selfish, vain and conceited?

What do these verses say to the Christian reluctant about evangelism?

Why does it help if Christians are doing all the things in this passage together (eg facing opposition together, sharing the same mind-set)?

### Conclusion

Does the salvation of others matter to me as it did to Paul and Jesus?  
Why / why not?

What is there in this passage to help me be more like Paul / Jesus?

In what ways does Emmanuel need to be more in 'Mission Mode'?

How should I (as a part of Emmanuel) be more in 'Mission Mode'?

What changes might this mean for me ... now? ... and in 5-10 years?



## Philippians 1:27-2:5

---

### Theme Sentence

Live in a gospel way, for others' salvation (as Jesus did).

### Story Board

So, live your life for this gospel. Even if you face the worst kind of opposition for it, even if you have to endure terrible suffering because of it, continue to stand together, shoulder-to-shoulder for the gospel, as I do.

You've experienced the wonderful blessings of the gospel, haven't you? Well then single-mindedly share together in a gospel purpose. Be more concerned for others and others' salvation than for your own comfort. Put this great need of theirs ahead of your wants.

That's exactly what Jesus did. And you should have the same mindset as the one that drove him to seek the salvation of others.

### Application

1:27a is the first application of the letter: all that Paul has written so far leads up to this call to live gospel-centred lives. So, do I do it? And so we don't miss the point, Paul spells out what this means:

- backing down in my Christian convictions and witness when I'm opposed is a sure sign that I'm not really gospel-centred. Following Jesus means not only believing in him, but suffering with him. So ... will I stand firm, or will I be intimidated?
- if I'd expect to enjoy the blessings of the gospel without that same gospel changing my focus from my interests and creature comforts to others' salvation, then I'm selfish, vain and conceited.
- am I like Jesus? His others'-salvation-centred mind-set models the mind-set that we should have. His others'-salvation-centred living models what Paul is calling us to: this is what normal Christian living is like.

## Verse by verse

27a Here is the application of all that Paul has been saying since 1:12. He has been describing how his one ambition is that the gospel advances / Christ is preached / he is granted more days to live for Christ. And the point of saying all this is that these Philippians should copy Paul's gospel-centred lifestyle.

Our English translations don't bring out how radical this call is: the phrase *manner of life* literally means 'have your citizenship'. Philippi became a Roman colony in 31BC so its people were Roman citizens - a passport to progress, privilege and status. Paul's point in 3:20 is that Christians are already citizens of heaven, with far greater privileges, and their king is the one whose name is above every name (even Caesar's) (2:9-11). To live as this kind of citizen will almost inevitably entail clashing with the secular powers-that-be.

28-30 Will this opposition they face so *frighten* them that they throw in the towel, or will they *stand firm*? The *progress in the faith* (26) that Paul is looking for is that they won't budge!

Opposition is a sign-to-be-seen-today of the future: the hostility of the world is a *sign to them* (ie 'gives the reason why') they'll be destroyed; the faithfulness of the church is a sign that they are genuine Christians (cf Romans 5:3-5) who ultimately will be saved (cf Mark 13:13).

This is why *suffering* and *conflict* are normal, linking Christians together, in a fellowship with Paul (30) and with Christ (3:10). It *has been granted* (with the sense, 'as a grace-gift') that we're not only believers, but sufferers, for the gospel's sake, for that is the path to resurrection (3:10-11).

2:1-4 This paragraph is traditionally read as a call for Christians humbly to work for unity with other Christians (cf 2:2) because:

- (a) it is assumed there was a 'unity problem' in Philippi. But was there? There were some false teachers (cf 3:2), but Paul never calls for 'unity' with false teachers! The only real evidence that there was a problem between some Christians is in 4:2 ... and that's not much evidence!
- (b) the attitude Christ showed (6-11) and which the Philippians must copy (5) is humble service, that puts the interests of others first. This is how to be one.

An alternative way to read 2:1-4 is to see it as a call for the Philippians to be unitedly gospel-centred, which will mean putting

self-interest to one side for the sake of others' salvation. It makes sense to read it this way because:

- (a) it fits the context of chapter 1. Phrases here link this paragraph backwards (eg *selfish ambition* [1:17, 2:3], looking to others' interests [1:23-24, 2:4], *one spirit* [1:27, 2:2] etc). And because Paul's main application so far is 1:27a, the most natural way to read this paragraph is that he is continuing his call for gospel-centredness.
- (b) Paul and the Philippians are *engaged in the same conflict* (30), namely hostility from without (1:12-14, 28-29) and rivalry within (1:17; 2:3). 1:12-26 shows Paul's concern in this situation is not for unity but *that Christ is preached*.
- (c) the attitude that Christ modelled (6-11) and which the Philippians must copy (5) is others-interests-first, for the sake of their salvation: we must ask why he came to earth, humbled himself to death on the cross, etc.
- (d) the 'if' in 2:1 should not be read as suggesting any doubt. They're real Christians, who've shown great *partnership in the gospel* (1:5) and Paul wants them to continue to be just as gospel-centred until *the day of Christ* (cf 1:27a).
- (e) Paul's concern is *one purpose*, not merely one-ness.

Paul's life exactly demonstrates what he's calling for. Because others were hearing the gospel, personal discomfort (1:12-14) and his *ambition* (1:15-18) didn't matter. He'll forego departing-to-be-with-Christ (which he'd prefer) for their sake (1:18-26). Will the Philippians do the same, though they may face the discomfort of opposition (1:28-30)? Similarly, Timothy (2:19-24) and Epaphroditus (2:25-30) are examples not of unity, but of serving the gospel at personal cost.

2:1 The simplest way to understand this is: 'So if you are genuine Christians (granted to believe and to suffer [1:29]), then ...'

2:5 Jesus' life is the example of this others'-salvation-centred lifestyle. And Paul refers to this supreme example with a very simple practical aim: will you be like Jesus? Will you renounce selfish ambition and vain conceit, and have the same mind (as him and as one another), set on the salvation of others? Will you do 1:27? Will you be gospel-centred for others' sake?