

Philippians Intro

In Acts 16 we read about the origin of the church in Philippi. On Paul's Second Missionary Journey out of Antioch, he and his team did not originally intend to go there. They attempted to go to Asia, but the Holy Spirit stopped them. So they tried to go to Bythia, but the Holy Spirit stopped them again. Then, while they were waiting in Troas near the site of ancient Troy, Paul received a vision in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us" (Acts 16:9). So Paul and company immediately made plans to go there.

The city of Philippi was in the northern part of Greece known as Macedonia. It was a Roman colony, meaning that citizens of Philippi were automatically citizens of Rome – an important social distinction in the Roman world. This was the city where Paul met Lydia, the seller of purple (Acts 16:14). It was also the home of the slave girl out of whom Paul cast an evil spirit (Acts 16:16-18). When that bit of ministry got Paul and Silas in trouble, Philippi was the place where an earthquake set Paul and Silas free from their chains in the middle of the night. The jailer, first wanting to kill himself, later fell down before Paul and Silas asking, "What must I do to be saved?" The text of Acts indicates that when Paul and Silas left town, Luke stayed behind, probably to take care of the newly planted church and picked him up again on the return trip to Israel.

It's now 5 or 6 years later and Paul is in Roman custody, this time in Rome. In the past the Philippian church repeatedly helped Paul by funding his ministry. They recently sent a brother named Epaphroditus to Paul in Rome bringing financial assistance from Philippi once again. But while Epaphroditus was in Rome he got sick and almost died – and when the Philippians heard about it they were worried. So, once he was better, Paul wrote this letter and sent it to Philippi in the hands of Epaphroditus. Paul took this opportunity to thank them for their help and to completely reassure them that Epaphroditus was okay.

This is a letter full of joy. The words "joy" or "rejoice" appear in some form 16 times in 14 verses. Unlike many of Paul's letters, this one was not written to correct problems, but mainly as an expression of love and thanks to a church that partnered with him in the spread of the gospel.

Lessons in Philippians

- Difficulties are not the same thing as Defeat.
- Joy is not dependent upon our circumstances.
- Humility, commitment, loyalty and sacrifice should be evident in the life of any Christian.
- This letter gives us several personal examples for us to learn from:
 - Jesus
 - Timothy
 - Epaphroditus
 - Paul
- It also includes several verses or passages you might like to highlight or memorize. We will take note of these along the way.

Bible text is from the NKJV

Chapter 1

Paul's Fond Memories of the Philippian Church

¹Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ,

To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:

²Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

³I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, ⁴always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, ⁵for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, **⁶being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;** ⁷just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace. ⁸For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ.

Paul's Prayer for the Philippians

⁹And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, ¹⁰that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, ¹¹being filled with the fruits of righteousness which *are* by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

The Upside of Paul's Imprisonment

¹²But I want you to know, brethren, that the things *which happened* to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, ¹³so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ; ¹⁴and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

Wrong Motives for Ministry

¹⁵Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from goodwill: ¹⁶The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; ¹⁷but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel. ¹⁸What then? Only *that* in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.

Paul's Confidence

¹⁹For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, ²⁰according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. **²¹For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.** ²²But if I live on in the flesh, this *will mean* fruit from *my* labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. ²³For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, *which is* far better. ²⁴Nevertheless to remain in the flesh *is* more needful for you. ²⁵And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith, ²⁶that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again.

The Importance of Worthy Conduct

²⁷Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel, ²⁸and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God. ²⁹For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, ³⁰having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear *is* in me.

Chapter 2

Intentional Unity

¹Therefore if *there is* any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, ²fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, *being* of one accord, of one mind. ³Let nothing *be done* through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself. ⁴Let each of you look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others.

The Mind of Christ (This whole section is vital.)

⁵Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, being in the form of God, did not consider it robbery to be equal with God, ⁷but made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, *and* coming in the likeness of men. ⁸And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself and became obedient to *the point of* death, even the death of the cross. ⁹Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, ¹⁰**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,** ¹¹**and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ *is* Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**

Our Outward Good Works are the Result of God's Inward Work

¹²Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; ¹³for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for *His* good pleasure.

Marks of a Good Witness

¹⁴Do all things without complaining and disputing, ¹⁵that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, ¹⁶holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.

Paul's Life Is an Offering to God

¹⁷Yes, and if I am being poured out *as a drink offering* on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. ¹⁸For the same reason you also be glad and rejoice with me.

The Example of Timothy

¹⁹But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state. ²⁰For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state. ²¹For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus. ²²But you know his proven character, that as a son with *his* father he served with me in the gospel. ²³Therefore I hope to send him at once, as soon as I see how it goes with me. ²⁴But I trust in the Lord that I myself shall also come shortly.

The Example of Epaphroditus

²⁵Yet I considered it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need; ²⁶since he was longing for you all, and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. ²⁷For indeed he was sick almost unto death; but God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. ²⁸Therefore I sent him the more eagerly, that when you see him again you may rejoice, and I may be less sorrowful. ²⁹Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness, and hold such men in esteem; ³⁰because for the work of Christ he came close to death, not regarding his life, to supply what was lacking in your service toward me.

Chapter 3

Rejoice

¹Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you *is* not tedious, but for you *it is* safe.

Warning against Ritualism

²Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation! ³For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, ⁴though I also might have confidence in the flesh.

God's Righteousness Is Far Superior to Any Other Righteousness

If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: ⁵circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, *of* the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; ⁶concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. ⁷But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. ⁸Yet 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 ⁹and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which *is* from the law, but that which *is* through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; ¹⁰**that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death,** ¹¹**if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.**

Perseverance

¹²Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. ¹³Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing *I do*, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, ¹⁴I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. ¹⁶Nevertheless, to *the degree* that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind.

Follow Those Who Have a Heavenly Mindset

¹⁷Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. ¹⁸For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, *that they are* the enemies of the cross of Christ: ¹⁹whose end *is* destruction, whose god *is their* belly, and *whose* glory *is* in their shame—who set their mind on earthly things. ²⁰**For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ,** ²¹who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

Chapter 4

¹Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved.

Encouragement to Unity

²I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. ³And I urge you also, true companion [possibly an unnamed leader acting as pastor of the church], help these women who labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names *are* in the Book of Life.

Keeping a Right Attitude

⁴**Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!**

⁵Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord *is* at hand.

⁶Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; ⁷and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

Staying Focused

⁸Finally, 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. ⁹The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the God of peace will be with you.

Thank You for Your Support

¹⁰But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again; though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity. ¹¹Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: ¹²I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

¹³**I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.**

¹⁴Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress. ¹⁵Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. ¹⁶For even in Thessalonica you sent *aid* once and again for my necessities. ¹⁷Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account. ¹⁸Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things *sent* from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God. ¹⁹**And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.**

Final Words

²⁰Now to our God and Father *be* glory forever and ever. Amen.

²¹Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you. ²²All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar's household.

²³The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

Conclusions

The book of Philippians reminds us of some essential Christian qualities we need both as individuals and as a congregation.

1. **Partnership or Fellowship** in the gospel Christians today often see themselves as isolated disciples of Jesus Christ. Churches see themselves as competing with each other. Philippians shows us a better way. We all have a common experience with the gospel, so we should pray for one another, encourage one another, and support one another in times of need with our resources, as did Paul and the Philippians.

2. **Unity** between Christians is another closely related idea. Paul talks about “being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind” (2:2). We followers of Jesus need to strive for unity in a spirit of humility and unselfishness. Personal differences should be suppressed for the greater cause of the gospel. Selfish ambition ought to be rejected and replaced with the unpretentious attitude of Christ. A fragmented and polarized world needs the witness that the unity of believers in Jesus Christ can provide.

3. **The joy of the Lord** is one of the clearest marks of a true Christian. It is contagious. It conquers circumstances. It communicates contentment. It comes from God Himself. Joy is not a superficial happiness or a sentimental feeling. Joy is an abiding confidence in God. Joy is found in a deep enthusiasm for life and an anticipation of God’s triumph. The joy Paul encourages in us is fueled by Christ’s power and His presence in our lives. Further, joy reflects a genuine excitement for the reality of the gospel.

4. **Single-minded commitment to Jesus Christ** identifies Christ’s disciples. Their very purpose of life is to know Christ and to make Him known. All other achievements and accomplishments pale into insignificance in comparison with knowing Him. It is the highest of all privileges to have fellowship with Jesus Christ, to share Him with others, to reflect His character, and to honor His name – even to bear suffering for His sake.

Finally

Being a Christian is an honor, but it comes with the greatest of all responsibilities. Our relationship with the Lord ought to be our highest priority in life. It may seem like an ever increasing demand, but that is because God is removing the “us” from us. He is emptying us, much the way Christ emptied Himself on our behalf when He came to this earth ultimately to go to the cross. The end result of such a submitted relationship to our heavenly Father, however, is to experience Christ’s complete sufficiency and absolute supply.

Someday every knee will bow and every tongue will confess along with us that: **Jesus Christ is Lord!**

Amen.