

Philippians 1

What can we learn from Paul?

- I. We should develop close friendships with other believers. 1:1-8
- II. We should pray for one another. 1:9-11
- III. We should be on the lookout for opportunities to serve. 1:12-18
- IV. We should maintain an eternal perspective. 1:19-26
- V. We should let our beliefs make a difference in our behavior. 1:27-30

- I. We should develop close friendships with other believers. 1:1-8

Notice the kind of relationship Paul has with the believers in Philippi.

1:3 He is constantly thanking God for them.

1:4 He prays for them with joy.

1:5 They had continuing partnership or fellowship in the gospel. It had probably been about 10 years since Paul first came to Philippi the church got started.

1:6 We'll talk more about this verse at the end.

1:7 As he sits there in Rome, chained to a soldier, his heart feels a deep connection with the believers in Philippi.

Defense in this case is *apologia*, meaning "a verbal defense, a reasoned statement or argument." (Thayer)

1:8 He greatly longs for them. We might say that he misses them, because their friendship is so very close.

Every Christian needs close Christian friendships – the kind of friendships that are based upon a shared relationship with Jesus Christ. Are there other Christians that you long to see the way Paul longed to see the Christians at Philippi? His love and affection for them was based partly on past experiences, but also upon the unity that comes when believers draw together upon Christ's love. All Christians share a deep family relationship, so we should rightly have a deep brotherly love for fellow Christians. Be sure to open yourself up to close friendships with other believers in Jesus Christ.

Illustration: Text from JB this morning – one word: "moron". But I can feel the love.

II. We should pray for one another.

1:9-11

- A. Paul prayed that the Philippians would have love leading both to spiritual insight and moral purity.
- B. 1:10 **approve the things that are excellent** So that we can know what is best.
 - i. Robertson points out that “the first step is to distinguish between good and evil and that is not always easy in our complex civilization.”
 - ii. We may not always know what is best, but one thing is clear – Paul thinks there is often a best – an excellence – that we should be able to get to know.
 - iii. D.A. Carson: “What is immediately clear ... is that Paul’s prayer spells the death of entrenched mediocrity, of smug self-satisfaction, of contentment with our own excuses.”
- C. Love will act in discernment based on growing knowledge. This is very different from an emotion passes for love in some circles, which typically acts impulsively and shallowly. This is discerning and knowledgeable love – **leading to v.11**

III. We should be on the lookout for opportunities to serve.

1:12-18

We should learn several things from this section.

- A. **Opportunities to share the gospel may come from hardships.** Difficult situations cry out for good news. The gospel is good news. Hardships may give us opportunities to share the gospel. Paul was even encouraged when the gospel was preached with wrong motives.
- B. **Problems can open up opportunities for service.** Problems usually mean that there are needs. Needs offer opportunities for needs to be met. God may want to use you to meet those needs. Meeting needs means you have opportunities for service.
- C. **God can use discouraging situations to bring glory to Himself.** Let’s face it: Being imprisoned would cause many people to become bitter or to give up, but not Paul. His chains became one more opportunity to spread the Good News of Christ. Those years in Roman custody merely helped define the boundaries of his ministry for that time. For example, he reached out to the Roman soldiers who made up the palace guard and, by doing so, he encouraged those Christians who were afraid of persecution. We should do the same thing with our own limitations. They don’t have to prevent us from serving the Lord; they can simply define the boundaries of our ministry.

- IV. We should maintain an eternal perspective. 1:19-26
- A. 1:19 & 25-26 Paul is confident that he will be released from this imprisonment (or more accurately “house arrest”) in Rome – in part, because he knows the Philippians are praying for him.
 - B. Still, this is a man who has the best possible outlook on life. His priorities are in the best possible place.
 - i. Read verse 21 again. Can we say that? I really don’t think that I can.
 - ii. 1:23-24 He would rather die than live, because he longs to be with Christ, but he sees that a longer life would mean more opportunity for ministry. This is an outlook worth imitating.
- V. We should let our beliefs make a difference in our behavior. 1:27-30
- A. Whatever we do, we should think of it in light of the gospel. The Philippians were a suffering church, just as Paul was acquainted with suffering for his faith.
 - B. Paul’s big concern for them was that in the midst of their trials they would continue to bring glory to Jesus.

Finally: A few words about Philippians 1:6

God is intimately involved in our spiritual growth. Spiritual growth is not something we do on our own. Take sneak peek ahead at **Phil 2:13**.

The Holy Spirit within us never stops working. When we receive Christ by faith, the Holy Spirit comes to reside within us. From that moment, the Holy Spirit begins a lifelong process of change, drawing us into a close personal relationship with God and making us more like Christ. The God who began a good work in us continues it throughout our lifetime and will finish it when we meet him face to face.

God will keep working regardless of our circumstances or our ability to see Him at work. Sometimes in the midst of trials we feel as though we aren’t making progress in our spiritual life. Maybe you feel incomplete, unfinished, or distressed by your shortcomings. Remember God’s promise and provision. Remember that when God starts a good work, he completes it! He promises to finish the work he has begun. Paul and the Philippians knew what it was to experience trouble. Don’t let your present condition rob you of the joy of knowing Christ or keep you from growing closer to him.

Second Peter 3:13-14 NKJV ¹³Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. ¹⁴Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless;