



Philippians

Chapter 1

- Author: The Apostle Paul
- Recipients: The Church at Philippi
 - First church in Europe, in the region of Macedonia in northern Greece
 - Founded by Paul on his second Missionary Journey, AD 51 – predominantly Gentile
- Time and Place of Writing: Most likely during Paul's imprisonment in Rome, AD 61 or 62
- Occasion and Purpose: Acknowledging the generosity of the church, sending Epaphroditus back, urging unity in the body
- Significant Themes:
 - Joy
 - Right Thinking – knowing Christ
 - Holy Living
 - Exaltation of Christ

Background to Philippians

- I. Opening 1:1-11
 - A. Salutation 1:1-2
 - B. Thanksgiving 1:3-8
 - C. Prayer 1:9-11
- II. Paul's Missionary Report 1:12-26
 - A. Paul's Circumstances 1:12-17
 - B. Paul's Attitude 1:18-26
- III. A Call to Sanctification 1:27-2:30
 - A. Christian Citizenship 1:27-2:4
 - B. Christian Humility 2:5-11
 - C. Christian Obedience 2:12-18
- IV. Doctrinal Polemics 3:1-4:1
 - A. Judaizers as the Context for Theology 3:1-6
 - B. The Essence of Pauline Theology 3:7-11
 - C. Practical Theology 3:12-4:1
- V. Final Concerns 4:2-23
 - A. Exhortations 4:2-9
 - B. A Word of Thanks 4:10-20
 - C. Closing 4:21-23

Outline of Philippians

³ I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, ⁴ always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, ⁵ in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now.

- Repetition of words related to prayer: “thank my God”, “offering prayer”, “in my every prayer” – even “remembrance” is used to designate prayer elsewhere in Paul’s writing
- Paul shows his true affection and concern for the Philippians. Who would you start a letter (email, text, etc.?) to with similar language?
- Paul is specific in his appreciation for the church members, focusing on their participation in the gospel from the beginning, and their continued faithfulness.
- “Participation” = koinonia (fellowship, communion). Emphasizes the close relationship between Paul and the believers in Philippi – but not just for the sake of the relationship itself, but because they were united in serving God through advancing the gospel.

Thanksgiving (Phil 1:3-5)

⁶ For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus. ⁷ For it is only right for me to feel this way about you all, because I have you in my heart, since both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers of grace with me. ⁸ For God is my witness, how I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.

- Paul expresses confidence, but ultimately that confidence is in the Lord who is doing the work in them. He knows it is right (good, righteous) to have such confidence because it is not in himself or in them, but in the Lord and in His promises.
- Paul is already expressing one of his main points, to persevere and be joyful in the midst of trials and suffering. In this case, he is reminding them that it is God who is working in them, and that He will always complete His work.
- “Partakers” = *synkoinōnous* (syn = with, koinōnous = sharer) Further emphasis of their fellowship in the gospel of grace
- Paul continues to show his heart for the Philippians: “I have you in my heart”, “I long for you all with the affection of Christ.” This is a very personal letter, full of warmth.

Thanksgiving (Phil 1:6-8)

⁹ And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, ¹⁰ so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; ¹¹ having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which *comes* through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

- Here Paul shifts from talking *about* his praying for them to the actual prayer that he offers on their behalf.
- He is not praying for their temporal well-being, but for abounding love, knowledge and discernment, for them to be “sincere and blameless”, and ultimately for God’s glory.
- “Knowledge” = *epignosis* (recognition, perception) and “Discernment” = *aisthēsis* (insight, understanding – practical application of knowledge)
- The central focus of Paul’s concern is *knowledge that cultivates love*. Paul regards knowledge without love as having no value (1 Cor 13:2), but he also does not call for a mindless love. Our growth in knowledge of the Lord and of His Word should lead to greater love for all.
- The most important thing in their conduct and sanctification is that the Lord receives glory and praise.

Prayer (Phil 1:9-11)

¹² Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel, ¹³ so that my imprisonment in *the cause of Christ* has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else, ¹⁴ and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear.

- Paul sets the report of his circumstances in the same context that he wrote in Romans 8:28 – all things work together for good for God’s people and for His glory.
- Paul went out of his way to make sure that the Philippians did not grow overly concerned about him.
- He emphasizes that the gospel did not simply go forth *in spite of* his imprisonment, but specifically *because of it*. Truly, what men meant for evil – to oppose the gospel – God meant for good (see Genesis 50:20).
- Speaking the Word of God is part of living out the Gospel in every Christian’s life – “most of the brethren” have been bold to speak the word without fear.

Paul’s Circumstances (Phil 1:12-14)

¹⁵ Some, to be sure, are preaching Christ even from envy and strife, but some also from good will; ¹⁶ the latter *do it* out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel; ¹⁷ the former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition rather than from pure motives, thinking to cause me distress in my imprisonment.

- Those people preaching Christ out of selfish ambition were not anti-Christ, they were anti-Paul. The gospel they preached was true and led to the salvation of many, and for that, Paul rejoiced in spite of what it meant for himself. Compare his attitude toward the Judaizers, who were preaching a different gospel, in Galatians 1:8-9.
- Paul understood his calling (“I am appointed – literally, ‘set in place’ – for the defense of the gospel”), as he described in Galatians 1:15-16:
 - ¹⁵ But when God, who had set me apart *even* from my mother’s womb and called me through His grace, was pleased ¹⁶ to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles...

Paul’s Circumstances (Phil 1:15-17)

¹⁸ What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice, ¹⁹ for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, ²⁰ according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I will not be put to shame in anything, but *that* with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.

- Paul rejoices that Christ is proclaimed, whatever the motivation of those preaching. Our responsibility is to be faithful to God's calling on our lives, the motivations of others are His concern.
- Paul uses several terms related to salvation: deliverance, hope, not be put to shame – it's possible that the deliverance he is expecting could have been physical deliverance from prison, but more likely he is referring to spiritual deliverance in the exaltation of Christ.
- Paul speaks of the means by which God will provide that deliverance, focusing on the prayers of the saints and the work of the Holy Spirit. Ultimately, salvation is a singular work of God, but our prayers for one another have spiritual impact as the Spirit works in the lives of God's people.

Paul's Attitude (Phil 1:18-20)

²¹ For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. ²² But if *I am* to live *on* in the flesh, this *will mean* fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose. ²³ But I am hard-pressed from both *directions*, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, for *that* is very much better; ²⁴ yet to remain on in the flesh is more necessary for your sake.

- Paul's teaching here appears to be a departure from OT teaching that regarded deliverance from physical death to be a sign of God's blessing and protection, while death was often an indication of being put to shame. Yet, Paul states a clear preference to depart and be with the Lord, calling it "better."
- "Hard-pressed" = *synchomai* (distressed) – Luke 12:50
- Paul is laying bare his conflicted feelings, his personal preference to depart, and his recognition that remaining in this life is more necessary for the sake of the Church – and also for the glory of the Lord.
- Paul is laying out the principle of considering others before yourself, which he expands in the next chapter. In chapter 2, Jesus chose death for the benefit of those whom He would save. In this chapter, Paul chooses life for the benefit of the Philippians.

Paul's Attitude (Phil 1:21-24)

²⁵ Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith, ²⁶ so that your proud confidence in me may abound in Christ Jesus through my coming to you again.

- Although Paul had just expressed a personal desire to depart this life to be with the Lord, here he reassures the Philippians that not only does he intend to continue living and ministering, but that he expects to return to them again.
- “Remain and continue” = meno kai parameno – abide and continue alongside, with the goal being their progress and joy in the faith. Once again, Paul shows his other-focused attitude.
- “Proud confidence” = kauchēma, (boasting, grounds for glorying). Elsewhere, Paul admonishes his readers to boast only in the Lord (1 Cor 1:31, quoting from Jeremiah 9:23-24) and not in men (1 Cor 3:21). Proper “boasting” in the Lord is to proclaim His great character and the marvelous things He has done. Proper “boasting” in people, both here and in other places (2 Cor 5:12; 7:4; 8:24; 9:3) should always be about what God has done and is doing in those other people.

Paul's Attitude (Phil 1:25-26)