



MEMORY VERSE:
"I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns. Philippians 1: 6

Philippians Lesson 1 God Is Working In Your Life Philippians 1:1-26

Paul's Thanksgiving and Prayer – Philippians 1:1-11

1. a. Paul wrote this letter to the church of Philippi when he was under house arrest in Rome. Timothy was visiting Paul. What did Paul call the 2 of them? vs. 1 _____
- b. What do you think being a slave/servant to God means?

- c. To whom is Paul writing? vs. 1 _____
- d. If you have prayed and asked Jesus to come into your heart and be your Savior, then in God's eyes you are a **saint** and **holy** and belong to Jesus. Read the definition of these 2 words in your Dictionary. How does this change the way you look at yourself?

- e. What did Paul ask God to give these believers? vs. 2 _____
- f. Read the definitions of **grace** and **peace** in your Dictionary. How would more of these gifts from God help you today? _____
- g. Paul gives thanks for the Philippian Christians who supported him and partnered with him in spreading the gospel. Do you have people in your life that support you and pray for you? Do you have people you support and pray for? Share. _____
- h. How does encouraging and praying for one another build solid, lasting friendships?

- i. What was Paul confident or certain of? vs. 6 _____
- j. When God starts a project, He completes it! God began his work in us when we first accepted Jesus and will continue until we die, or Christ returns. God's goal is for our attitudes and actions to become more and more like Jesus and we have the Holy Spirit living in us to help us. What attitudes and actions do you need the Holy Spirit's help with today? _____
2. a. What does Paul pray for them? vs. 9 _____
- b. Paul wanted them to overflow with a love based on who Christ is and what Christ had done for them. How do you see this kind of love being different than love that is based on feelings?

- c. Read verse 10. How can you live a "pure and blameless" life? Also see John 15:4; Ephesians 4:23; James 4:7.

- d. Paul used the words "best," "pure," and "blameless" to describe the way we should be. Why do you think he didn't use words like "adequate," "fair," and "just good enough"?

- e. What does Paul want us to be filled with? Why? vs. 11

- f. What is "the righteous character produced in your life by Jesus Christ"? See **fruit of righteousness/salvation/spirit**.

- g. What does this mean to you? _____

Paul's Chains Advance the Gospel – Philippians 1:12-26

3. a. What has Paul being in prison helped? vs.12 _____
b. Define **gospel/Good News**. _____
c. How has Paul's situation helped other believers? vs. 14 _____
d. Why are they preaching? vs. 15 _____
e. Either way, why is Paul rejoicing? vs. 18 _____
f. Paul was assuring the Philippians that the true gospel was still being spread even if some were spreading it for the wrong reasons. If Paul's imprisonment could not hinder the gospel, neither could the wrong motives of some. God's work was still getting done, and that was cause for rejoicing. What does Isaiah 55:11 tell you? _____
g. How might this change your thinking about how some Christians share their faith? (TV, other churches...) _____
h. How can Paul's circumstances and attitude encourage you? _____
4. a. What does Paul know and expect? vs. 19-20 _____
b. As Paul's trial approached he knew he might be close to death, but he trusted God either way. Write verse 21. _____
c. Paul said, "*for to me living means ...*" How would most people you know finish that line? How would you? _____
d. Paul said, "*and dying is...*" How would most people you know finish that line? How would you? _____
e. Because Paul was ready to die, he was ready to live. Because he belonged to Christ and was confident of his eternal destination (heaven), he could live his life on earth doing what God called him to do. Paul made the most of each day here on earth. What can you learn from this? _____
f. Paul had a purpose for living: telling others about Christ, serving and encouraging others, and boldly proclaiming Christ through his life (words and actions). What do you think God wants you to be doing for Him—today, this year? _____
g. How can Jesus be magnified through something hard you are going through right now? _____

SO WHAT? – Philippians 1:1-26

5. a. What did you learn from Paul's letter this week? _____
b. How will what you learned this week help your walk with God? _____



ACTION: This week, write someone an encouraging note.

CHALLENGE: We are to tell others about Christ and represent Him in everything we do. What message are your words and actions telling others about Jesus?



Lesson 1

God Is Working In Your Life

Philippians 1:1-26

Philippians is often called the “Joy Book” of the New Testament. Though Paul wrote from prison, he uses the word joy or rejoice 16 times. He did not depend on his surroundings to be joyful, but on his Savior. Paul lifts Christ up. He lets us look at His beauty and claim His power. In this letter to his friends at Philippi, Paul reports on his circumstances, thanks them for their continuing financial support, and encourages the Philippian believers to live victoriously. God chose Paul to take the good news about Jesus to the Gentiles. A Jew with rabbinic training, Paul spoke Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic. His meeting with the risen Christ (Acts 9) changed his life, and he became the greatest missionary the world has ever known. Paul received good news by divine revelation, and his job was to tell others. The word gospel (Greek evangelion, “good news”) is used here seven times. He also speaks repeatedly of fellowship. Paul wrote his letters from A.D. 50 to A.D. 62. Scholars date this letter at around A.D. 60. Paul does not say from which prison he writes, but the best evidence pinpoints his house arrest in Rome. He apparently felt his martyrdom might be coming soon as he awaited Caesar’s decision on his fate. He did not know what his future held when he wrote, but he faced life or death victoriously “in Christ.”

On Paul’s first missionary journey for the early church, Barnabas and John Mark accompanied him. At the start of Paul’s second journey, he and Barnabas disagreed and went their separate ways (Acts 15:36-40). Barnabas and John Mark traveled to Cyprus; Paul took Silas with him through Syria, Cilicia, Derbe, and then Lystra. Timothy joined them at Lystra (Acts 16:1-3). Following two unsuccessful attempts to go into Asia Minor, Paul had a vision: a Macedonian man begged him to “come over to Macedonia and help us” (Acts 16:6-10). At Troas, Luke (a Greek medical doctor who later wrote both the gospel that bears his name, and Acts, the historical record of the church’s birth and early growth) joined the group. From Troas, they sailed to Philippi, “a Roman colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia” (Acts 16:11-12). Paul and his group went out to the riverside on the Sabbath. Roman law required all religious groups not officially recognized by the government to meet outside the city gates. The group there included Lydia, a successful businesswoman from Thyatira. She and her household were Paul’s first converts in Philippi church. In his final remarks in his letter to Rome, Paul mentions Phoebe, Priscilla, Mary, Tryphena and Tryphosa, Persis, Julia, and Nereus’s sister (Romans 16). Paul eagerly accepted them as fellow workers in God’s kingdom. The Christian church, and Paul in particular, elevated and dignified the position of women.

The lifestyle Jesus modeled is one of giving up rights and privileges, and of accepting hardship, misunderstanding, and rejection. Yet Jesus did not go around looking sad. He was honest, and loving — and He attracted all kinds of people as He gave of Himself. We too are called to be gracious, loving, and hopeful, for no matter what our present troubles are, we have a glorious future awaiting us. When we have to sacrifice time, convenience, or personal gain for the sake of the gospel, let us do so as Jesus did, with grace and good humor. We will never carry any cross that compares with His. But when we are called to a difficult sacrifice, we know we are not alone. And we never face any trial alone because He is with us. His words about life give us courage and confidence: “In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world” (John 16:33b). Believe Him, and act on your belief.

Paul begins not with the title apostle but with servant (doulos), acknowledging that he belongs to Jesus Christ as a slave bought with His blood. Paul calls his readers “all the saints [hagioi] in Christ Jesus at Philippi” (1:1). The Greek word *hagioi*, saints, is from the word *hagios*, holy. The Hebrew *kadosh* and the Greek *hagios* mean “to set apart for a specific purpose.” In both the Old and the New Testaments, the words mean something set apart for God’s specific purpose. Paul’s greeting to the Philippian Christians is one he often used: “Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (1:2). The word grace (Greek *charis*) means joy, beauty, pleasure. God’s grace makes it possible for every Christian to have these traits. The word peace, from the Greek word *eirene* (Hebrew *shalom*), implies the total well-being of a person, community, or nation. The biblical idea of “peace” is more than the mere cessation of war; it means harmony, stability, and serenity. It is God’s intense desire that Christians live healthy, happy lives in harmony with Him, with other people, and within themselves.

Paul’s joy is based on knowing God will continue to work in and through the Philippians until what He began is completed. He could write joyful prayers for he has learned to trust God. During his imprisonment in Rome, the Philippians sent help; they were kind to Paul and his helpers from the beginning. Paul’s first convert, Lydia, welcomed his team into her home (Acts 16:15). When Paul exorcised a Greek girl, her owners incited a riot and Paul and Silas were jailed. At midnight, they were singing hymns when an earthquake shook the prison and freed them from their chains. The jailer was about to take his own life because the Romans would kill him if any prisoner escaped. Paul reassured him that the prisoners were still there, and before morning, the jailer’s entire family was baptized. The magistrates learned Paul was a Roman citizen, came to the prison, apologized, and asked Paul and Silas to leave

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the city. After a visit to Lydia's house to encourage the new Christians, they went to Thessalonica (see Acts 16). After such troubles, some new converts might have been tempted to draw back. But these new converts stood firm; they sent funds to Paul twice when he was in Thessalonica (Philippians 4:16) and likely joined other Macedonian churches in contributing to the common fund for relief of the Jerusalem Christians. The ties between Paul and the church at Philippi were close. During his long stay at Ephesus, he sent Timothy to the Macedonian churches. Acts 20:1-2 reports that Paul visited these churches, including Philippi, on his way to Corinth. After Corinth and a journey north, he again visited Philippi and spent the Passover season there before his last journey to Jerusalem (Acts 20:6). Paul had confidence in the Philippians ability to endure and mature because he had confidence that God would complete every good work the Philippian believers began.

In 1:9-11, Paul tells the Philippians he wants their love to keep growing, along with reasonable knowledge (epignosis) and keen perception (aisthesis), so they might discover the highest and best for their lives. This prayer gives profound insight into what the Philippians needed in their lives, and what is needed in the lives of all believers. Love without knowledge and insight can be mere sentimentality, while knowledge and insight without love can be arrogant and harsh. In Acts 28, Luke describes Paul's house arrest in Rome; though chained to a guard, Paul could still have visitors and share the good news of Jesus Christ. Here we learn of Paul's opportunity to preach and teach in jail. The Praetorian guards had great influence on both upper and lower-class people. Imagine what Paul's consistent preaching and teaching and "living out the message" did to this elite group who were handcuffed to him. His imprisonment actually helped "to advance the gospel" (1:12). He uses the Greek word *prokope*, advancement on a way, like the forward movement of a powerful army tank that paves the way for foot soldiers to move ahead. God Himself had laid out the best strategy for His servant Paul — imprisonment in Rome under house arrest. Daily for two years the guards heard Paul's preaching (see Acts 28:30-31), and many became Christians. God's unusual plan strengthened Paul's fellow believers. Their courage grew, and they preached the gospel wherever they were.

Paul wrote or dictated many of his New Testament writings while in a tough situation — behind prison bars. God works in surprising ways — even today. Paul writes that some jealous people preach more to annoy him than to honor Christ. Yet to him the important thing is that Christ is being preached. How could he be so calm about this? Why is his present attitude so unlike that in other situations? In Corinth, Jewish converts questioned his authority. They believed they must keep certain parts of the Jewish law, along with having faith in Christ. Paul rebuked them because they were listening to people who preached a different Jesus and a different gospel, which produced a different spirit (2 Corinthians 11:4). Paul was not reacting because of pride or ego, but because his authority came from God. Paul's letter to the Galatians reflects a similar situation. Galatia had four small Jewish-Gentile communities of believers (see Acts 13-14). The Judaizers there were teaching that Gentile converts, in order to be "real" Christians, must also be circumcised and keep certain parts of the Jewish law.

This teaching was contrary to Jesus' own preaching and to the whole theme of the gospel. The future of the church depended on stamping out this heresy that Christ's death on the cross for sin was not sufficient. But in Philippi, Paul's rivals preached the same gospel he preached, so he stayed calm. Paul's concern was not with purity of motive but with purity of message. In the Bible, the word *soteria* (shalom in the Old Testament) means the salvation of the human soul that guarantees the saved person a place in heaven. It means the safety of the whole being — physical, spiritual, and emotional, and the health and happiness of both present and future life. Paul's joy also came from his trusting that he would exalt Christ whether he lived or died. Paul's reason for living was to show Christ to the world. Thus he could say: "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain" (1:21). To die meant being with the Lord. Paul's life was only a pale shadow of the reality of being in the presence of God Himself (see Romans 8:22-23; 2 Corinthians 5:1-2). Paul's own life reflects his advice to Timothy: "Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage — with great patience and careful instruction" (2 Timothy 4:2). As long as Paul lived, he would speak the truth, honoring Christ with his words and his life, confident that he would have the courage to live or die in a way that honored Him. Paul uses the Greek word *synechomai*, which describes a ship going through a narrow canal. He is "torn between" (1:23) two desires: to depart from this world and be with Christ and to remain in the flesh for others' sake. To depart to be with the Lord would be to enjoy total freedom, relieved of the burden of life on earth but Paul is convinced he will remain for the sake of the believers he teaches.

Chained to a Roman guard, Paul tried to convince his guards as well as his beloved Philippians of God's ever-relevant truth: "Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner [politeuo] worthy of the gospel of Christ" (1:27). The Greek word *politeuo* means to be a citizen. Worthy (Greek *haxios*) means of equal value. Being a Roman citizen was a great privilege. The Philippian church surely had vivid memories of Paul's first stay, when he and Silas were beaten and jailed without a trial. When the authorities wanted to release them quietly, Paul said he was a Roman citizen who had been unjustly jailed and he demanded proper treatment. The alarmed magistrates personally "came to appease them" and asked them to leave the city (Acts 16:37-39). Just as Roman citizens had both privileges and obligations, so do citizens of heaven, says Paul. He urges the Philippians to live worthy lives, encouraging them not to be afraid of their enemies. Their ability to stand firm, their unity, and their lack of fear will be a sign to those who oppose them. Proper Christian behavior validates one's Christian witness; it shows that the Christian will be saved and the opposition will be destroyed. Finally, when Paul says suffering for the sake of Christ is a privilege, he is echoing what Christ said in Matthew 5:10-12: when we suffer for the gospel's sake, we are blessed.