



PHILIPPIANS 1 LIVE FOR CHRIST

Introduction

As Paul wrote his epistle to the Philippians, he was imprisoned and chained at the wrist to a Roman soldier. He had done nothing to break the law — he had simply preached the gospel of Christ. His circumstances were definitely not joyful. How then does this beautiful little epistle come to be filled with such joy? The secret is found in the very first chapter. Paul did not live for his own comfort, pleasure, or advancement. He was a single-minded man with but one joy and goal, and that was Christ. Paul lived, not for Paul, but for Christ. Because of that, he viewed his circumstances differently than an ordinary man might. He did not grumble, complain, or even show any regret concerning his imprisonment. Paul saw his circumstances as ordained by God to further the spread of the gospel and to glorify Christ. So Paul rejoiced!

The tone for the epistle is set in the first chapter. It is personal, joyful, loving, encouraging, and centered on Christ. Paul lived for Christ and that is the theme he sets forth in Chapter 1.

OUTLINE OF PHILIPPIANS 1

- I. Greeting - Philippians 1:1-5
- II. Live in Confidence - Philippians 1:6-7
- III. Live in Love - Philippians 1:8-11
- IV. Live Above Circumstances - Philippians 1:12-26
- V. Live in a Worthy Manner - Philippians 1:27-30

I. Greeting - Philippians 1:1-5

Paul begins by introducing himself as the writer and naming the church at Philippi as his recipients.

- A. From servants - Philippians 1:1a

Paul includes Timothy's name in sending this epistle, as the Philippians also knew and loved Timothy. However, as explained in the introductory lesson, Timothy was not a coauthor, although he supported Paul both physically and emotionally in sending this letter. Paul describes them both as servants of Christ. They had found freedom in Christ and now willingly served him as the Lord of their lives.

- B. To the saints - Philippians 1:1b-5

The word *saints* means literally "those who are separated

or set apart." *Saints in Christ Jesus* would signify believers, those who were part of the church at Philippi. Paul also made special mention of the *bishops* (literally overseers) and *deacons*. Bishops would have been the elders of the church, the ones who were responsible for shepherding the flock. Deacons were leaders who had been appointed to special roles of service within the church. Paul opened his epistle with special words of blessing and encouragement to all.

- 1. Grace and Peace - 1:2

These are spiritual blessings which are bestowed by God through the Lord Jesus Christ.

- 2. Remembering - 1:3-5

With a heart overflowing with gratitude, Paul encouraged his readers with his *remembrance* of them.

- a. He remembered them with thanksgiving - 1:3

Paul thanked God every time he remembered the Philippians and prayed for them. Thanksgiving should be a part of every prayer, giving glory to God for His grace toward us. Do you begin every prayer by thanking God for the blessings He has extended to you?

- b. He remembered them in prayer - 1:4

Paul interceded for the Philippians, taking their needs before the throne of grace. Who do you pray for regularly? How often do you speak to the Lord on behalf of your friends and their spiritual needs?

- c. He remembered them with joy - 1:4

"Intercession is not a burden to be borne but an exercise of the soul to be performed with joy" (The Wycliff Bible Commentary, Moody Press). Paul found joy in interceding for others. This is the first mention of joy in the epistle and we find it to be a key word throughout. Is there someone you find particular joy in praying for?

- d. He remembered their *fellowship* - 1:5

Fellowship is the Greek word "koinonia" which comes from a verb meaning "to have in common." Paul's fellowship with the Philippians had Christ in common. They shared Christ and all His blessings. They also shared the blessings bestowed upon them with one

another. Paul had shared the gospel with the Philippians and they had shared their love, concern, and material blessings with him.

II. Live in Confidence - Philippians 1:6-7

Paul was confident that his fellowship with the Philippians would continue. All believers can have the same confidence which Paul expresses in these verses.

A. *He who has begun a good work in you will complete it* - Philippians 1:6

It is God who began the good work of salvation within you. You were *dead in trespasses and sins* and *you He made alive* (Ephesians 2:1). *For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them* (Ephesians 2:8-10). God planned the good work beforehand. He began the good work in you, and He will be faithful to complete what He has begun. As a believer, you can look forward with confidence knowing that God's good work of salvation in you will be completed on the day of Jesus Christ, the day of His second coming. *So that you come short of no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, who will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ* (1 Corinthians 1:7-8).

B. All are partakers of grace - Philippians 1:7

Paul had good reason for his confidence. The Philippians had found a place in his heart because they had lovingly demonstrated the reality of their faith through their sympathy and kindness toward him and their defense of the gospel. He saw living proof of the good work God had begun and was continuing in their lives. Paul's beloved Philippians were definitely fellow partakers of the grace of God. How does your life display the grace of God?

III. Live in Love - Philippians 1:8-11

In these verses, we see Paul's love for the Philippians expressed in a longing and a prayer for them.

A. Paul's longing for the Philippians - Philippians 1:8

Paul writes that God is his witness concerning his attitude toward the Philippians. They could not know what was in his heart, but God did. God knew that Paul loved the Philippians with Christ's love. His longing was not his own personal emotion, but Christ's longing, as

though Christ's heart were Paul's heart. Whom do you love with the affection of Jesus Christ?

B. Paul's prayer for the Philippians - Philippians 1:9-11

In verse 4, Paul had revealed that he found joy in praying for the Philippians. Beginning in verse 9, we see how Paul prayed for them.

1. *That your love may abound* - 1:9

Love must not become stagnant, but continue to grow. The word Paul uses, *abound*, means literally "to overflow". Are you so filled with Christ's love that it overflows on those around you? That is the kind of love that Paul had in mind. He did not promote blind or ignorant love, but love rooted in knowledge of God and an understanding of the ways of God.

2. *Approve the things that are excellent* - 1:10a

Paul desires his readers to be discerning of what is best, testing all things to be sure they meet God's perfect standard. It is a mistake to be sidetracked by the good at the expense of missing out on the excellent.

3. *Be sincere and without offense* - 1:10b

Paul's prayer is that believers may BE what they SEEM, being pure, honest and upright of heart. There must be no hypocrisy in the Christian life. Hypocrisy is an offense because it causes others to stumble. Christians must be examples of all that is excellent.

4. *Filled with the fruits of righteousness* - 1:11

Paul lists the fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23. These are undoubtedly the fruits he had in mind as he prayed for the Philippians: *Love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control*. These fruits come through Jesus Christ and are for the purpose of glorifying God, never for one's own glory.

IV. Live Above Circumstances - Philippians 1:12-26

Paul shows how to live above the circumstances by his own inspiring illustration. The Philippians were concerned about Paul's imprisonment and how that would affect the spread of the gospel. Paul shows that his ministry was not set back by his imprisonment, but rather propelled forward. "Paul's obstacle became His pulpit" (Henrietta Mears, What The Bible Is All About). What obstacle is facing you which God might turn into a pulpit?

A. Paul's example - Philippians 1:12-18

1. His imprisonment - 1:12-18a

Paul was under house arrest in his own rented quarters, guarded by a Roman soldier at all times. The custom was for a prisoner's wrist to be chained to a soldier.

a. Witness to all - 1:12-13

As a result of Paul's imprisonment, the whole palace guard was hearing about Christ. Paul preached Christ to everyone who came in contact with him. The whole city was learning that Paul was not in confinement for breaking the law, but for the cause of Christ. Paul's chains proclaimed Christ.

b. Encouragement to brethren - 1:14-18a

Paul's imprisonment also gave courage to those who had been timid about preaching the gospel. They saw that Paul's prison experience was having positive results and that gave them boldness to speak up for Christ. They were also encouraged by Paul's attitude in prison. It was obvious that he was being supported and strengthened by the Lord. Two kinds of people were encouraged to preach due to Paul's situation.

(1.) Some preached from impure motives, out of envy, rivalry and selfish ambition. They were believers who did not love Paul or support his work. They were not sincere in their preaching, but did it to promote themselves and annoy Paul when he was in a helpless position.

(2.) Others preached from good will, because they loved Christ and loved Paul. They were co-laborers with Paul in defending the gospel.

Paul's reaction to the situation is an example to all. He harbored no envy or resentment. He looked beyond the motives of those who were preaching to the fact that Christ was being preached. Paul did not judge, but left that prerogative to God.

2. His rejoicing - 1:18b

Instead of being resentful and criticizing those with mixed motives, Paul rejoiced that the gospel of Christ was being preached. "If there were some who were holding him down, he was still content within himself... for he sought not advancement but the will of God" (A. W. Tozer, Renewed Day by Day). Do you spend more time complaining about circumstances or rejoicing in Christ?

B. Paul's confidence - Philippians 1:19-21

Paul knew that God can bring good even out of malicious intent. He was convinced that the whole situation, both his imprisonment and the opposition, would turn out for the best. Paul had written earlier in his career, *And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose* (Romans 8:28).

1. In prayer and in the Spirit - 1:19

When Paul writes, *I know that this will turn out for my salvation*, he is not making reference to his deliverance from captivity. He is speaking of salvation in the spiritual sense, the saving work of the gospel as related to his own ministry. Because the Philippians were praying, Paul had confidence that the Holy Spirit would supply all that was needed to fulfill the ministry to which he had been called. Concerning Paul's calling and ministry, see Ephesians 3:1-10.

2. That Christ will be magnified - 1:20

Paul had earnest expectation and hope. The Greek words evoke a picture of one craning his neck and looking with intent anticipation to see into the distance. As he looked ahead, Paul's fervent hope and expectation was that whatever the circumstances, he would have no reason to be ashamed of his actions. Whether he lived or died, he wanted Christ to be magnified through his words and actions. Paul's only concern was that Christ be glorified!

3. Christ - Paul's life - 1:21

Warren Wiersbe in his With the Word Bible Commentary writes that "life is what you are alive to. A sports fan may be tired, but comes alive and wants to attend a sporting event which is taking place. A hungry person comes alive at the mention of food. An avid shopper comes alive at the announcement of a sale. So a Christian must be alive to everything pertaining to Jesus Christ." The apostle Paul was alive to Christ. Christ was the essence of his life — his reason for living. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul had written, *I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me* (2:20). However, Paul did not shrink back from the thought of death. If he were put to death, he would be with Christ and have an even deeper experience of union with Him.

C. Paul's desire - Philippians 1:22-26

1. Paul's quandary - 1:22-23

If he lived there would be more fruit from his labor, but if he died, he would be with Christ. He did not know which was better in his case, although he knew that departing this world and being with Christ was a preferable condition.

2. Paul's ministry - 1:24-26

Paul's utmost desire was to fulfill his ministry. If his life would be of value in ministering to the Philippians, then his desire was to live. In verse 25, he expresses his own personal conviction that he will be released from his chains for the sake of serving those he loves and that they might progress in the faith with joy. He knew they would rejoice in Christ to see him again.

V. Live In a Manner Worthy of the Gospel - Philippians 1:27-30

Whether he saw them again or not, Paul wanted them to live exemplary lives in Christ. He had written to the Ephesians, *Have a walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace* (4:1-3). He had admonished the Colossians to, *Have a walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God* (1:10-11). His message to the Philippians is very similar, adding here that they must *stand fast in one spirit, with one mind* (1:27) even if they suffer (1:29).

A. *Stand fast* - Philippians 1:27 - 28

Paul's call is to stand fast and strive together. The picture is that of an athletic team in the midst of competition, making a joint effort and working in unity of spirit and mind. The unity is necessary because of opposition. As the Philippians stand firm and strive together, they can be confident that they will be delivered and that the opposition will be destroyed. *It is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed* (2 Thessalonians 1:6-7).

B. *Suffer for His sake* - Philippians 1:29-30

Believers have been granted, both to believe in Christ and to suffer for His sake. *Granted* is the Greek word "echaristhe" which is derived from "charis" the word which means grace. The idea Paul desires to put across is that both believing and suffering are associated with God's grace. Both are graciously conferred upon those who are *saints in Christ Jesus* (1:1). M. R. Vincent in Word Studies In The New Testament writes that, "Suffering was the marriage gift when they were espoused to Christ; the bounty when they enlisted in His service."

All believers should expect and welcome the same sort of opposition and conflict Paul experienced. It should be accepted as graciously coming from God. Just as Paul's troubles were working for the furtherance of the gospel, so will be your own suffering, as you walk in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.

Applications

1. Whom do you know who is suffering and needs Christ's love and your prayers? Will you allow Christ's love to overflow through you to comfort and strengthen someone in need? What will you do to show Christ's love to that person (or persons)? What will you pray for them? Will you pray often with joy and thanksgiving?

2. What circumstances in your life are troubling to you right now? Are you standing firm and enduring those circumstances in a manner worthy of the gospel? What reasons can you find for rejoicing in your present trials? Whom can you encourage even though you need encouragement yourself?