

To Live is Christ

Philippians 1

By Scott Huckaby

2/6/2022

**BIG BEND
BIBLE
FELLOWSHIP**

What do we know about the book of Philippians?

- It was written by Paul when he was in a Roman prison around A.D. 61.
- The city of Philippi was a miniature of Rome and had a higher cultural level than other cities visited by Paul.
- The church at Philippi was less Jewish and more Gentile than all others and was the first church established in Europe (Acts 16:6-40). Women occupied a prominent place here; Lydia was the first convert in Europe (Acts 16:12-15). The church was generous in its gifts to the Lord's work.
- This epistle was written to (1) thank the church for their generous support of Paul, and (2) to address the division caused by a misunderstanding between two of the women.
- The key thought of this epistle is joy. It has been labeled "The Secret of Joy." Some form of the word occurs 19 times.

Phil 1:1-11 – Greeting, Thankfulness and Prayer

*Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ,
To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with
the bishops and deacons:*

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

³ I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, ⁴ always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, ⁵ for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, ⁶ being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ; ⁷ just 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. ⁸ For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ.

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

v 1-2 – to whom did Paul write this letter?

The Apostle Paul wrote this letter to his close friends, the Christians in Philippi, from his Roman house arrest described at the end of Acts (Acts 28:30-31) as he waited for his court appearance before Caesar.

- The church in Philippi was founded by Paul some eleven years before this letter on his second missionary journey (Acts 16:11-40).

Who were the saints to whom Paul referred?

All born-again believers in Jesus Christ are saints.

Who were the bishops?

In a general sense, this meant those with leadership responsibilities.

- The ancient Greek word meant overseers and was used to describe general leadership before it came to describe a specific office recognized by some Christian traditions.

Who were the deacons?

Those who had recognized positions of service.

- Churches often use deacons as a leadership team when they are really those who occupy a position of service. It should be a requirement before someone is designated as a deacon that they should specify how they would be serving in the church.

v 3-6 – For what was Paul thankful?

When Paul remembered what all the Philippians did for him, he was extremely thankful. He was naturally grateful to the Philippians, but more so to God who had worked such kindness through the Philippians.

- The Philippians were extremely giving towards Paul, both when he was with them (Acts 16:15, 16:32-34) and when he was apart from them (2 Corinthians 8:1-7, 9:1-4, and 11:9).

What gave Paul joy?

It gave Paul joy when he prayed for the Philippians.

- It is remarkable to see that Paul's first reference to his own feelings or frame of mind in this letter is that of joy – though he wrote from prison and a possible soon execution.

- Fellowship with Christ triumphs over all adverse circumstances. Difficulties drive us closer to God and His people.
- Paul was thankful for the Philippians because they had “partnered” with him in spreading the gospel through their friendship and financial support.

What was the good work that God would complete?

This work in the believer will not be finally complete until the day of Jesus Christ, which in context has the idea of the second coming of Jesus and our resurrection with Him.

Why was Paul so confident of their ultimate resurrection?

It is the nature of God... God completes His works. “Where is there an instance of God’s beginning any work and leaving it incomplete?”

What is the on-going work of God?

The sanctification of His children... The work of grace has its root in the divine goodness of the Father, it is planted by the self-denying goodness of the Son (justification), and it is daily watered by the goodness of the Holy Spirit (sanctification); it springs from good and leads to good, and so is altogether good (glorification).

v7-8 – What was right about Paul’s thankfulness, joy, and desire to pray for the Philippians?

Because they stood beside him in his trials for the gospel, and they received the same grace he did (you all are partakers with me of grace).

How is it Paul had the Philippians in his heart?

Paul was a man of towering intellect, but he was also a man of great heart (emotional attachment).

- He could even call God as his witness regarding his deep affection for them.

How is it Paul could cite God as his witness for having the Philippians in his heart?

God knows all, even the genuineness of our motives.

v9-11 – What did Paul pray for the Philippians?

The Philippians had shown a lot of love to Paul. Yet Paul didn’t hesitate to pray that their love would grow.

- It doesn’t matter how much love for others we have; we can still have more!

What kind of love grows in knowledge and discernment?

The love Paul wanted the Philippians to abound in was not blind, emotional love. It was a love that was rooted in truth

and thus could approve godly things that are excellent (v10).

How may we be sincere and without offense?

When we approve and receive the things that are excellent, we become sincere (speaking of inner righteousness) and without offense (speaking of outer righteousness that can be seen).

How long should we be sincere and without offense?

Until the day of Christ implying that these things should become increasingly evident in our life until Jesus returns.

How may we be filled with the fruits of righteousness?

The work of becoming sincere and without offense is really God’s work within us. It happens as we are filled with the fruits of righteousness.

- Bearing fruit is always the result of abiding in Jesus (John 15:4-6). As we abide in Him, we receive the life and nutrients we need to naturally bear fruit to the glory and praise of God.

Phil 1:12-18 – Christ Is Preached

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

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

v12-14 – How had Paul’s incarceration served to further the gospel of Christ?

Paul wanted the Philippians to know that God’s blessing and power were still with him even though he was in prison. He was not out of the will of God, and God’s work still continued.

- The circumstances around Paul’s imprisonment and his manner in the midst of it made it clear to all observers that he was not just another prisoner, but that he was an emissary of Jesus Christ. This witness led to the conversion of many, even some of the palace guard.

- Paul's imprisonment gave the Christians around him – who were not imprisoned – greater confidence and boldness.

How did Paul's imprisonment cause others to be bolder in sharing the gospel?

- They saw that Paul had joy in the midst of such a trial.
- They saw that God would take care of Paul in such circumstances.
- They saw that God could still use Paul even when he was imprisoned.

v15-18 – How is it that some preached Christ out of envy and strife?

Paul knew that some preached because they wanted to “surpass” Paul in ministry and to promote their own name and place above Paul's.

How could there have been some who took advantage of Paul's imprisonment?

They felt it gave them a competitive edge in what they considered to be the contest of preaching the gospel. They had a competitive spirit, which too often is common among preachers.

- Those preaching the gospel out of wrong motives are infected with selfish ambition, which makes them serve, but not sincerely.

Is it wrong to have ambition?

Ambition isn't necessarily bad; there is nothing wrong in wanting to be the best we can be for God. But selfish ambition is most concerned about a successful image, instead of striving for true success before God.

How did the competitive spirit of those who preached Christ out of selfish ambition afflict Paul?

Their competitive hearts didn't only want to win for themselves and God; they also wanted Paul to lose.

- They wanted Paul to admit that others are more effective in ministry than he was.

How could Paul rejoice that there were people preaching Christ out of selfish motives?

People preached the gospel more energetically, due to Paul's imprisonment. Some were motivated in a good way and some were motivated in a bad way; yet nonetheless, they were motivated – and Paul could rejoice in that.

- Paul objected if he thought a false or distorted gospel was preached, even if from the best of motives (Galatians 1:6-9).
- If they preached the true gospel, Paul didn't care what their motives are.

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.

Phil 1:19-28 – To Live Is Christ

¹⁹ For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, ²⁰ according 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. ²¹ For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain. ²² But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. ²³ For I am hard-pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. ²⁴ Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you. ²⁵ And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith, ²⁶ that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again.

v19-20 – How would Paul's circumstances result in his deliverance?

Paul knew that the Lord was in control of all events, even though his imprisonment and impending trial before Caesar Nero made the situation look pretty dark.

How could Paul be confident of his deliverance?

Paul's needs were met by the Spirit of God, but this provision to Paul was brought about by the prayers of the Philippians.

What was Paul's earnest expectation and hope?

Paul mightily trusted God that He would not cause him to be ashamed or turn against him in the matter.

- Though he was in prison and awaiting trial before Caesar, Paul had the confidence that he was in the center of God's will and not punishing him.

How was it that Paul could magnify Christ in his death as well as life?

Paul admitted to the Philippians that he might not be released from this present imprisonment, but it might instead result in his martyrdom.

- As people witnessed how Christians did not fear death, this attracted them to the message which gave them that confidence.

v21 – What did Paul mean that to live is Christ?

If Paul survived his ordeal in Rome, it would be because Christ wanted him to live on as His representative... Paul would be totally at Christ service to further His Kingdom.

How is death gain for a follower of Christ?

Paul knew that death was a graduation to glory, a net gain for the Christian.

- First, his death for the cause of Christ would glorify Jesus, and that was gain.
- Second, to be in the immediate presence of the Lord was gain for Paul.

How does Paul's understanding of "to die is gain" argue against the idea of "soul sleep?"

This false teaching says that the believing dead are held in some sort of suspended animation until the resurrection occurs. Paul was even more explicit:

2 Corinthians 5:8 – *We are confident, yes, well pleased rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord.*

How does Paul's understanding of gain for the Christian in death address the idea of purgatory?

There is no sense here that the believing dead must be purified through suffering before coming into the presence of God.

What does it reveal that about a Christian who fears death?

When people fear death, it is not necessarily that they are unbelievers but it is quite certain that if they have very weak and sickly faith.

What has COVID revealed about people?

There is a lot of people in this world who fear death.

2 Timothy 1:7 – *For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.*

God can use it to attract people to Him when unbelievers see us having courage in the face of death.

But isn't there unbelievers who don't fear death?

Islamic jihadists appear to not fear death but they are motivated by religious fervor to earn God's favor for salvation. Islam is a salvation-by-works religion with no promise of eternal security apart from dying while killing infidels.

v22 – What did Paul expect if God allowed him to live on?

Paul was confident that God intended him to be fruitful. There was no doubt in Paul's mind that this was God's plan for him.

v23 – Which did Paul think was better, his life or death?

Paul saw advantages either way is life or death but recognized that being with Christ would be better for him personally

So, did Paul want to die?

Paul did, in some way, want to die. The word translated "desire" here describes a strong longing: The Greek word has much force in it. He panted, he longed to be gone.

Is the desire to be with Christ a valid motivation for suicide?

- Some men have wished to die, gripped by the gloom and darkness that leads to suicide.
- Some have been so tired of this world and the cruelty of others that they thought death was better.
- Some have wanted to die in the crisis of some kind of suffering.

Paul's desire to depart had nothing in common with these attitudes among men. Paul probably had many motivations to depart...

- Going to heaven meant he would finally be done with sin and temptation.
- Going to heaven meant that he would see those brothers and sisters who had gone to heaven before him.
- Most of all, going to heaven meant being with Christ in a closer and better way than ever before.

v24-26 – What was Paul's motivation for living on?

Paul understood that others still needed him; that his work was not yet done.

- So while allowing for the possibility of his martyrdom, he told the Philippians that he expects to be spared at this time (I know that I shall remain and continue with you).

Was Paul's confidence that he would live on realized?

Yes, Paul survived this imprisonment and was set free. He did come to visit the Philippians again. He was eventually martyred in Rome in A.D. 68.

- Paul's friendship with the Philippians was so close that he knew that they would be rejoicing to see him again.

Phil 1:27-30 – Striving and Suffering for Christ

²⁷ *Only 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,* ²⁸ *and 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.* ²⁹ *For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,* ³⁰ *having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me.*

v27 – What did Paul admonish the Philippians to do?

Paul wanted the Philippians to work together for the cause of the gospel.

- *Only let your conduct:* The ancient Greek word translated “conduct” means literally, “to live as a citizen.” Paul told the Philippians to be good, patriotic citizens of the kingdom of God.
- *I may hear of your affairs:* Paul wanted the Philippians to know they were accountable before him. He would check up on them.
- *That you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind:* Paul wanted to know that the Philippian church stayed together as one body, without becoming fragmented and fractionalized.
- *Striving together for the faith of the gospel:* Paul wanted their unity to be put to a productive purpose, so that an increasing trust and belief in the good news of Jesus Christ would be promoted among those who already believed and among those who had yet to believe.

v28 – What else did Paul want the Philippians to do?

Paul wants the Philippians to be bold before their adversaries who are really God’s adversaries.

- *And not in any way terrified by your adversaries:* In the Greek language, “terrified” is a vivid term, denoting the uncontrollable stampede of startled horses.

Why shouldn’t Christians be terrified of their adversaries?

Which is to them a proof of perdition: Our lack of fear demonstrates our confidence in the perdition – meaning destruction – of our adversaries.

- When our spiritual enemies fail to make us afraid, they have failed completely because they really have no other weapon than fear and intimidation.

What does our lack of fear have to say about our salvation?

But to you of salvation: When Christians are not in any way terrified by their adversaries, it is also evidence of their own salvation. In the Lord, we can surprise ourselves with our boldness.

v29-30 – Why else shouldn’t the Philippians be terrified by their adversaries?

The attacks and challenges they face are ordained by God.

- *For to you it has been granted:* In the same way it has been granted for Christians to believe in Jesus, so also was the privilege to suffer for His sake.
- *But also to suffer for His sake:* Their present difficulty was granted to them, not as a punishment, but as a tool in God’s hand.

How was the suffering of the Philippians similar to what Paul was suffering?

Having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me: The conflict of the Philippians concerned the difficulty of walking right with the Lord and proclaiming the gospel when persecuted and under attack.

- If the Philippians had Paul’s kind of conflict, they could also have Paul’s kind of joy and fruit in the midst of it.

What applications do we see from this discussion today?

- Cooperating with the Holy Spirit in our sanctification builds confidence in our ultimate glorification; what God began He will complete.
- Our ambition should be to further God’s agenda, not our own.
- Believers should never fear death. This is especially important during the Age of COVID when fear of death is so common.
- Believers should never fear our adversaries who are really God’s adversaries; God can use that courage to further His kingdom.