



Rejoicing in Christ as the Principle of Life

Philippians - Chapter One

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Rejoicing in Christian Community [\(1:1-11\)](#)

As we begin the study of Paul's letter to the Philippians. We are going to see a theme that is prevalent through the whole letter. That theme is joy. Paul has much to rejoice concerning the church at Philippi. The church had grown from just a handful of believers ([Act 16](#)) to one that has grown both in numbers and in faith. This church has financially supported him and his ministry. In chapter one we are going to see that rejoicing in Christ needs to be a principal in the life of a believer. We need to always strive to live exemplary, Christ-like live regardless of the afflictions and trials that we face. Paul opens his letter to the Philippians by rejoicing in their faithfulness as a community of faith that stays true to the gospel regardless of circumstances.

Which Christian brother or sister would be heartened to receive a letter from you this week?

Salutation. [\(1:1-2\)](#)

Paul opens this letter by declaring he and Timothy are Bondservants of Jesus Christ. This is different from his other letters where he declares his apostleship. This is most likely because he was not having to address any false teaching or doctrines at the Church of Philippi. He greets them with Grace and Peace. This is a letter of friendship and joy in which he is rejoicing over the faith of the church.

He includes Timothy, his beloved son in the faith, not as a co-author of the letter but, the person who Paul dictated his letter. Timothy is a constant companion of Paul's. We also see that Timothy is the messenger who carried several of Paul's letters to the churches.

The title bond-servant denotes a willing slave who was happily and loyally linked to his master. Paul saw everything through the lens of his slavery to Christ. His life's purpose was to serve the one who saved his soul. This is the attitude in which Paul is addressing the Philippian Church.

This is the attitude that all believers should have. God really wants us to be happily and loyally linked to the work of the Kingdom. Sadly, many churches today are consumer based, where people come to get something. Not missional based where people come to prepare to go and give. Our churches should be a place where we come and encourage and celebrate what God is doing through us the rest of the week.

What is the ATTITUDE you bring when you come to church on Sunday?

Rejoicing in Thanksgiving. [\(1:3-8\)](#)

The church at Philippi holds a special place in the heart of Paul. Since he first ministered to them ten years earlier, they have grown and become a supportive part of Paul's missionary work. They have supported him both monetarily but also with their prayers. It is important that we never forget the ones that lead us to Christ. Even today I remember the small church that changed my family's life forever.

Paul wants them to know that he has not forgotten them either. He prays regularly for them and lets them know how much their partnership has encouraged him. Paul knows the character of the church at Philippi, and he has confidence that God would complete the work that Christ has started because of their faithfulness.

Confident translates *peithō*, which here means to be persuaded of and have confidence in. Paul's confidence was much more than human hope; it was the absolute confidence that comes from knowing and believing God's

promise. Paul is confident of what God has already done and knows that the God *who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion.* ([Phil 1:6](#)).

Our confidence is not in things here on earth they are on the promises of God found in the Bible...this is where Paul's confidence was placed. As believers, we are to grow in our Christian life becoming more like Christ each day. This growth is a constant thing that starts the day we are saved. Even in a world that is constantly moving away from God, we can have confidence the He is in control. We are not to place our hope in our circumstances but in the hope of Christ's return.

Where do you place your confidence? In things or in the hope of Christ and His return?

Rejoicing in Prayer. ([1:9-11](#))

After Paul shares his love and thanksgiving for the Philippian church, he shares his prayer for their pursuit of continued Christian growth. An old song once said, *"What the world needs is love."* As believers, Love is a primary characteristic of Christlikeness.

Paul's idea of love was radical for his time because Roman culture was so stratified, you had the really wealthy, and you had the really poor and the two did not mix. At the top you had landowners and the wealthy and at the bottom you had the slaves. The love that is found in Christianity broke down these barriers. That is what Paul means by may your love abound more.

The Greek word picture this behind the word abound is like a bucket standing under a large waterfall with the water flowing out of both sides of the bucket such that the bucket cannot hold it. This is how our love should be as believers we should have love for everyone regardless of their status, regardless of where they stand in the culture. This love should be such that it is overflowing and cannot be contained.

Paul's desire for the Philippians was they would have this kind of love, but that love comes with knowledge and discernment in order to stay focused on the teachings of Christ. *Knowledge* is a word used twenty times in the New Testament to convey the idea of knowing about God and spiritual things. *Discernment* moves beyond the acquisition of knowledge to its application.

The goal of a love characterized by knowledge and discernment is so we can approve or confirm what is excellent. Paul's word translated approve (*dokimazein*) describes a blacksmith hammering out and testing a red-hot iron ploughshare or spear. Considerable mental and spiritual effort underlies important decision-making, especially where moral issues are involved. By having this kind of love unbeliever is that more able to love both God and man. The ultimate result of this kind of love is to bring glory and honor and praise to our God and Lord Jesus Christ who has saved our souls. The ultimate end of all Paul's prayers is that God be glorified regardless of our circumstances.

What prayer of thanksgiving can you offer for your church today?

Rejoicing in the Christian Ministry [\(1:12-26\)](#)

One of the surest measures of a Christian's spiritual maturity is what it takes to rob them of their Spirit-bestowed joy. So many times, when we face adversity, we become distressed and depressed. This is not the case with Paul. He is sitting in a jail in Rome surrounded by guards with no freedom. But we do not find him complaining or being overly concerned about his situation. Instead, what we see is a man who is totally committed to proclaiming the gospel regardless of his circumstances.

Proclaiming the gospel. [\(1:12-20\)](#)

Paul continues on letting the Church at Philippi know that even though he is in a Roman jail the gospel mission continues. Paul continues the letter by noting that his personal circumstances are irrelevant. He is living his life in such a way that all those around him see the difference and hear the gospel through his life.

Many of those around him understood that Paul was not in prison because he committed a crime. Even the praetorium guard that were there in the prison working saw the gospel being lived out through the life of Paul. Paul proclaimed the gospel even to the *Praetoria Guard*, the elite of the Roman army. These soldiers were the Imperial Guard of Rome, men who had been hand-picked to protect the emperor and to carry out the major armed functions of the state. The praetorium guard consisted of some 16,000 soldiers, most of whom were stationed in Rome at any given time. It was these soldiers who guarded and were chained to the wrist of Paul day and night for two years—young men who were the elite of Roman youth. How many Paul led to the Lord is unknown. But note: Christ was shared so much that the gospel spread throughout...the whole Praetorian guard, the palace of the emperor and many other places.

Paul was in prison because of his stance with the gospel. But there were some preachers in Rome who were jealous of Paul and envious of his results, of the favorable attention and prestige he was gaining from society and the social circles of the community. They were jealous of the position he was gaining as the leader of the Christian community in Rome. They used Paul's imprisonment as an issue to speak out against Paul.

It needs to be understood that their preaching was from envy and strife. They were not preaching a heresy like the Judaizers. They were preaching the true gospel. The issue was not what they were preaching but why they were preaching. Some might have been preaching from self-ambition others might have been preaching to cause more distress for Paul in his imprisonment. Paul's attitude about the situation was "*What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in this I rejoice.*" ([Phil 1:18](#)).

Far from lamenting, resenting, or complaining about his hardships, Paul acknowledged hardships as an unavoidable element of ministry. In his own eyes, however, they were but a small cost that he was more than willing to pay, because God used those trials as a means for furthering the spread of the gospel.

Paul's circumstances were beyond most people's ability to understand. Yet he was a model of joy, contentment, and peace. Those inner qualities obviously were not based on his physical comfort, his possessions, his freedom, his self-satisfaction, or his reputation and prestige. They were based entirely on his trust in his gracious and sovereign Lord and his delight in the furtherance of the gospel.

Freedom to proclaim the gospel is understandably cherished today by Christians in the so-called free world. But many, if not most, of the great expansions of the faith and spiritual revivals within the church have come during times of opposition and persecution. Christianity was long outlawed in communist China and even today in much

of that nation public expression of Christianity is still severely restricted. Yet by many responsible estimates, there are millions of Bible-believing Christians in that great country. By contrast, in most of the "free" Western world the influence, if not the size, of the evangelical church has been continually eroding.

Paul's faithful determination was not only toward winning converts outside the church, but he also wanted to strengthen and encourage the believers within the church. In fact, his imprisonment caused many believers to have a new sense of confidence and boldness to proclaim the gospel. Paul, is demonstrating to us that the key to maintaining joy and ministry is quite simple, stay focused on Jesus and make the gospel the focus of your life and ministry.

Ask yourself these questions am I focused on Jesus and is what I am doing promoting the gospel.

Surrendering to Christ. [\(1:21-26\)](#)

Many scholars believe that this passage here is the most important passage in the whole letter. Paul is laying out the Christian life in verse 21 when he says, *"for me to live his Christ and to die is gain"*. The Christian believer should be willing to do whatever it takes for the Kingdom even if it means suffering and or death.

I once met a man who had served in the Vietnam War. He explained to me that when he first arrived on the battlefield, he was full of the fear of dying. One day during his quiet time he read [Phil 1:21](#). He came to realize that the worst thing the enemy could do to him was kill him. If he died, he would be immediately in the presence of his savior and Lord. He said that once he came to that realization, he gained a peace that allowed him to complete his mission without fear. He understood that whatever happened was going to be good. If he lived, he got to serve his Lord longer if he died, he got to see his Lord sooner. When we no longer fear death but merely see it as a door to eternal life with Jesus Christ. Then we are free to live a life of purpose, meaning and a commitment to the Kingdom.

This is how Paul was living his life. In this passage Paul says I am torn between two things, my desire to go on to heaven and be with my savior and my understanding that if I stay behind there is so much more to be done for the Kingdom. But either way Christ will get glory. Paul recognized that his body was not his own, his future was not his own, his reputation was not his own they all belong to Christ.

The apostle's very being was wrapped up in his Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. He trusted, loved, served, witnessed for, and in every way was devoted to and dependent on Him. His only hope, his only purpose, his only reason to live was Christ. He traveled for Christ, preached for Christ, and was persecuted and imprisoned for Christ. He would die for Christ. But even death, by God's marvelous grace, was for Paul's eternal gain. Paul was totally surrendered to the will and desires of Christ.

Paul had a purpose for living when he served the Philippians and others. We also need a purpose for living that goes beyond supporting our own physical needs. Whom can you serve or help? What is your purpose for living? What is something you would like to accomplish before you die.... What is your spiritual bucket list?

What step toward dedicating every area of your life to Christ can you take today?

Rejoicing in Christian Living. [\(1:27-30\)](#)

"I am convinced that the most important thing in my life as a Christian is to have the reality of Jesus Christ in my life." - J. Vernon McGee

Paul is exhorting the church to live a life worthy of the gospel of Christ. This meant they had to stand firm in one spirit and one mind in unity. When Paul says to *"conduct ourselves"* he is literally meaning for them to "live as citizens." Philippi was a Roman colony and was very proud of the privileges that came along with being a Roman citizen. Most of those who belonged to the church were either Roman citizens or wanting to become Roman citizens because of all the privileges that they got as Roman citizens.

Paul was asking the church to remember that they are citizens of another Kingdom, and they should "live as citizens" of heaven, with all the responsibilities that come along with being a heavenly citizen. As citizens of heaven our responsibilities are dictated by the central concerns of the gospel. As believers we must live our lives in a way that it brings honor to our King...Jesus Christ.

Paul goes on to remind us that living as citizens of heaven is going to come with a cost. As believers we must always remember that we are going to experience adversity. We live in a fallen world that wants to have nothing to do with the things of God and that adversity is an integral part of the Christian life. We should be willing to face adversity in a manner that is worthy of our heavenly citizenship. There are many evils occurring in this fallen world, however our primary mission is not to rail against them but to present Jesus Christ the one who had triumphed over them by his act of redemption.

We are to proclaim the good news of the Gospel. We accomplish this by living a life worthy of our heavenly citizenship. We must always remember that God is bigger than our circumstances. He sees the whole picture of history and knows the why of our circumstances. When we begin to understand and remember that God is in control. That He is never surprised. It will produce real joy and praise in our lives.

We must conclude Like Paul; *"For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."* ([Phil 1:21](#)). When we are prepared to die, we are best prepared to live. When we are in Christ, life or death is a win-win situation. The worst thing, which is the best thing, that could happen is that we die and go to heaven. This causes us to rejoice and want to live a life worthy of who we are, Citizens of Heaven.

What step toward dedicating every area of your life to Christ can you take today?

Points of Application

- God is bigger than my circumstances.
- Proper perspective produces praise.
- In Christ, life or death is a win-win situation.
- When we are ready to die, we are best prepared to live.
- Rest in the fact that God is with you in the midst of difficulties.
- Ask God to help you see his vantage point in your circumstances.
- Thank God that a Christ-centered, eternal perspective brings joy.

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