

DIGGING DEEPER

January 7, 2024

Philippians 1:1-11

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INTRODUCTION

Of all of Paul's writings Philippians has the most personal content of any of his letters to the churches. It is obvious that Paul is intending to not only remind his readers once again of all that Christ has done and are able to experience an overflowing joy as they walk with Christ in their daily life.

"This book has a traditional reputation of being the epistle of joy. Various forms of the words 'joy' and 'rejoice' are found eighteen times in the book. This theme can be seen in the key verse of the book: 'Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice. (4:4).'" (Gromacki, R. G. (1974). New Testament survey (p. 260).

DAY ONE: A Church of Saints (Philippians 1:1-2)

Read Philippians 1:1-11. If you have the time, it would be profitable for you to read the entire four chapters of this powerful book in one sitting. It will inspire your soul.

The church of Philippi had as its founding a specific act of obedience for Paul. (See Acts 16:9) Paul, Silas, Luke and Timothy responded to the vision Paul had to take the message of the gospel in a direction that was new to the apostle. He was moving toward Europe. The church at Philippi would be the result of this obedience to the call to "come over to Macedonia" (Acts 16:9)

At Philippi Paul ministered to some women by the river, among them was Lydia who became a believer along with her family. They were all baptized (Acts 16:12-15) and her house became the meeting place for other believers.

The next significant convert was the jailer in the city. Paul and Silas were put in prison as a result of casting out a demonic spirit from a young girl. Her owners were enraged and had Paul and Silas arrested. (See Acts 16:20-21). At midnight Paul and Silas prayed and sang and an earthquake ruptured the prison, and the doors were opened, chains fell off. The jailer was ready to commit suicide and Paul stopped him, shared the gospel and the jailer responded to the gospel. As a result, he and his entire family were baptized.

What a start for a church, families brought together by the gospel, baptized together and worshipping together! It is no wonder there is such joy over this group of saints. It appears that Paul is writing this letter to this church about 10 years after its inception and Paul still rejoices over them. The heart of a loving pastor is on display even as Paul is undergoing trying personal experiences.

Grace and peace are his words to the saints. The source of this grace and peace is God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. That is Paul's gracious gift to the church.

As you pray today remember when you have responded to Christ, He transforms you. What does being called a *saint* mean to you? Saints are such only by being in Christ Jesus! When these early followers of Christ were called saints how do you think they impacted them? While our neighbors probably don't

call us saints, do they see us living like saints? What would detract from that perception in our daily living? How can we change that?

Joy is not a luxury or a mere accessory in the Christian life. It is the sign that we are really living in God's wonderful love, and that love satisfies us. —Andrew Murray

DAY TWO: Powerful Prayer (Philippians 1:3-4)

Read these two verses and note what you feel are important words.

Paul, probably around 43 years old, had invested in the lives of this young church and would continue to have the heart of a pastor towards this church until his death. On two occasions the church sent gifts to Paul during his ministry in Thessalonica (see Philippians 4:14-16). It appears that Paul briefly visited this church on at least two more occasions.

With this in mind it is easy to understand why he would say "every time I think of you, I thank God for you." Gratitude seems to be a genuine characteristic of the apostle. He would follow his own advice (see Ephesians 5:20, 1 Thessalonians 5:18) and express it to this young church – gratitude is important!

It follows that when he thinks of this young church, he prays for them. His praying is not merely mentioning them to God, but with joy he thanks them for their partnership in the gospel. Paul is introducing a couple of great thoughts to us – he prays with joy, and he reminds them and perhaps himself, they are partners with him in proclaiming the gospel. Again, Paul is consistent (see 1 Thessalonians 5:16,17).

We will learn more about that partnership tomorrow but let's focus on Paul's joy. Various forms of the words "joy" and "rejoice" are found eighteen times in Philippians. A key verse of the book is found in Philippians 4:4 "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say: Rejoice".

Joy is a recurring theme not just in Philippians but throughout Paul's writings as well as the other apostles. It is a unique characteristic of the Christian even in the midst of physical problems or persecution. Take the time to look up the following verses: Romans 5:3; 8:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:16; James 1:2-4; 1 Peter 4:12-16. Paul follows Jesus' principle given in Matthew 5:10 – 12.

As you read these verses let them speak to you and encourage you to discover the joy Christ has for you.

"We are chosen for joy. However hard the Christian way, it is both in the travelling and in the goal, the way of joy. There is always a joy in doing the right thing. When we evade some duty or some task, when at last we set our hand to it, joy comes to us. The Christian is the man of joy. The Christian is the laughing cavalier of Christ. A gloomy Christian is a contradiction in terms, and nothing in all religious history has done Christianity more harm than its connection with black clothes and long faces." —William Barclay

DAY THREE: Why Pray? Paul presents his reasons (Philippians 1:5, 7-8)

Partners in the gospel from the first day to now, that is how Paul viewed this church. They were not fair-weather friends they helped Paul whether he was in prison or out. They understood Paul was a powerful ambassador of the gospel and they hitched their church and lives to his ministry.

We will never know the sacrifices they made to assist Paul but without any doubt Paul knew. He kept them in his heart. In fact, Paul says he has the same affection for them as Christ Jesus (verse 8) and he calls God to be the witness of his love for them. What a powerful testimony. No wonder Paul would pray for these brothers and sisters in Christ.

“The enterprise of Christian missions is the most joyful work in the world; the proclamation of the most joyful news to every human being, on the authority of God’s command, in the light of God’s glorious promises.” – H. D. M. Spence

DAY FOUR: Substance of Paul’s Prayers (Philippians 1:6) [Part 1]

Read verse 6 a couple of times and let its message penetrate your soul.

Confidence that God will bring to completion the work that he has started within you. This is not written only to the church in Philippi but to you and me! God is working and doesn’t quit working in us and on us and through us.

“... in that gracious day, our rejoicing will not be in the personal knowledge that He saved us from hell, but in the joyful knowledge that He was able to renew us, bringing the old self to an end, and creating within us the new man and the new self in which can be reproduced the beauty of the Son of God.” – A. W. Tozer

Ask yourself these questions today, “Where is God working in me?” Where do you think the most work needs to be done in your life? How are you giving God the right of way to do his work in you?

DAY FIVE: Substance of Paul’s Prayers (Philippians 1:9-11) [Part 2]

Read verses 9-11. Do you see the substance of Paul’s prayer for the church at Philippi? We need to look at them closely.

Three great prayer concerns Paul has for the Philippians.

- Their love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight. Paul was not merely asking they love more, but they love better. You have to know how to love, how to demonstrate it, how to share it. You have to have a deep understanding of the need so your love can meet needs in the lives of others. That requires insight!
- That you will be able to discern what is best and pure and blameless. Your love cannot be misunderstood as if you are manipulating people but rather it is for their good and their blessing that your love is being shown. You have to take the time to know and understand those around you as you minister in Jesus’ name. No haphazard or thoughtless love but love that meets needs.
- That you be filled with the fruit of righteousness. There is no room for self-aggrandizement in the life of a believer, rather our righteousness is to bring glory to God. Our righteousness is a praise to God! After all it is not our work that makes us righteous it is only by the work of Jesus Christ. (see Roman 1:17, Isaiah 64:6, Romans 3:22)

“Eternal joy is the end of the ways of God. The message of all religions is that the kingdom of God is peace and joy. And it is the message of Christianity. But eternal joy is not to be reached by living on the surface. It is rather attained by breaking through the surface, by penetrating the deep things of ourselves, of our world, and of God. The moment in which we reach the last depth of our lives is the moment in which we can experience the joy that has eternity within it, the hope that cannot be destroyed, and the truth on which life and death are built. For in the depth is truth; and in the depth is hope; and in the depth is joy.” -- Paul Tillich

Love, discernment and righteousness – the trifecta of Paul’s prayers for the Philippians and for you! Let God complete his work in you and discover the joy Christ has for you.