

## Philippians 1:1-20

The book of Philippians encourages us to rejoice in Christ. Joy is difficult to describe. Joy is not a feeling like “happy” is a feeling. Joy is a much deeper emotion. Joy starts within and expresses externally, whereas, happy starts outside and expresses internally. Therefore, joy can be produced despite circumstances. For example, Paul was joyful and rejoicing in prison. Happiness is a response to something that happens to you; thus, your circumstances produce happiness. Why is it important to know the difference between joy and happy? Scripture commands us to be joyful but we are never commanded to be happy. Which is a big deal because that’s a reminder that joy is possible (through Christ) in any and all circumstances.

### Section 1: 1:1-2 – Greeting

Background: Acts 16:6-40

Major Characters in Philippi

	Ethnically	Economically	Spiritually	Ministry Approach
<b>Lydia</b>	Asian	Wealthy	God-fearer	Words
<b>Slave Girl</b>	Native Greek	Poor	Spiritual turmoil	Deeds
<b>Jailer</b>	Roman	Blue Collar	Practical and Indifferent	Example

All ethnicities and classes of people can be saved, and people in all types of spiritual conditions can be saved. Some are really influenced by dialogue, argument, and teaching. Others are moved by deeds of mercy. And some are attracted to Christian example. All of them are saved through responding to the gospel (Romans 10:9).

About 10 years after Paul established the church at Philippi, he wrote this letter to his partners in the gospel. He thanks them for their exemplary generosity (4:14-19). Before he does that, he makes them aware of his present situation (1:12-26); he explains why he had to send Epaphroditus back so soon (2:25-30); he appeals to them to unite in the gospel (1:27-2:11; 4:2-3); he warns them of the dangers of false teaching (3:2); and in all things, he urges them to persevere with joy in Christ.

### Philippians 1:1-2

<sup>1</sup>Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus: to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons. <sup>2</sup>Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

### Words of Interest

Servant	Greek Word for servant means “bond servant” – a bond servant is a slave by choice. Paul and Timothy have freely become slaves to Christ.
Saints	Saints mean “holy ones” – holy means set apart – Saints literally means, “set apart ones”
Overseers	Bishops – this is a reference to the elders/pastors. The words bishop, elder and pastor are descriptors of the same office.
Deacons	Deacon literally means “servant”. The deacons were the lead servants of the church. They were marked by their willingness to serve others.
Father	God is our Father. What a joy to know that’s the type of relationship God

	wants to have with us!
Lord	Lord literally means – master, owner, ruler. Jesus is the master, owner, ruler of our lives.

By God’s grace we become Christians, servants of Jesus, and it’s by God’s grace that we live out the Christian life. The phrases “of Christ,” “in Christ,” and “from God” all highlight God’s work in uniting us to Jesus.

### Discussion Questions

- ❖ Paul and Timothy have made themselves slaves to Christ for the sake of the gospel. Have you ever considered yourself a slave to God?
  - What does “being a slave” to God mean?
  - Do you have a say or do you only take orders from the master?
  - Do your desires matter or only the master’s?
- ❖ What do you find encouraging about Paul’s greeting?

## Section 2: 1:3-11 – Thanksgiving and Prayer

### *Finding Joy in Christ and Community*

Philippians 1:3-5

*<sup>3</sup>I give thanks to my God for every remembrance of you, <sup>4</sup>always praying with joy for all of you in my every prayer, <sup>5</sup>because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.*

### Partnership in the Gospel

What does “gospel partnership” mean? The Greek word used for partnership (koinonia) is where we get our word fellowship. Two sides joining together over a shared vision. Throughout Philippians “koinonia” refers to gospel-centered friendship as well as a shared mission of gospel proclamation. The temptation today is to water down the biblical idea of fellowship. We get together and eat and call that fellowship. The Bible gives us a much deeper understanding of what “true Godly fellowship” really is: a people committing together to glorify God through gospel-centered friendship and mission.

Two aspects of gospel partnership: friendship and mission.

#### Friendship:

The church of Philippi was diverse (Romans, Greeks, Asians, Jews). Even though they may have been from different places, they could be brothers and sisters because they were bonded together in the Spirit through Christ.

#### Mission:

Believers have a shared mission, proclaiming the gospel to all people. Sadly, many see the church as an audience of customers to please rather than a group of coworkers who spread the gospel all week and then gather together to encourage one another.

Philippians 1:6-8

*<sup>6</sup>I am sure of this, that He who started a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. <sup>7</sup>Indeed, it is right for me to think this way about all of you, because I have you in my heart, and you are all partners with*

*me in grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. <sup>8</sup>For God is my witness, how deeply I miss all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.*

### **Love for One Another**

God always finishes what He starts. That truth should change how we view one another. We are all on a journey, walking with Jesus for the glory of God. Unfortunately, we have many bumps and slumps along the way. Therefore, we never give up on one another. Why? Because God is not finished with us.

True love endures, it never fails (1 Corinthians 13). Even in our darkest valleys, God still loves us. Even in our darkest moments, God is not finished with us. When we see brothers and sisters struggling through life, we lovingly remind them of this truth, God is still working.

Philippians 1:9-11

*<sup>9</sup>And I pray this: that your love will keep on growing in knowledge and every kind of discernment, <sup>10</sup>so that you may approve the things that are superior and may be pure and blameless in the day of Christ, <sup>11</sup>filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God.*

### **Pray for One Another**

Paul is praying for the believers in Philippi earnestly and frequently. Paul prays that:

*Their love for knowledge and discernment will continue to grow.*

*Why?*

*So, they may approve things that are pure and blameless before Christ, filled with fruits of righteousness.*

Through his prayer, Paul is reminding the believers at Philippi what truly is important in this life, we do all things “to the glory and praise of God.”

### **Discussion Questions**

- ❖ Paul considered the church of Philippi to be “partners in the gospel”. What would be some differences between a “partner in the gospel” and a casual attendee on Sunday?
- ❖ What makes a friendship between believers and non-believers different?
- ❖ What are some ways we can help each other stay focused on the mission to share the gospel?
- ❖ How does the phrase “God is not finished with us” impact how you treat and view other believers?
- ❖ How will Paul’s prayer in verses 9-11 impact how you pray for fellow believers in the future?

## **Section 3: 1:12-20 – Advancing the Gospel**

Paul maintains joy in ministry by staying focused on the gospel and the glory of Christ.

Philippians 1:12-14

*<sup>12</sup>Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually advanced the gospel, <sup>13</sup>so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard, and to everyone else, that my imprisonment is because I am in Christ. <sup>14</sup>Most of the brothers have gained confidence in the Lord from my imprisonment and dare even more to speak the word fearlessly.*

## **Put the Gospel First**

Paul's primary focus in life was the advancement of the gospel. He often endured hardships for the sake of the gospel being proclaimed. Paul put the gospel first, therefore, all of the imperial guard heard the gospel even as he faced the hardship of prison. Even in our "hardships" God makes a way for the gospel. Paul didn't view his hardships as a setback, but as a launching pad for the gospel to be proclaimed.

The Greek word for "advancement" is a word that means – to blaze a trail for an army. The Romans thought they would quiet Paul down, but they only gave him a captive audience that he might not have otherwise addressed (prisoners and guards). See the providence of God at work here? Instead of living freely and heading to places like Spain, one of the most powerful Christian missionaries was allowed by God to be imprisoned. But it was through Paul's imprisonment that the Lord was making the gospel known in Rome.

We never know how God might use suffering to advance the gospel. God is advancing the gospel; therefore, we should also view all circumstances as opportunities to share the gospel.

### Philippians 1:15-20

*<sup>15</sup>To be sure, some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of good will. <sup>16</sup>These preach out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel; <sup>17</sup>the others proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, thinking that they will cause me trouble in my imprisonment. <sup>18</sup>What does it matter? Only that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is proclaimed, and in this I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice <sup>19</sup>because I know this will lead to my salvation through your prayers and help from the Spirit of Jesus Christ. <sup>20</sup>My eager expectation and hope is that I will not be ashamed about anything, but that now as always, with all courage, Christ will be highly honored in my body, whether by life or by death.*

## **Christ will be Highly Honored**

Either by life or by death, may Christ be highly honored in my body. Paul was a bold, faithful follower of Christ. How was Paul so bold and faithful? He was filled with the Holy Spirit. He was living the truth we will see in Philippians 4:13; *I could do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*

In this section Paul provides three ways Christians should seek to honor Christ: by rejoicing in Christ (v 18), by relying on Christ (v. 19) and by representing Christ (v. 20). In these ways we find a life that glorifies God.

### **Discussion Questions**

- ❖ What factors may cause people to lose their joy in doing ministry?
- ❖ Does Philippians 1:12 encourage you? How so?
- ❖ In what ways can you "put the gospel first" in your relationships?
- ❖ Why is it difficult to be courageous and speak the gospel to someone who is spiritually lost?
- ❖ Do you love Christ's glory more than your own?
- ❖ How could Paul "rejoice" and tell others to "rejoice" even though he was in prison? How should his example impact us today?
- ❖ How do you actively rely on Christ on a daily basis?
- ❖ How do you represent Christ to family, friends, neighbors, coworkers, etc. on a daily basis?