

## Books of the Bible Series

# Philippians

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We have been continuing in our summer series spanning several years going through each book of the Bible; after four summers in the Old Testament and the Gospels, this summer we started with Acts and continued with letters written by Paul to various churches. This week we are in the book of Philippians and next week, Colossians, will be our last week in this series until next summer.

Each December, we have a “fallow month” in which we as a church discontinue our weekly meetings; the pastors are still working but doing other things which include praying about and mapping out the next year. Also, the staff gets together and writes thank-you notes to everyone who served our church in the previous year (which is almost everyone!). It’s actually super fun to choose who to write to...but the actual writing part is hard for me, maybe because it takes me a long time. I’m saying this because the book of Philippians is a **THANK-YOU note!** Paul has been cared for by this church and he is writing to them. Hold onto this as we read through this!

### **Background:** (from Acts)

Paul et al. were in Philippia during his 2nd missionary journey through Asia Minor, modern-day Turkey. Paul had a dream about where to go and they ended up in a Roman colony named Philippi.

Philippi was a peaceful community the Romans built for their retired soldiers. This is notable because there was **no synagogue** when Paul arrived (the synagogue was the usual place to interact with people). Instead, Paul went to gathering places near the river where he met Lydia, who made purple cloth and was the head of her family. Her family became believers and Paul and his friends stayed in her home.

In Acts, Paul visited many sequences of cities and sometimes it seems he went from place to place very quickly. The reality is that Paul was in Philippi for several weeks or more establishing a church.

One day Paul was on the streets of Philippi and a slave girl possessed by a demon followed them around and proclaimed them as servants of the Most High God. This frustrated Paul and after a while, he cast out the demon. Now the owners of the girl could not make money off of her and they got angry at Paul, arrested him, and threw him in jail without a trial. In the middle of the night an earthquake opened the jail doors and the jail owner feared that all the prisoners escaped

and wanted to kill himself. But Paul assured him they were still there and told him about Jesus; the jailor's whole house believed and was baptized. When they tried to let Paul go, Paul announced that he was a Roman citizen and was owed an apology by their leaders. Instead, he left and went to Thessalonica alone. When he had trouble there, the Philippians sent him aid. When he wrote this letter, he's actually in jail again and thanked these people for caring for him.

The Roman jails are not like American jails which give prisoners a place to sleep, food, and medical care. In Roman jails, you get chains and guards but nothing else. When Paul was imprisoned, he needed medical care and food and was dependent on someone else, a friend or family, to care for him. The Philippians send him Epaphroditus along with money to care for him. Paul then sends him back with this thank you note.

It's important to grab onto these details: This letter is not like the book of Romans with its heavy theology and rebuke. This is a letter between friends, people who have cared for one another. Paul is in prison and the Philippians are sending him care and he is grateful for this. He loves them.

**Phil 4:1** Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, dear friends!

Continuing on, notice that it reads like a thank-you note: there isn't really an orderly structure.

**HOMEWORK:** Read it this week after you read Acts 16. It will only take you 20 min: you can feel the love and care he has for these people.

### **Philippians Outline:**

**1:1-11 Thankfulness and Prayer.**

**1:12-30 Comfort** for the Philippians because of their concern for Paul: he wants to encourage them that the Gospel is continuing. He addresses their concern that he will die in jail.

**2:1-18** Theological part of the letter: **Be like Christ**

If you are in Christ, then you should live this way: considering others better than yourselves with an attitude like Jesus. This is what we are called to as a church today: we should consider others better than ourselves in humility.

**2:19-30** This is a **story of Timothy and Epaphroditus**. He is sending Timothy to care for them and he is sending Epaphroditus back to them, probably carrying this letter. Paul is grateful for what Epaphroditus did and he wants them to honor him.

**3-4:1 Encouragement** for the Philippians and input on **some issues they might encounter** such as circumcision. This was a Roman colony with mostly Gentiles. He wants the leaders to embrace the righteousness from God. He assures them he will keep working for the Kingdom. At the end, he wants them to live according to the model he gave them. These people were like Paul in that both are Roman citizens. But he tells them this is not their identity: Caesar can only offer a measure of peace in this life but this is not where their true citizenship is located. Theirs is in heaven as followers of Christ. He repeats this over and over: for us today, our citizenship may be in the U.S. but our victory is not in the victory of the U.S. Our victory is in Jesus Christ!

**4:2-23 Closing:** Paul offers more ways for them to continue in their pursuit to be like Christ. We sign this song “Rejoice in the Lord Always” from this passage:

#### **Phil 4:4-9**

**4** Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! **5** Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. **6** Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. **7** And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

**8** Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. **9** Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

Paul knows they are worried about him and he wants them to know he is OK:

**10** I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it. **11** I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. **12** I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. **13** I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

**14** Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles.

Paul’s friendship and love for these people is evident and he is grateful for their help.

Final thoughts:

**Consider Christ’s humility:** Sit in the poem of Chapter 2 and be encouraged that we are called to consider one another better than ourselves. What does this mean?

**Phil 4:8** Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

**Think on these things, dwell on these:** This word actually means COUNT: it means to list these things, know them, understand them: Count them!

**HOMEWORK:** This week I want you to:

1. Take time each day (5 minutes?) to **count what is good**. Make a list of things around you in your life that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and praiseworthy. This doesn't need to be a long list, either. Just write some things or text them to yourself or your spouse.
2. **Take someone in your life and write 3-4 things** that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, praiseworthy about this person. Make a list and write it down!

**Phil 4:9** Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.

3. Paul wants them to reflect on what they have seen in PAUL: (not Jesus, etc.) This is a bold statement because in other places he says he is the worst of men and of sinners. **Look around and ask, “Who am I following?”** What things am I seeing in the people I follow? Whose footsteps do I imitate and follow?

I, Mark, am a broken and sinful man and that we should follow. All of your pastors are the same: also, **notice who is following me**. I guarantee our children are following you! Your friends and your pilgrim group are following you. Think about this! Someone is following you and you are following someone.

4. **Rejoice in the Lord always:** we have peace and comfort in God; he is our hope.