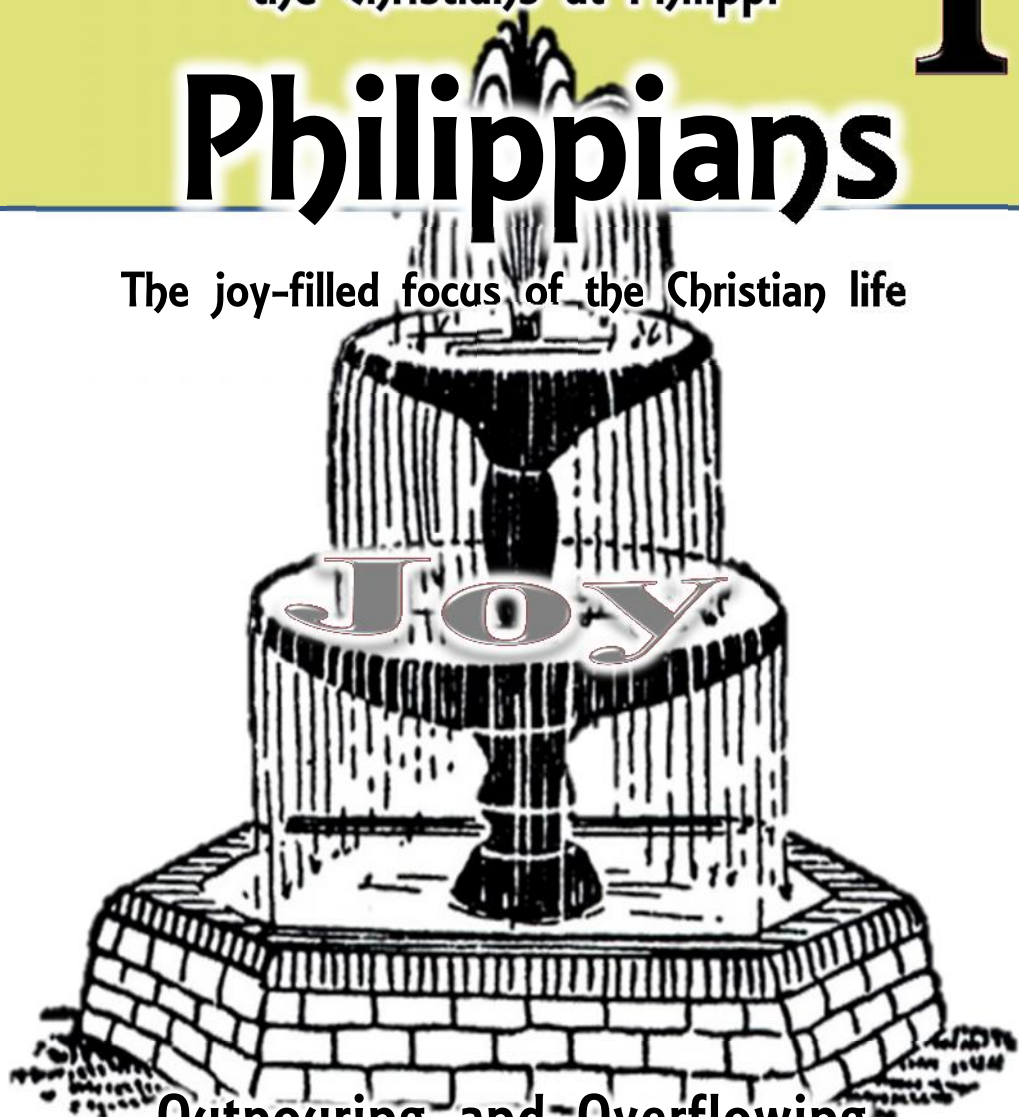


Paul's Letter to  
the Christians at Philippi

#1

# Philippians

The joy-filled focus of the Christian life



Outpouring and Overflowing

From the Pulpit Ministry of Christ E Free Church  
April-July 2018







Jesus Christ  
Our Highest Calling  
Our Greatest Purpose  
Our Soul's Source and Joy  
And Our All-Consuming Passion



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## INTRODUCTION

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If there is anything that is missing in the church today, I feel it is genuine joy in Christ. If you asked Christians if they have the joy of the Lord, most would probably outwardly affirm, “yes”, but inwardly might walk away wondering; “Do I really have the joy of the Lord?”

This book is not about wondering whether or not we have the joy of the Lord and then discussing and debating what that is or what it looks like. Instead this is intended to encourage each reader to believe with all their hearts that...

*“...do not be grieved, for the Joy of the Lord  
is [y]our strength.”*

*-Nehemiah 8:10*

And therefore to be willing to hunker down and together, fight of the joy that Christ brings into each believing Christian’s life.

# “Acts 16: An Important Introduction”

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**Series Title:** *“The Book of Philippians: The Proper Christian Perspective”*



**Series Text:** book of Philippians

**Sermon text:** Acts 16

April 8, 2018



## An Introduction



“...As it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”  
Philippians 1:20-21 ESV

\_\_\_\_\_.

The Joy of the Lord is our Strength. If the devil can steal our joy,  
\_\_\_\_\_ He will strip us of our strength.

:

### Introduction

**4 Summer Friends:** Is anyone here, sentimental? I have been on a year-long mission to reconnect with 3 childhood buddies. Growing up in my home town in SE Tennessee, I had a friend from New Jersey whose grand-parents owned adjoining property with my Dad. Each summer my friend came from New Jersey to live with his Grand-parents in SE Tennessee. His Grand Parents home was

just across the property line, and through an apple orchard from my home. We became friends and spent many summers growing up together.

I had a second friend from New Orleans who spent the summers with his grand-parents, who attended our church. We became summer time buddies and we also spent many years growing up together.

I had a third friend from Colorado whose grand-parents also attended our church. He came to live with them during the summers and we became friends and we also spent the summers together. So there were 4 of us who were summertime friends. We rode motorcycles together, got summer jobs together and for years we were close friends, until High School. Then one, by one, my buddies quit spending the summers with their grand-parents and as a result, we all drifted apart, some 40 years ago.

So last year I began a search for them, mostly through Face book and I located each of them. It was something I really wanted to do, because of the memories of our experiences and friendships together.

Maybe you are a bit sentimental. Maybe you hang onto items that remind you of past experiences or personal relationships that have been meaningful. Maybe you hold onto memories that have been very emotional to you and you find yourself sitting and recollecting the personalities and circumstances of those memories.

Paul's present situation as he is writing this letter to the Philippians was a sentimental situation. He writes this letter to a group of people with whom he had some very special relationships, and whose memories brought to the surface some deep emotions – emotions and memories he was never able to let go of. And Paul writes this letter from prison.

Paul's prison letters or Prison Epistles (Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon), were written during Paul's first imprisonment at Rome (ca. A.D. 60–62).

*Today's focus: I want to encourage you to ...*

**LOOK FOR THE *SUPERNATURAL* PRESENCE AND PURPOSE OF GOD IN YOUR LIFE.**

Be alert to the work of God or the means through which God works in your life, leading, moving, opening doors of opportunity as well as closing doors of ministry opportunity. It is important to recognize and respond to the Kingdom moments God brings into our lives, whether in the scheduled events of the day, but especially in the disruptions, and the unexpected diversions that seem to reschedule life for us, maybe even the dead end paths of your life.

Be alert and consider the *SUPERNATURAL* work and purpose of God in the day to day details of life.

**BACKGROUND TO THE BOOK OF PHILIPPIANS**

\* Acts 16 is a behind the scenes study, on the background of Paul's letter to the church in Philippi.

We are going to begin this series on Paul's Letter to the church in Philippi, by looking first at the 16<sup>th</sup> chapter of Acts. Both Silas and Luke were with Paul (Acts 16:19 / 15:40). Out of this 16<sup>th</sup> chapter, we learn some important background information on his ministry at Philippi and to the believers to whom he writes, in the book of Philippians.

On Paul's 2<sup>nd</sup> Missionary journey, he ministered in Philippi, where he experienced a variety of ministry opportunities. He enjoys productive ministry in the North Western section of what is modern Turkey. Then the Holy Spirit of God prevented him from ministering in some areas.

God led. God opened doors. God blessed ministry. God closed doors of ministry. God re-directed them away from one area to another. Paul's travels lead him to the Roman governed area of Macedonia, just north of Greece. And Paul's experiences here are nothing short of the **SUPERNATURAL** hand of God. It was in Troas, that Paul had the vision of the Man from Macedonia. (16:9)

## Paul in Troas (Acts 16:8-10)

\* God often moves and directs us in ways that are, indescribable other than to say it was *Supernatural*.

**Modern day Istanbul**



Troas is along the North Western point of Western Turkey in Western Asia. **Istanbul** is a transcontinental city in Eurasia, straddling the Bosphorus strait (which separates Europe and Asia)

between the **Sea of Marmara** and the **Black Sea**. Its commercial and historical center lies on the European side and about a third of its population lives on the Asian side. If you were in Western Istanbul, you would be in, what is considered the continent of Eastern Europe. But if you drove across the bridge, across the Bosphorous Strait, you would enter into Eastern Turkey, which is located in Western Asia. Drive across the bridge from Europe to Asia and you are still in Istanbul. It was just south of this general area where Paul had a life altering vision.

### **Paul's Vision in Troas**

**Act 16:8-10 NIV** <sup>8</sup>So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas. <sup>9</sup>During the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, "Come over to **Macedonia** and help us."<sup>10</sup>After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

As a result of his vision, Paul was certain as to its purpose. God had a place He wanted Paul to go and He had a plan to use Paul once he arrived at his new destination. Many of us may not be familiar nor comfortable with this kind of leading from the Lord. I being one of those! But it was effective in guiding Paul. With God's Supernatural leading, He also had a Supernatural plan for Paul. I was not raised in a church setting that was big on visions and dreams, and yet that is one way God promises in Acts 2, that would begin to mark His work through His servants, following Pentecost.(Acts 2:17ff) So Paul is obedient and he traveled to Philippi.

### **MINISTRY BEGINS IN PHILIPPI (16:12)**

\*Paul experienced meaningful ministry in the area of Philippi. Ministry unexpectedly and **Supernaturally** begins when Paul

arrives in Philippi, his new mission field. (see map)

## **Paul and Lydia (16:12-14)**

\* As God led Paul, He likewise provided for productive ministry.

**Act 16:12-14 NIV** <sup>12</sup> and from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. We remained in this city some days. <sup>13</sup>On the Sabbath we went outside the city gate to the river, where we expected to find **a place of prayer**. We sat down and began to speak to the women who had gathered there. <sup>14</sup>One of those listening was a woman from the city of Thyatira named Lydia, a dealer in purple cloth. She was a **worshiper** of God. The Lord opened her **heart** to respond to Paul's message. <sup>15</sup>When she and the members of her household were baptized, she invited us to her home. "If you consider me a believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my house." And she persuaded us.

### ***At Philippi --***

(i) In Philippi Paul was **on his way to a prayer mtg.** but it doesn't seem that he ever got around to prayer.(16:13) There He met Lydia, a seller of purple fabrics from Thyatira. Thyatira was known for special dyes and fabrics of purple.

(ii) Lydia was a worshipper of God and a woman of whom God had already prepared her heart to hear Paul's message of Christ. (16:14) "Lydia" was also a name for which the North Western area of Turkey or earlier Galatian, was often referred. Lydia was evidently a convert of the Jewish faith, as she is described as a worshipper of God. That was a great foundation upon which Paul could build, for while she was a worshipper of God, she was not a believer in the Lord Jesus, Messiah.

Connecting with Lydia was an unexpected, unscheduled interruption to Paul's plans for the day. However, it was also a

**Supernatural** interruption. Paul shared the word of God and she believed as did her family, and they were all baptized.(v15) What an exciting and productive experience. If Paul ever doubted His vision and picking up and moving to Philippi, perhaps this would have convinced him that he had made the right decision.

Paul was alert to the **Supernatural** in his life. God supernaturally intervening, and **Supernaturally** re-directing. When speaking about God's presence amidst life's chaos, Joni Erickson Tada refers to God as "The Glorious Intruder". He enters into our affairs. He reschedules our day. He Intrudes into our well thought through plans and **Supernaturally** redirects life.

Paul was aware of and alert to the Supernatural intrusions, of the "Glorious Intruder". And so Paul's story picks up, as Paul picks up where he left off, that is, making their way to the prayer meeting.

### **Paul and a Slave Girl (16:16-17)**

\* Here we have a clash between the Supernatural work of the Kingdom of God and the supernatural work of the kingdom of darkness.

**Act 16:16-17** NIV <sup>16</sup>Once when we were going **to the place of prayer**, we were met by a female slave who had a spirit by which she **predicted the future**. She earned a great deal of money for her owners by fortune-telling.<sup>17</sup>She followed Paul and the rest of us, shouting, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved."

(iii) Paul resumes his journey to the prayer mtg. But again, he does not make it. He met a slave girl possessed by a demon of fortune-telling or "divination" (16:16) The word here is **Putho** = python, fortune-teller, sorceress; Pythia was the earlier name of the Greek area which was believed to be the home of the god Apollo.

It was renown for fortune tellers, seers, prophecies, and sorcerers. So the spirit of “divination” is a spirit of Python or of demonic prophetic utterances. And yes, this kind of spiritual darkness is a reality. And it seems to imply that this “spirit” originated at a geographic area, from which it got its name.

**The Jamieson, Fausset Brown** commentary states: Regarding the spirit of “Python” - The reality of this demoniacal possession is as undeniable as that of any in the Gospel history.”

This entire experience was nothing short of **Supernatural**. As we have dealt with before, there are evil Supernatural influences from Satan, and there are divine Supernatural influences from God Himself.

With **divine** Supernatural discernment, Paul realized this woman was the product of a demonic **Supernatural** spirit and cast out the spirit from the woman and she was gloriously set free. (v18) But this gal was owned by people who made money from her fortune telling. So once she was delivered from the spirit of divination, she lost the power to tell the future. As a result, her owners lost their source of income and they were irate. (v19)

So an angry mob began to gather and all of a sudden, Paul and Silas who are the good guys, who have been experiencing powerful **Supernatural** ministry, all of a sudden are now in trouble with the authorities.

**Act 16:22-24** NIV <sup>22</sup>The crowd joined in the attack against Paul and Silas, and the magistrates ordered them to be stripped and beaten with rods. <sup>23</sup>After they had been severely flogged, they were thrown into prison, and the jailer was commanded to guard them carefully. <sup>24</sup>When he received these orders, he put them in the inner cell and fastened their feet in the stocks. Their clothes

were torn off them, they were severely beaten and thrown into prison. (v22-24)

Now they experience more of the *Supernatural* world, but now it is Supernatural *opposition* to their ministry for Christ. Those who owned the slave girl and made their fortune from her abilities, are now left without their money source. In their anger they stir up a riot against Paul and Silas and as a result, they are beaten and unjustly incarcerated.

After this, we hear nothing else about the delivered slave girl. Wouldn't you love to know what happened to her? Scripture doesn't tell us. Maybe she staggered away, coming to her senses and wondering what just happened? Or perhaps she, like the others in this chapter became true believers in Jesus and was gloriously saved. It seems that this would be the only good reason Luke would have included this experience into his history book. It is quite possible that as Paul writes this letter to the Philippians, he has her in mind as one of the new believers in Philippi who would eventually read his letter.

## **PAUL AND THE JAILER (16:25-32)**

\* Those who are incarcerated are often those of whom God has had opportunity to bring them to conviction, soften their hearts and make them receptive to the message of hope in Jesus Christ.

### **Paul and Silas in prison (v24)**

\* Please note, that unpleasant circumstances did not deter Paul and Silas from their proper Christian perspective.

Paul and Silas are imprisoned. All that ministry and now this. Frustrating? Discouraging? For some probably. For us, maybe, but not for Paul and Silas.

**Act 16:25** NIV <sup>25</sup>About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them.

**Guess what?** They finally get their prayer mtg. They were praying and worshiping and rejoicing and trusting God with what seems like a SUPERNATURAL Sense of God being in control. An assurance of the Sovereignty of God over all situations, even their trouble. They were praying, and singing hymns to God. And all the prisoners there were listening to them.

There was their prayer mtg. There was their mission field for the moment. And perhaps somewhere in there was the Man from Macedonia, if he was really a person.

### **The Jailer and family (16:28**

\* If anything, this chapter shows us the dramatic, supernaturally powerful manner in which God can work in and through us, and how He works to call and direct those whom He chooses, and how He provides and prepares those whom He has chosen to receive his message.

**Act 16:26-32** NIV <sup>26</sup>Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everyone's chains came loose. <sup>27</sup>The jailer woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself because he thought the prisoners had escaped. <sup>28</sup>But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! **We are ALL here!**"

<sup>29</sup>The jailer called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. <sup>30</sup>He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

<sup>31</sup>They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be

saved—you and your household.” <sup>32</sup> Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all the others in his house.

Now a **Supernatural** earthquake occurs, opening the prison doors and causing the jailer to fear for his life, assuming the prisoners had all escaped. He was actually going to take his own life, but Paul urges the jailer not to harm himself because Paul and Silas had not escaped.

Servants of Christ must have a highly developed trust in the supreme sovereignty of God Almighty, otherwise defeat, discouragement, and despair could easily set overtake us.

If the prisoners had escaped the jailer would quite possibly have been executed for his negligence, so he was going to save himself the humiliation and take his own life. But Paul and Silas had not escaped (v28a). And there were other prisoners than just Paul and Silas right? What about them? Didn't they escape?

(v28b) "Do not harm yourself, *for we are **ALL** here.*"

“**All**” the prisoners were still there. Why? I understand Paul and Silas not running for freedom, but why did the other prisoners not make a break for it and head for the hills? Something miraculous or **Supernatural** had happened to them also. It would seem that Paul and Silas had experienced productive **Supernatural** ministry right there in the unlikely place of their own prison among their fellow prison mates.

They recognized the divine, heavenly Supernatural going on, and so trusting in God, while in prison, they also recognized the kingdom opportunities the Glorious Intruder had brought to them. And they not only recognized the opportunity, but they responded to the opportunity.

It seems they had fruitful ministry among the prisoners, such that the prisoners did not appear to escape – perhaps realizing they

were genuine criminals and were deserving of jail. Who know? Perhaps these prisoners became ministers to others in jail.

### **People who were Paul's Spiritual children**

- (1) Lydia and her family entire family (16:15)
- (2) Possibly the demonized slave girl? (16:18)
- (3) The jailer and his entire family (16:34)
- (4) Possibly some of the prisoners who were left in prison? (16:39)

So these are people whom Paul met, had input into their spiritual lives and apparently some became co-laborers in the work for Christ. These were people, relational connections and powerful personal memories that Paul was never able to let go of. As a result, He wrote to the Christians in Philippi while he, himself, was incarcerated in Rome.

### **CONCLUSION:**

Paul's ministry led him to write His letter to the church at Philippi or the book of Philippians. Some lessons we can learn on this introduction. For the true believer in Jesus Christ, our life and our ministry is infused with the -- **SUPERNATURAL**.

**(1)** Look for the **Supernatural** circumstances in your own life. If nothing more than the manner in which God directed and moved Paul around, HE often uses circumstances and even trouble to guide and re-direct our lives as well. God used significant diversions to direct Paul to significant, fruitful ministry and He can do the same for us today.

**(2)** Look for the **Supernatural** adjustments that God may want to make in your life. Consider how God leads, and often redirects our course along the way. Paul never actually met the man from Macedonia. He did however, meet Lydia and her family; the Slave Girl; the fellow prisoners and the Jailer and his family. God used

that vision of *the man from Macedonia* to guide Paul in the direction God wanted him to go, for the ministry He had prepared for both he and Silas.

You may think you have certain well thought through plans for your life, but God also has plans to intrude, and redirect your path. Be open to God changing or at least adjusting your course.

I went to MBI for missionary aviation. But God re-directed and adjusted my direction by allowing me to flunk out of flight school. However he redirected and refocused my path and pointed me in a slightly adjusted direction, with a different major, with a broader perspective and with a greater surrender to the will of God in my life.

**(3)** Look for the unexpected Supernatural opportunities, in the most unlikely and unexpected places, where God might supernaturally lead you, in order to be used for His divine, Supernatural kingdom purposes. A waiting room for the doctor or the mechanic; a family gathering that you attended and was unscheduled; a meeting at school or in the gym or in dance class; a long line at the supermarket; or a neighbor who drops by to bend your ear. Be aware of potential kingdom moments God is bringing into your life. Be aware of the schedule of your day or the circumstances of your life. Don't detest or curse those changes, but rather see them as out of your control, yet still under God's Supernatural control to bring about His Supernatural purpose and plan for you. God used a demon possessed person and time in prison as unexpected intrusions to Paul's schedule and ministry. I have found that He works similarly in my life as well.

**(4)** Ministry has it is ups and downs. We prefer the ups, but sometimes tend to despise the downs. We must begin to view the *downs*, just as much a part of God's Supernaturally perfect plan for us as the *ups*. There is no telling how many downs, we have

experienced, yet wasted by being downcast, upset, frustrated, dissatisfied and unappreciative -- that we missed some other Supernatural opportunity or kingdom moment God may have had planned for us. Now that I've actually said that out loud, it doesn't sound very Calvinistic of me does it? Nevertheless, I believe that to be a very real possibility. ***If God is in control***, there are now bad days; there are no delayed schedules, there are no wrong turns or missed opportunities. If God is truly in control, then these are merely Supernatural life course adjustments. .

**(5)** There are times when it is difficult to differentiate between the attacks of spiritual darkness or the ***Supernatural*** leadings of God Almighty. We tend to view all things "bad" as being from the devil, just because its uncomfortable or inconvenient, and only the "good" things as being from God. That is an inappropriate means of measurement or discernment. Don't be quick to blame things you feel are unpleasant, on the devil.

**(6)** God's guidance often takes us to where we were not intending nor desiring to go. When the Glorious Intruder is at work, all intrusions, interruptions, interferences; all distractions, diversions and disruptions are grand, glorious and Divinely Supernatural, if we will only Trust God's sovereign hand in all of life's situations.

**(7)** God Sovereignty works to ***Supernaturally*** prepare hearts and bring Kingdom results to those whom He pleases. He did it for Lydia, He did it for the Jailer, He did it for the slave girl.

If we were in Paul's situation, we might be tempted to chalk up the ministry to Lydia and her family, as our own accomplishments, that we check off and send to headquarters. We might be tempted to think we should not waste our time with a disruptive, annoying and frustrating person such as the fortune telling slave girl. And yet she was one of Gods' ***Supernatural*** appointments for the ministry of deliverance from the clutches of Satan himself.

We might also be tempted to be irritated with God for allowing us to be incarcerated and imprisoned. We might think we were wasting valuable ministry time. We might be tempted to think, “What is God doing, wasting my valuable time and talents in this crazy place.”

We may even be tempted to think, Lydia and family were more important than the slave girl. We might consider the mysterious **Man from Macedonia** to be more important than those “low life” prisoners in the cold, damp dungeons of the Philippi prison system.

We may be tempted to think that the people God has called us to reach out to, the trailer parks, children’s ministries, community outreaches for connections are tolerable things, but are too outside our walls to be too bothered with.

***WE MUST NOT FAIL*** to recognize the **Supernatural** in our church life. We must not fail to respond to the work which God has placed before us - reaching out to the least, the last and the lost --- the frustrating and the time consuming people around us. If we fail there, we need not expect God to bless us with any help we may be praying for or provisions for anything else we think may be of importance.

We must recognize the Supernatural in our personal life and the opportunities to connect with others, in order to connect them to Christ and to other Christ followers. We must recognize the opportunities God Supernaturally provides for us and not fail to express and explain the love of God demonstrated to them in Christ and how their lives can be just as gloriously filled with hope and joy as our own life.

Paul never forgot those whom he met and developed relationships with there in Philippi. So later when he is in prison, it is these people who are on his mind and who become the recipients of the Letter to the Saints in Philippi.



# Philippians

*The Proper Christian Perspective*

# Chapter 1

*“The **FOCUSED** Perspective”*



“The **FOCUSED** Perspective: We do not focus so much on our circumstances, but on Gods’ purpose in our circumstances.”

# “Fellowship in the Gospel”

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**Series Title:** *“The Book of Philippians: The Proper Joy-filled Christian Perspective”*

**April 15 & 22**

**Sermon text:** Philippians ch.1

**SERMON:** “Fellowship in the Gospel” (1:1-11)

*\* The Foundation for all things Christian*

Philippians: *“ THE JOY FILLED CHRISTIAN LIFE”*

*\* The Proper Christian Perspective*

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*Our Proper Christian perspective, refers to our outlook on life. The involves how we view (1) Our Past Experiences, (2) Our Present Circumstances, and (3) Our Future Opportunities.*

## REVIEW

So Last week we looked at Acts 16 at the people who are the recipients of the book of Philippians, which is a letter from Paul to the Christians he met at Philippi, ministered to and some who became ministers with him in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Those people were:

- (1) Lydia of Thyatira and her family
- (2) Possibly the demonic slave girl who was gloriously set free
- (3) The jailer and his family
- (4) Probably some of the prisoners

These are some of the people who Paul met on his missionary journey to Philippi and those to whom he writes while in prison

## INTRODUCTION

So in Acts 21-27 we see Paul in Jerusalem and certain Jews stir up a riot against him for his message of the gospel of Christ. He is arrested and while in custody, the Lord appeared to him and

informed him that he would go to Rome and would testify of Christ there.(Acts. 23:11)

Paul actually remained incarcerated for 2 years in Caesarea(24:27), which is West of Jerusalem on the coast of the Mediterranean. After several opportunities to not only give the reason for his arrest but also testimony of his dramatic conversion to Christ, he was sentenced to stand before Caesar in Rome.(Acts 25:17). After surviving shipwreck along the way, Paul arrives in Rome and was assigned to house arrest, and lived alone with the soldier who was guarding him.

**Act 28:30-31** ESV He lived there two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him, (31) proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ with all boldness and without hindrance.

And it is believed that during his imprisonment there in Rome, He wrote his *prison epistles* or the prison letters of Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon.

The context of Paul's imprisonment is important because what he writes in his letter to the Christians in Philippi, is the focus of this study, which is "THE PROPER JOY-FILLED CHRISTIAN LIFE PERSPECTIVE"

Chapter 1 \* The FOCUSED Perspective: Paul Reveals that he has "A Heart of Joy in a life of Trouble"

**Phil.1:1-7** (1) Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all God's holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons<sup>a</sup>: (2) Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (3) I thank my God every time I remember you. (4) In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy (5) because of your partnership in the gospel from the first

day until now, (6) being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. (7) It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart and, whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. (8) God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus. (9) And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, (10) so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ,

So Philippians presents our Proper Christian's Focused Perspective. How we view (1) Our Past Experiences, (2) Our Present Circumstances and (3) our Future Opportunities.

**SERMON:** "Fellowship in the Gospel" (1:1-11)

*\* The Foundation for all things Christian*

**Q:** What is your perspective on your own Christian life? Is it positive and productive? Is it Negative and pessimistic? Or is your view of your Christ focused life both hopeful and joyful?

**Q:** Now where is Paul again? *Prison.*

**THE CHRISTIAN MIND (1:1-7 - Our Thoughts**

The Foundation for all things Christian, is the gospel and how we view life in light of the gospel or "Good News" about Jesus. The Christian mind involves our thoughts and our focused thinking. Thinking refers to the gaining of knowledge, the reflection on experience, resulting in emotion; all of which may serve as motivation for Christian living.

**Paul's Greetings to the Philippians (v1-2**

*\* Paul's letter of encouragement seeks to pass on his blessings from God to others, which is specifically directed to those with whom he has served.*

**Phil.1:1-2) (1)** Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all God's holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons<sup>a</sup>: **(2)** Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Greetings (1:1-2) from Paul as the author. He has Timothy with him, who was one of Paul's "spiritual children". Timothy was part Jew and Greek. (Acts 16:1-3, 1Cor. 4:17, Phil.2:20)

It is interesting to note how Paul addresses the recipients of this letter. They are "holy people in Christ or "Saints". Saints are not superstar Christians, or celebrity Hot Shots who are exalted above all the other "normal Christians". Saints are simply true believers in Jesus Christ. The Bishops are the overseers or spiritual leaders or elders of the local church there. HE also writes to the Deacons who are those who are helpers and volunteer servants in the church of Philippi.

Now notice how Paul describes himself. Paul & Timothy, servants of Jesus Christ. This word for servant is "doulos" or slave of Jesus. He could have referred to himself as "apostle" which is a title or label which may be perceived as authoritative. But instead he refers to himself as a *slave* of Christ Jesus, which expresses humility and servitude, and on common ground with the other Christians.

I've heard it said, "We're all slaves to something? What are you a slave to?". Sometimes we can be taken up with titles, labels or position, which can become relational and ministerial barriers. We can allow things to separate us from one another. Titles may elevate you over someone else. A label may separate you from another brother or sister in the Lord. Position may infiltrate our minds and fill our hearts with pride, so that we begin to view ourselves on different planes of worth within the Church of our Lord Jesus.

From Greg Herrick, in “*Philippians: The Unconquerable Gospel*”, we get this lesson: **Recognize and appreciate that in the church we are all servants no matter what how “high” or “low” our profile in the body of Christ may be.**

**1:2** Grace (charis) is more of a Greek greeting referring to God’s undeserved favor or blessing being bestowed. Peace or Shalom, may be more from the Hebrew background, which was also a greeting, wishing others harmony, prosperity and fulfilment from the Lord.

“Grace & Peace” may have been a Christian greeting or wish or prayer that expressed desire for one to receive Gods’ grace and as a result to experience His peace as well. Grace is an act of God. Peace is the experience of the believer. The terminology would have resonated with both Greek and Hebrew alike.

Paul had an ample supply of both ‘grace and peace’, none of which the authorities can take away, nor can prison keep out of his life. And it is his desire to pass these on to his friends in Philippi, in order for them to experience the same level of Christian life that he enjoys.

Greg Herrick: Accept God’s grace and enjoy the peace he has provided for you. Or Share Gods grace and help others to experience that grace from God and peace with God that every person needs.

Paul recalls his past experiences in Philippi, and in his present circumstances, takes the future opportunity to encourage the believers there with his letter of love and joy.

### **Paul’s joy filled memories (v.3-6**

\* Paul’s memories from his past, prompted him to thankful prayer.

**Phil.1 1:3-6 (3)** I thank my God every time I remember you.

(4) In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with **joy** (5) because of your **Fellowship in the gospel** from the first day until now, (6) being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

(v3)- remembrance    -to think this (v7)    -knowledge (v9)

Paul purposefully puts his mind into action and vividly recalls Acts 16. He recalls God's Supernatural connections with Paul and Lydia and her family. He remembers his encounter with the slave girl who was dramatically and gloriously delivered from a demonic spirit. And he would recount the jailer and his family and perhaps the prisoners who also became believers while imprisoned with Paul.

The impressions we make, on the people we meet, last a lifetime. These impressions have never left Paul's memory. Meaningful, ministry experiences have a way of doing that. Paul's knowledge of the past, prompts his present reflecting of on his experiences, which result in his deep emotion and heartfelt gratitude to God for all his experiences, even the uncomfortable ones.

### ***Emotion of appreciation***

**1) He offers Thanks to God (v3).** always in every prayer. This reflects Paul's deep sense of appreciation to God for what he remembers about God's Supernatural workings in their situations. Remember the **Supernatural** element of God in their lives from last week.

Greg Herrick reminds us: Learn to appreciate other Christians by thanking God for their ministries and contribution to the body.

Not only is Paul an "emotional" person, but also a thankful person and a prayerful person. This gives insight into his personal

relationship with God. Sometimes our prayer life is characterized more by asking, rather than on focusing on God or on others.

He is thankful for his partners in ministry(v5). Some of these were not merely the people he ministered to, but the relationship is reciprocal. These people ministered to him as well. They had served together in the work of the gospel. “Fellowship in the Gospel” refers to being co-workers together in sharing Christ with others and working together to disciple all who were interested in the area of Philippi. Working together to help others draw nearer to Jesus Christ can unite people more deeply together, than any other experience I know.

I recently received a post on Facebook from the family of Dan Ivans, celebrating Dan’s 110<sup>th</sup>. (though Dan died years ago). Dan was my old Sunday School teacher when I was around 10 years old. I remember one day he came by my house to pick me up for a pic-nic. He had others from my SS class in his old green station wagon. He took us down to the river to a field, where he parked and we enjoyed the food. Then he got out the football for us to play with.

Now Dan was crippled from an injury at an earlier part of his life. He could not run. But he would toss us the ball and he’d try to move around then he’d sit down to rest. Then he’d try to get back into the game again. I was amazed that he would want to be with us SS kids, that he’d go through all this to be with us.

His picture immediately brought back memories and emotions attached to that man’s interest in my life as a very young boy. This whole thing took me back to my past. And as I was reading this passage of Scripture, I received this picture of Dan. So in this present circumstance, I had to stop and take time to thank the Lord in prayer, for Dan Ivan’s interest and influence in my life.

Perhaps you have had someone in your past who was a positive and encouraging influence on you; perhaps a Sunday school teacher, grand parent, school teacher or even a guardian. If you have a memory like that, and if that person is still living I'd like to urge you to attempt to contact them, and share your appreciation to them for the impact they had on your life. You may even have the opportunity to share your spiritual journey with them and encourage them as well.

**2) He makes Requests to God with joy** (v4) Not only does Paul express his thankfulness, but his prayers are prompted by joy. IT would be of significant encouragement to know that when someone thinks of you, they are thankful to God that He brought you together. Or that you are filled with joy as you recollect life together connecting with others, in order to connect them to Christ and to other Christ followers.

**SQ:** 1:4 Who does Paul pray to God for? “for all of you”. Paul prays for others. That’s intercession. “I always pray for all of you.” That is the prayer of intercession. His prayers are others focused towards their own needs and personal welfare, not just his own.

**SQ:** What has contributed to Paul’s joyful and thankful heart?

**Phil.1 1:5-6** (5) because of your **Fellowship in the gospel** from the first day until now, (6) being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

**3) Fellowship (v5):** means something shared; or a partnership or joint participation in some activity or endeavor. But This is not just “Christian fellowship”, like eating together, but rather it is “ministry fellowship” or being co-laborers in the work of sharing Christ with others. (v5)

The Big Difference. (1) They also shared in the grace of God, through faith in Christ, and are recipients of eternal salvation. (2) They have shared in the ministry of the gospel, which is sharing that salvation through Christ with others. Here is the source of the emotion of Paul and the affections he has toward the saints in Philippi.

**SQ:** 1:5 In what ways can you help your Christian teachers? We can make their job a joy, by faithfully following and serving Jesus Christ together.

**4) Confidence (v6):** Here Paul speaks words of encouragement to the saints in Philippi. Remember Paul is in prison. Remember also, that throughout this book, Paul makes reference to the pain, the hardship and the struggles in the lives of these Christians. He refers to the evil workers, adversaries and other things that cause us to realize that they too are facing some significant challenges of the faith.

Regarding the spiritual state of the believers in Philippi; if they are wondering as to their worth, Paul is not. Paul is confident or fully assured of their value in the Kingdom work of Christ and of his appreciation for how they have ministered to him.

So he writes to encourage and reassure the Saints. Paul has full assurance of their salvation, and of the fact that God has a work to finish and that work includes the Philippian Christians.

At times, we are in need of reassurance. Thank God for those around us who have assurance, who can reassure us. And Thank God that there are times in our lives when we are the ones who have assurance, and strength of faith so that at particular times, those who are assured and who can offer reassurance to those around us who may be struggling with relationships, circumstances, self-worth, value in ministry and even their place within the plan of God.

Paul is assured that what God has begun with them, He will not lay aside but will in fact, continue that work, until they reach maturity and God's plan is complete. There is no one who does not have a purpose within God's plan. Paul is assured that God is not only working *in* each person there, but he is working *through* each person there. One is a work of maturity, while the other is an equipping for ministry. And God's plan for them will not end, but will continue until the day of Christ Jesus; that is the 2<sup>nd</sup> coming of Christ to judge sin and reward believers.

Each person is part of God's plan and purpose and He is working *IN* your life. But not only is HE working *IN* your life, He wants to work *THROUGH* your life, to help others along in their own spiritual journey.

**“Connecting to others, in order to connect them to Christ, and to other Christ followers, the church.”**

Phil.1:6 “... being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.”

**“Never squelch a reassuring comment.”** Is there someone who was a positive, encouraging influence in your life? Someone who has helped you, or showed interest in you? Perhaps there was someone who helped you become the person you are today. I'd like to encourage you to contact that person(s) soon and express your appreciation for their influence in your life. This is what Paul is doing.

## **THE CHRISTIAN HEART (1:7-9 *Our Affections*)**

\* Emotion leads to affections, resulting in Action. Our thoughts and feelings are powerful motivators for changing lifestyle direction. Our emotions and memories or our relational

connections can be powerful motivators.

**2Cor. 7:9-10** ESV As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved >> into repenting. For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us. (10) For godly grief produces >> a repentance that leads >> to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces >> death.

(>>is my own emphasis) Our greater emotion can overpower a lesser emotion. The sorrow over our sin, can overpower our joy in sinning or our desire to keep sinning. Our joy to please our heavenly Father can override the joy we had experienced in the sin we were living in.

**Q:** When was the last time you were so grieved over your own sin, that it resulted in genuine repentance? Some may be thinking, "well its been so long since I have sinned, therefore it has been a long time since I have needed to repent."

That is not for me to judge, but for God's Holy Spirit to work that out with you. It has been a very long time since I have heard any Christian indicate that they have been convicted to confess and repent from any sin!

Godly sorrow, which is our Godly emotion, can be a powerful motivator which can lead to effective repentance and a purified life or changed living.

### **Paul's heart for the saints** (v7

\* Paul's love for the saints prompts him to take action.

**Phil.1:7-** (7) It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart and, whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. (8) God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.

**1) in my heart** (v7a) (*kardia*) refers to thoughts and feelings and emotions, which result from favorable experiences + joyful remembrances. This in turn can lead to deep fostered affections which >> leads to deeply motivated responses.

When we help children to trust Christ, they are often encouraged to ask Jesus to fill their hearts. Children in Papua New Guinea ask Jesus into their “stomachs”. Either way, it is not a place in our body, but a reference to our inner most being, that Christ would rule and reign from the inside out.

**2) in my bonds** (v7b) Paul makes reference to his own situation of imprisonment.

**3) in the defense and confirmation** (v7c) Though incarcerated, Paul is under house arrest and is enjoying a certain freedom in ministry, though remaining under guarded supervision.

Paul is urging the Christians to be doing what God has called him to do. Paul is in prison and the Philippians are also experiencing some levels of persecution. As we progress through this book, their own troubles become more apparent.

They have people who are their adversaries, due to the faith. (1:28)  
They are partakers in the sufferings of Paul. (1:28-29)

They are not merely sympathizing with Paul’s sufferings, they are participants in those sufferings, at some level. We will read more about that later.

>>I want to invite you to look up and look around at the church here. TODAY, We are all partakers together in the ministry of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Look hard. Remember each face well. My brothers and sisters, it may not be but one generation,that separates any of us from the cultural freedom we share today, with the cultural persecution we may experience in the decades ahead.

Remember these faces. Hold fast to these experiences; which may seem almost insignificant now, but may be the memories of the experiences and the relationships we recall later, that may keep us from giving up under the looming Christian persecution.

This is what sustained the Apostle Paul. It seems to be what is sustaining Pastor Andrew Brunson, who is imprisoned in Turkey for his offenses of Gospel Terrorism in Turkey today.

### **Paul's circumstances of life (v8)**

\* Remember Paul's ministry and feelings were reciprocal. He ministered to the church and they are indebted to him. On the other hand, he remembers them with deep emotions of joy and he is ministered to by those fond memories.

**Phil.1:8 . (8)** God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.

These were not people who Paul ministered to and who became “✓” marks on his ministerial score card. On the contrary...

#### **1) He had a Heart full of affection for his friends:**

**SQ: 1:7** How might you share with your Christian teachers in their contribution to your spiritual life?

**2) God is witness** (v8a) – “martyr” – God is the heavenly testimony of the Truth, about how we feel.

#### **3) Paul's Affections**

**Phil.1:8 . (8)** God can testify how I long for all of you with the *affection* of Christ Jesus.

**1) Heart of affection for his friends:** These were not people who Paul ministered to and who became a “✓” on his ministry score card. In fact they had become closer than family. Affections: **literally refers to the bowels or intestines:** the

deepest, inner most part of a person's emotions (v8) "long" = yearn, crave after ... deep inner longing for close, brothers and sisters in Christ, but in the gospel ministry.

**Phm 1:7 KJV** For we have great joy and consolation in thy love, because the ***bowels*** of the saints are ***refreshed*** by thee, brother.

That would have a different cultural connotation for us today. As they say in missions; "Context is everything."

This is not based on physical attraction or on what good things they did for Paul. But there is a Supernatural connection – a fellowship of salvation and now a fellowship in their sufferings, that has become a bond of Christ focused ministry relationships.

## THE CHRISTIAN PRAYER (1:9-11

(1) The Christian Mind: Thoughts leads to Experience, resulting in emotion

(2) The Christian Heart: Emotion leads to affection, resulting in Action.

(3) The Christian Prayer: Action leads to Lifestyle, resulting in Prayer. And the Action of love is ***prayer***.

**1Th 5:21 ESV** but test everything; hold fast what is good.

Too often the negative experiences color our world more indelibly and more vividly than the good experiences. Therefore hold onto what is good.

Where is Paul again? *Prison*.

### **The Christian life in all circumstances** (v.9

\* Paul is in prison and some feel the recipients of his letter may also be persecuted at this point.

**Php 1:9-11 ESV (9) And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, (10) so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ,<sup>[v6,9; 2:16]</sup>**

Love here is not actually emotionally love. Nor is it brotherly love. It is Agape Love – which is the Love that only God has and we only have it because God gives it to us.

**(1) love may abound** (v9a) “abound” = indicating a love which is growing (v8) in knowledge and insight and to exceed expectations; or go beyond measure; to overflow in its content and demonstration

**(2) more and more in knowledge** and judgment (v9b)

increasing in knowledge, which is recognition, precise, correct, understanding; and in judgment, which is our perception, discernment

**Discernment** is actions based in wisdom, which governs our emotions. Discernment is good and Godly judgment.

**SQ: 1:9** In what ways does Paul want the Philippians’ love to increase?

**Our Standing before God** (v10)

\* We walk by faith but not by sight. However we still use our brain.

**Php 1:9-11 ESV (9) And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, (10) so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ,**

As Christians we must continue to exercise our God given intellect and good “common” sense. Take note. Examine and evaluate

things. Allow your brain to access and assimilate knowledge, with the purpose of deeming what is worthy and what is unworthy. Paul uses several words as object lessons.

**1) That you approve** things that are excellent (v10)

approve = approve, document; it means to exercise good judgment or guess what? Godly spiritual discernment, resulting from actions based in wisdom, which governs our emotions, choices and ultimately actions.

Excellent implies things that differ, and not having the same value or worth. Some things are better than others. Our spirit sensitized minds have the ability to sort through information, evaluate the value and worth of matters and make a decision for that which is the best and most worthy of our time, attention and interests. Being able to distinguish, between what is good and what is best, is a mark of Christian maturity.

**2) that you may be sincere** and without offense; meaning genuine; the real thing; sincere = “from the sun’s rays” – judged by sunlight; to sift rapidly; as in the winnowing process of separating wheat from chaff; “without offence = nor causing others to stumble.

**3) until the day of Christ** (v10) - cp v6 (2:16). Along with the concept of Joy, the day of Christ or the return of Christ is mentioned in each chapter in Philippians. These references are intended to keep the Christian focus, not on ourselves, on what we want, or what we think looks good or is desirable; but we are to do all that we do and make all our decisions based on the fact that one day, we will give account to Christ for what we have done, how we have lived, our treatment of one another, our obedience to the Great Commission and even our choices. (Acts 10:42, 2Tim.4:1;1Pet.4:5) We must hang on and stay on track for Christ.

## Our Fullness in Christ (v11)

\* It is Paul's desire that every believer be filled with the fullness of Christ Himself.

**Php 1:10-11** ESV (10) so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, (11) **filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.**

**SQ: 1:10** Why does Paul want the Philippians' love to increase? In order that they be filled with the fullness of Jesus Christ.

**1) being filled** with fruit of Right. (v11a) At salvation we receive His gift of positional righteousness.(2:Cor.5:20). Yet daily, we are being sanctified so that we will practically become more like Christ in our attitudes, choices and actions.

**2) through Christ for God's praise and ultimate Glory** (v11b)

Sometimes we may wonder, if any of us do anything for God's glory anymore? In our Wed night P&B video series on Church History, Pastor Tom Nelson shared some statistics on prayer and he stated that it is not the glory of God that motivates most Christians to pray, it is our own personal pain that is the greater motivation to get Christians to pray.

**Q:** How are the fruit of righteousness displayed? What is the purpose of any kind of good works for the true believing Christian? To demonstrate the purity and depth of our own personal faith based relationship with our Creator, heavenly Father God, through His Son, Jesus Christ.

**Good works:** cp. Mat.5:16; 2Tim.3:17; Eph.2:10; Tit.2:14; 1Pet.2:12

**Q:** (1) What is the main reason that you should want to evidence true goodness and Righteousness? (2) What is the bottom line

reason you spend time in prayer? If our answer is not “for the ultimate praise and glory of God”, then perhaps we are praying and living amiss or with wrong motives.

### **CONCLUSION:**

(1) How do you view others around you, especially in the body of Christ? (are they categorized? Labeled? Approachable? Do you view each as a valuable brother or sister in Christ? Or an equally valuable part of Gods’ creation?

**1Cor. 15:58** ESV Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

(2) In all our Experiences? Under all of life’s Circumstances? In the face of all my opportunities? Do I have a positive outlook? Do I possess a joy-filled perspective toward life, people and ministry?

Positive → Productive

Negative → Wasteful

Hopeful → Joyful

### **REFLECTIONS QUESTIONS:**

1) Are there any Christians in our lives that we love as much as Paul loved the Philippians? Those whom we serve side by side with each week?

2) What is one specific thing you could do to help another Christian(s) with their spiritual growth? Encourage? Contact? Send a note? Make a visit? Engage in a conversation?

3) Is your life characterized by righteousness as Paul prayed?

- 4) Have you thanked God lately, for the godly people in your life – SS teacher, family member, friend who has been a close, deep, spiritually discerning friend whose interest and input into your life has been a positive influence, toward molding you into the person you have become today?
- 5) Prayer for those who have lived their Christian lives in a manner that gives you something to shoot for. For those with whom you have shared ministry with and who retain a heart and burden for the lost and for Christ's kingdom.

### **ASSIGNMENT:**

- (1) Read Phil. Ch.1.
- (2) Be fully involved in the work of the Lord for the glory of God and for the sake of the Lost.

**1Cor. 15:58** ESV Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain.

- 3) Offer Prayer for those who have lived their Christian lives, in a manner that gives you something to shoot for.
- 4) Remember Pastor Andrew Brunson, imprisoned in Turkey for Gospel Terrorism.



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# “Paul’s Prayer Revisited”

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**Series Title:** *“The Book of Philippians: The Proper Joy-filled Christian Perspective”* -----

**Sermon text:** Philippians ch.1 -The Focused Perspective

**SERMON:** “Fellowship in the Gospel” (1:3,4 & 9-11)

Paul’s Prayer for the Philippians April 29, 2018

Paul’s Prayer for the Saints. Christian INTERCESSION

**Php 1:3-4 ESV** I thank my God  
in all my remembrance of you,  
(4) always in every prayer of mine for you all  
making my prayer with joy,

**Php 1:9-11 ESV))**

**And it is my prayer**

**that your love may abound more and more,  
with knowledge  
and all discernment,**

(10) so that you may approve what is excellent,  
and so be pure  
and blameless

for the day of Christ,  
(11) filled with the fruit of righteousness  
that comes through Jesus Christ,  
to the glory and praise of God.

When you pray for others, what do you usually pray for? We often pray for God to fix something, heal someone or change something. One of the first things we notice about Paul’s prayer for the Philippians is that he gives thanks for them.

Perhaps our intercession should begin with thanksgiving for those for whom we are interceding and thanksgiving for our opportunity to support them in prayer before God.

Where is Paul again? *Prison*

## CHRISTIAN PRAYER AND LOVE

(v.9)

\* Paul is in prison. Some feel some of the recipients may be imprisoned as well. Paul's thoughts lead to a heart Love. A Heart of Love results in intercessory prayer.

**Php 1:9** And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment,

*Intercessory Prayer is made for...*

**#1** – Personal, spiritual **GROWTH**.

**SQ: 1:9** In what ways does Paul want the Philippians' to grow?

**(1) love may abound** (v9a) He addresses their Christian love. This can be toward one another and in all circumstances. That they would **Grow in Love**. To abound refers to exceeding expectations; or go beyond measure; to overflow in its content and demonstration. Love here is not actually emotional or romantic love. Nor is it merely brotherly love. It is *Agape* Love which is the Love that only God has and we only have it because God gives it to us.

It is love that is not based on appearance or performance, but is a manifestation of God's life in a believing Christian, through our **attitudes, behavior and choices** (ABCs) Paul's prayer is that the unconditional love of God would grow, increase, abound, and exceed his expectations. And he prays that their growing love would be evidenced or governed by both knowledge and insight.

**(2) With knowledge and discernment** v9b) i.e. love that is evidenced by or marked by knowledge more and more. It seems that the abounding growth not only refers to the love but also to the ever increasing of their knowledge and discernment.

- knowledge = recognition, precise, correct, understanding

**Discernment** is Truth based knowledge, exercised with judgment; perception or wise discernment. It involves Observation, Evaluation and Determination in ethical or moral matters. It means to scrutinize something or to manifest wise and discerning judgment, which governs our emotions and ultimately determines our actions. This kind of growth is spiritual maturity, which incorporates both mind, body and emotions.

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The Christian life focus in all situations, is joyful thoughts, loving relationships, and godly actions even in troubling circumstances.

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So our intellect is to be engaged in our prayer life. God made our brains amazing. Some are more amazing than others, -- or less. But even as Christians we have the capacity to think and evaluate; to take in data and process information. We have the capability of sorting and sifting through information and situations. We are to be mindful of our situation and to consider and evaluate the potential outcome of our choices.

Christians are never called to disregard our thinking process, while being Spirit led. Some people equate being “Spirit led” by flying by the seat of their pants. And whatever happens, was “the leading of the Spirit”. Some don’t believe in studying scripture or preparing for a lesson or message, because to them, that is not being “led by the Spirit”. Being led by the Spirit is like getting up, and shooting from the hip in a message or lesson. Almost like keeping your mind clear so the HS can fill it as you are talking. In

preaching class that was called extemporaneous speaking or preaching and the process may or may not be Spirit led.

## THE CHRISTIAN PRAYER AND THE MIND (v10)

\* “Walk by Faith” never implies we disregard our own God given intelligence.

**Php 1:9-11** ESV (9) And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, **(10) so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ**<sup>[1:6;2:16]</sup>, (11) filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

<sup>1</sup>Observation: Take note of things. <sup>2</sup>Evaluation: Be mindful enough to examine the issues, or facts. Evaluate and utilize good judgment on relationships, emotions and lifestyle, teachings and interacting with others, whether inside or outside the church body.

<sup>3</sup>Determination: taking action on what we know and that of which we are convicted.

Why are we instructed to use our Holy Spirit sensitized minds?

**a. In order that you may approve** things that are excellent(v10). Prayer driven by love and governed by proper Holy Spirit thinking, seeks the best for another person.

\* **approve** = to document; it means to exercise good judgment. Godly spiritual discernment(9b), resulting from actions based in wisdom, which governs our emotions, choices and ultimately our actions.

\* **excellent** = the idea that there will always be a multitude of influences upon us; a variety of choices that influence every situation; and through prayer, the leading of the Holy Spirit and

exercising God given intelligence. Through this process, we weigh things, and make Godly choices based on what we know and how we sense the Holy Spirit leading us. To approve what is excellent is a way of saying, out of all that is good, “choose that which is best”.

- Discerning wisdom is a mark of Christian maturity. To think through tough situations; to weigh things out, consider the facts and evaluate possible choices, takes maturity. To carefully consider the alternative options and to evaluate the possible outcome off our choices and actions takes discernment. To seek God’s direction and to have a sense that God would have us make a certain decision or go in a certain direction, is a sign of mature wisdom and maturity.

**ILL**) Recently we were working through some family matters.. All 5 of us were thinking about things and talking about it together. We were thinking about the issues independently from one another; praying over it, seeking the Lord’s guidance and wondering where in the world are we all going to land up with all this. Then decisions were made, things worked out and we were all in unison on the situation. We exercised and implemented <sup>1</sup>Observation. <sup>2</sup>Evaluation. <sup>3</sup>Determination, and even some <sup>4</sup>Discernment.

**b. that you may be pure (v10)** and without offense; genuine; the real thing; sincere = “from the sun’s rays” – judged by sunlight. To be pure refers to being sifted rapidly as in the winnowing process. It is a process of separating wheat from chaff, and in our context a process of thinking, evaluating, deciding between what is *good* and what would be the very *best*.

“**without offence** “ or blameless: = not causing to stumble; not leading towards sin; implying free from being led by our own personal or fleshly desires. That which is not self-focused or self-

seeking. But we should be evidencing God's purifying and sanctifying work in conforming each of us into the likeness of our Lord Jesus Christ.(Rom.8:29)

**c. until the day of Christ** (v10) If we were talking about an American football game this would be "the goal line". Not making decisions that bring in the greatest person gain. Not a matter of being a perfect Christian. But a matter of one day, when we stand before Christ, that our actions would not prove us to be self-serving, or self-motivated, but Christ serving, Christ centered and Christ focused, as we focus more on the needs, interests and well-being of others. This is *Agape* or God's love.

Remember chapter 1 is "the *FOCUSED* Perspective" and this Christ-focused perspective is what Paul is praying for, for the saints in Philippi and how we can pray for others, even our missionaries.

Compare v6 (2:16). Along with the concept of Joy, the day of Christ or the return of Christ is mentioned in each chapter in Philippians. These references are intended to keep the Christian focus, not on ourselves, for what we want, or what we think looks good or is desirable; but we are to do all that we do and make all our decisions based on the fact that one day, we will give account to Christ for what we have done and how we have lived; our treatment of one another, our obedience to the Great Commission and even personal choices. (Acts 10:42, 2Tim.4:1;1Pet.4:5)

We must hang on. Stay on track for Christ. Paul's prayer is that the church hangs on, stays on track, continues growing in spiritual maturity and is found spotless, as one day we will all stand before Jesus Christ.(2Cor.5:10)

## **CHRISTIAN PRAYER & THE FULLNESS IN CHRIST (V11**

\* Paul prays for the best things for the church. Prayer for others should always be in the best interest for others.

**Php 1:10-11** ESV (10) so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, (11) **filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.**

**SQ: 1:10** Why does Paul want the Philippians' love to increase?

**i.) being filled with fruit of Right.** (v11a) This is personally focused to each individual Christian, with God's love filling their lives and governing their perspective, which would in turn put others first. God's love does that. It is an attitude that puts others first, before ourselves.

**Joh 1:15-16** ESV (John bore witness about him, and cried out, "This was he of whom I said, 'He who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me.'") (16) For from his fullness we have all received, grace upon grace. [Col.1:19]

I don't think this is in reference to our own Righteous standing *in Christ*, but rather a reference to the fruit or manifestation of the righteous life of Jesus being lived out in each believer's lifestyle.

**ii.) through Christ for God's praise and ultimate Glory** (v11b)

Sometimes we may wonder, if any of us do anything for God's glory anymore? In our Wed night P&B video series on Church History, Pastor Tom Nelson shared some statistics on prayer and he stated that it is not the glory of God that motivates most Christians to pray, it is our own personal pain that is the greater motivation to get Christians to pray.

Paul's desire for each believer and his prayers for them is that they would be overflowing with God's love; for their own Holy Spirit matured manner of thinking and the daily lifestyle of Jesus' life to be seen in their own lives.

**Q:** How is the fruit of righteousness displayed? What is the purpose of any kind of good works for the true believing Christian? To demonstrate the purity and depth of our own personal faith based relationship with our Creator, heavenly Father God, through His Son, Jesus Christ.

Does the Lordship of Jesus Christ affect our lives or not?

**Good works:** cp. Mat.5:16; 2Tim.3:17; Eph.2:10; Tit.2:14; 1Pet.2:12

**Q:** (1) What is the main reason that you should want to evidence true goodness and Righteousness? (2) What is the bottom line reason you spend time in prayer? If our answer is not "for the ultimate praise and glory of God", then perhaps we are praying and living amiss.

This prayer of Paul's for the Philippians not only reveals so much about Paul's love for the Christians at Philippi, but it becomes for us as Christians today, one terrific pattern for praying for others. When we are interceding for those on our prayer list in the bulletin, or on Wednesday nights, or during our own prayer time; praying this pattern of intercession for others is a great, Biblical way to pray well.

## **A Pattern of Prayer of Intercession**

**Philippians 1:3-5** ESV (1) Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons: (2) Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. (3) ***I thank my God in all my remembrance of [name],*** (4) always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, (5) ***because of [name] partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.*** (6) And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. (7) It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. (8) For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. (9) And ***it is my prayer that [name] love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, (10) so that [name] may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, (11) filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.***



# “The Furtherance of the Gospel”

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**Series Title:** *“The Book of Philippians: The Proper Joy-filled Christian Perspective”*

**May 13, 20, 2018**

**Sermon text:** Philippians 1:12-20 – *The Focused Perspective: Paul reveals he has “A Heart of Joy in a Life of Trouble”*

The proper Christian perspective is not about merely positive thinking.

\* ***The Furtherance of the Gospel*** is, for the Christian, the Foundation of all things and The Unquenchable Fire of Missions, or it should be. We take our example from Paul this morning.

## INTRODUCTION

Many of us have been hunting at one time or another. And many have endured some pretty bad and unpleasant weather conditions; whether it was a cold, snowy day or a miserably rainy day, sitting, and waiting for your target; focusing on your miserable conditions.

But then, you see what you have been waiting for. You look through your scope and focus in on that deer. As you begin to focus in on that deer, you are almost unaware that you are no longer concerned with or aware of the rain, the snow or the overall uncomfortable circumstances of the past 6 hours. The circumstances haven’t changed, but your focus has changed. Now all that matters and all you are aware of is what’s in your scope.

How many know what I’m talking about? This is Paul’s focused perspective. And it’s not the rain or the snow, but imprisonment. And it’s not the deer in his sights, but the Lord Jesus Christ, that is now the fullness and the focus of his life.

And it is that proper Christ-focused perspective that allows Paul to have such a positive and even joy-filled disposition, even in very unpleasant circumstances.

When the Christian perspective is properly Christ-focused, then that doesn't necessarily change anything in terms of our circumstances; however it does change everything that needs to be changed, if that makes sense. The Christian perspective is not intended to be determined by our situation or circumstances. Our better way of thinking doesn't change our circumstances but it can and should change our perspective on our circumstances. So the proper Christian Perspective does not change everything; but it does change everything that needs to be changed. Our perspective can change how we view life; how we view our circumstances; how we view God's purpose for us and what He allows into our daily experiences.

So even if our circumstances don't change, our perspective on our circumstances *can* change. May is Missions Month. Missions and Persecution can't be separated. And Paul's persecution for the faith and his perception on his ministry and life situations, hold important lessons for us today.

## **PAUL'S CHALLENGING CIRCUMSTANCES FOR SOLID SERVANTS (1:12-13)**

\* Sometimes God puts us in challenging circumstances to get the attention of the world around us, and to provide opportunities for testimony from us.

**Philp 1:8-13 (ESV)** (8) For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. (9) And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, (10) so that you may approve what is excellent, and

so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, (11) filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. **(12) I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to the furtherance of the gospel, (13) so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ.**

Our past experiences and our present circumstances, affect our outlook on life, whether positively or negatively. Our perspective can be negative and down-cast, or it can be positive and Joy-filled!

*We see....*

### **God's Purpose in Paul's Circumstances (v12)**

\* God's plan for His sincere servants, is not for our comfort, but for providing opportunity to minister for Christ. Often times when this scenario plays out it is in the reverse of what Paul presents. Often times when difficult or unpleasant circumstances occur in our lives, someone may remind us of Rom.8:28 - that all things work together for good, for those who love God and who are called according to His purpose and that God has a purpose for your particular situation. BUT the reverse occurs here.

Now where is Paul again? *Prison*. And Paul's friends were concerned about Paul's circumstances; they may have been feeling sorry for his imprisonment; and yet we see *Paul* encouraging *them*, reassuring his friends that God does indeed have a plan in His circumstances. "Hey, don't pity me: I'm right in the middle of the will of God. I am imprisoned but I am experiencing fruitful ministry for Christ and this is what I'm all about!" Paul realizes that his life is not his own and that he was saved for such a purpose as this!!

This is the price and Sacrifice for sharing the gospel. Those who have dedicated their lives to this – we call them missionaries. – They understand this is not unusual, but part of serving Jesus Christ. This is the glory and sharing in the sufferings of Christ.

### **Paul shares His Confidence in his Circumstances being part of God's Purpose. (v13)**

\* If we can view our lives, in the context of God's purpose and plan, then our perception of our circumstances would surely become life transforming. Paul's life purpose is the purpose of the gospel.

For Paul, ***THE FURTHERANCE OF THE GOSPEL*** is the Foundation of all things and The Unquenchable Fire and all-consuming passion of his life. Paul seems to be the kind of guy who was not easily discouraged, because his perspective was that challenging hardships were new opportunities to share Christ, proclaim the gospel and do some disciple making.

That view of God's purpose in his life brought a joy-filled perspective for Paul. For Paul, obedience to God had nothing to do with pleasant or unpleasant circumstances; nothing to do with convenience or inconvenience. Christ's Great Commission to Make Disciples, had nothing to do with spare time, right curriculum or a conducive small group environment. All Paul's circumstances; all his challenges were not excuses, but rather opportunities for the ***Furtherance of the Gospel***.

**Q:** How do you view your situation or your circumstances? Where do you want to be? Where would you rather go? What would you rather be doing?

I have often thought that if anyone had reason to moan, it would have been Paul, yet he did not. In fact it was almost like he liked being imprisoned.

**1:12-13)** (12) I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to the *furtherance of the gospel*, (13) so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest, that my imprisonment is for Christ.

In prison, Paul rejoiced in his chains. In his circumstances, he rejoiced in his sufferings and in the opportunities God brought in order for Him to make Christ known. Paul rejoiced being in the center of God's will, even if it was not pleasant, comfortable or convenient.

Have you ever asked yourself: "Where does God want me right now? What does God want me to be doing right now? DOES GOD MAKE MISTAKES? ARE THERE ERRORS IN HIS PURPOSES AND PLANS FOR HIS PEOPLE? Well then, could we not consider, that right where you are, right now, is exactly where God wants you, for now? Could you not imagine that what you are experiencing right now, is exactly what God wants you to be doing, for now?

We can spend so much time window shopping with the fantasies in our head, that we fail to make much of the opportunities that we are stumbling over or walking around.

Often times we are consumed with thoughts like: "When will I get my promotion?" Where am I going to move next? What will I be doing in 5 yrs? Will I be living my dream and accomplishing my goals?"

What if we were consumed now with the thoughts of: How does God want to use me today? Who is God going to bring into my life next? What kingdom moment will I experience today and what kind of kingdom impact will I make before the end of my day?

If we're thinking: "I'm too old now!" or "I don't have enough money right now." "I don't have enough time to do anything for the Lord at this stage of my life.", then we probably do **not** have that properly focused, joy-filled Christian perspective that made such a difference in Paul's life and ministry.

For Paul, ***The Furtherance of the Gospel*** is the Foundation of all things and The Unquenchable Fire and all-consuming passion of his life.

## PARTICULAR PEOPLE IN PAUL'S LIFE (1:14-17)

\* The church and the world need good examples of Christians who love and serve God and rejoice in Him, regardless of their "quality" of life, or the comforts of life or the possessions of this world. Unfortunately contentment with the things of this world, too often determine the joy and satisfaction we have in our Christian lives, or lack thereof.

I have often thought about my earlier Christian life; if I had only desired the fullness of Christ in my life, as much as I desired the fullness of my possessions. If I had only pursued the fullness of the fruits of righteousness through Jesus Christ<sup>[1:11]</sup>, and eternal pleasures, as much as I pursued the earthly pleasures.

**Philp 1:14-17 (ESV)** (14) And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

*We see a connection between...*

### **Paul's sufferings and Believer's boldness (v14)**

\* The powerful influence of a Godly Christian, patiently suffering and joyfully serving our Lord Jesus, cannot be underestimated. We are tempted to think "my life is being wasted because of these

circumstances”. But in fact our lives will be wasting away, if we fail to recognize and respond to the purpose and plan that God has for us right **now**. In all things, the bigger picture is Jesus!

Jesus’ promise of suffering was not just for the 12 but for the church – **us**. It was not just for then, but for **now**. IT was not something we can **ignore**, but that which we must **face** and **embrace**.

**1Pet. 2:21** ESV For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.

**Php 1:29-30** ESV For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, (30) engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

Believing is the part we typically focus on; that is the positive or the end result of heaven. We tend NOT to focus on the suffering part, or if we do, it becomes defeating to us.

*In this passage, we see....*

### **Paul’s confidence in God’s sovereignty (v15-17)**

\* Trusting **God** means trusting God’s **Plans** under adverse conditions and around adverse or oppositional people. Paul does not respond in jealousy or animosity, but with faith in God’s salvation.

**Philp 1:15-17** (ESV) (15) Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will. (16) The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. (17) The former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment.

He didn't care who got the credit, even if they were as enemies to him. His focused perspective, and this occluded all other issues, was that the gospel was going out! That is God's purpose and is now Paul's all-consuming focus; so much so, that he became less concerned or aware of his unpleasant circumstances. God's purpose was more important than his own discomfort, due to persecution.

Jesus stated, "They persecuted me, they will persecute you". (Jn.15:20). For Paul, *The Furtherance of the Gospel* is the Foundation of all things and The Unquenchable Fire and all-consuming passion of his life and ministry, which he did not separate. By the way, Paul did not moan or pity himself, nor would he let anyone pity him for his sufferings for Jesus.

Imagine the Christian life is like a baseball game, though not nearly that boring. Imagine a batter walks out of the dugout and picks out his bat. He has to check its weight and balance. He feels the grip. Then he reaches down into the dust and covers his hands, then picks his bat back up and steps into the "on-deck" circle. And he begins warming up and swinging his bat. The batter before him makes a hit and gets on base. The player who is still in the "on-deck" circle, continues swinging the bat; continuing to adjust his hat. He does a couple squats; and through it all, he works on his form and has the sense that he's looking really good, as he continues demonstrating his form and swinging his bat, in the *on-deck* circle.

Now here's our question: "*Is that enough?*" Is it enough to stretch a little and warm up? Is it enough to adjust your hat and practice swinging the bat and perfect your form? *Is it enough* to look good -- if you never step into the batter's box and take a swing at the ball? If you haven't stepped into the batter's box, you have never really played the game.

Sometimes Church is like that *potential* batter. We are learning, we are preparing, we are working on our form, and sharpening our techniques and strategies, even gaining much knowledge of the game Sunday after Sunday, but there are some who don't regularly get out there and really play the game. For some, the Christian life is a never ending preparation or a continual warming up, and swinging the bat and perfecting the form. But they are not really involved in what has to take place, in order to make the game what it is.

And Heaven chatters: "Step into the Batter's Box!" Play the Game! Swing at the ball! *You need to swing at the ball!"*

***The Furtherance of the Gospel*** is the Foundation of everything for the Christian and the unquenchable Fire and all-consuming passion of missions. Paul was fully in the game. That's why he was where he was.

Q: How are you involved in the game of missions? Are you regularly sharing your faith in Christ, with others or actively making disciples? How are you personally or through the ministries of the church – How involved are you in helping to make the gospel known to others?

How involved are you in helping others become a disciple of Jesus? These particular people in Paul's life were part of the circumstances that God was using to spread the message of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

*We see...*

### **PAUL'S HOLY HOPE IN CHRIST EXALTED (1:18-20**

\* This is Paul's Focused perspective. For the children of God, the uttermost thing in our Christian service is the exaltation of our Lord Jesus Christ in all things. He is our Greatest Purpose; our

Highest Calling, our Soul's Source and joy and our All-Consuming Passion. The Gospel message exalts Christ.

### **Paul's Joy is in the Lord Jesus (v18)**

\* For every Christian, not just for Paul, the proclamation and reception of Jesus Christ is our highest priority and our greatest joy.

**Philp 1:18** (ESV) (18) What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice,

If our unpleasant circumstance is what it takes for Christ to be exalted, then so be it. That was Paul's ***Focused Perspective***. If inconvenient experiences are what it takes to provide opportunities for us to share Christ with others, then so be it.

**Our question is:** Are we making the most of those gospel, disciple making opportunities? Paul's joy is in the Lord – that is, in the person of Jesus Christ. His jail sentence can't take that away. His circumstances can't hinder that. Paul had a focused perspective – focused on Christ and he demonstrated a heart of joy in a life of trouble. The presence of Jesus is what stirred his emotions and focused his perspective.

### **Paul's Confidence in God's Help (v19)**

\* The peace in trials comes from confidence that God's will is done and Christ's grace is experienced.

**Philp 1:19** (ESV) ...Yes, and I will rejoice, (19) for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance,

Paul was joyful in Christ and confident in God's help through the difficulties God had ordained for him. The prayers of God's people and the Spirit of Jesus are the sources of Paul's confidence

and peace. Paul's devotion to Christ was not conditional upon his circumstances, but in spite of those circumstances.

He was assured that the Philippians were praying for him. Our missionaries need assurance that we are praying for them, regularly, and passionately. Our correspondence with them will help them be assured that they are not forgotten and that they are not alone in their service for Jesus Christ.

### **Paul's Hope for This Life and the Next (v20)**

\* As Christians we live with one foot in the world and one foot in the eternal kingdom. One eye is on those around us and the other eye is on our eternal home. This is Paul's joy-filled perspective, of which, Jesus Christ is always the central focus.

**Philp 1:20 (ESV)** (20) as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full ***courage*** now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death.

As Christians it is crucial, that we are both ***earthly*** minded as well as ***heavenly*** minded. Both must pervade our minds, as we are citizens of both. However one is temporary, while the other is eternal. It is not whether you *live* or *die*, but *how* you live or *how* you die. Paul knew this and was an earmark of his ministry and focused perspective.

**2Co 5:8-9** **ESV** Yes, we are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. (9) So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him.

This was Paul's Proper Joy-filled Christian perspective. It was His frame of mind; it was His world-view; it was his Christ-focused life. Paul warned Timothy: "If you desire to live Godly in Christ Jesus, you will experience persecution." (2Tim.3:12f)

Persecution, hardship, sufferings, inconveniences - were not things Paul ran from, but something he faced and embraced with joy, for our Lord Jesus. These were God's purposes for Paul and the opportunity to make Christ known.

***The Furtherance of the Gospel*** is the Foundation of all things and The Unquenchable Fire and all-consuming passion of Missions. That was Paul's proper Christian Perspective. He had a heart of Joy, in a life of trouble.

### **REFLECTIONS QUESTIONS:**

**(1)** What does your life look like? Are you playing the game? Are you involved in sharing your faith in Jesus Christ with others? Connecting with others, in order to connect them to Christ and to other Christ followers, His church?

**(2)** What gospel sharing ministries do you regularly participate in? The great thing is, you don't have to do it alone. Summer Outreach at Hayfield Estates; December outreach with Night in Bethlehem; our weekly Nursing Home services; our weekly Kids Klub; our Weekly Prayer and Bible study nights, praying for the lost, our missionaries and the persecuted church around the world...

**(3)** How do you view your life circumstances? We can become more focused on our circumstances, rather than what God wants to do through our circumstances. Circumstances shouldn't distract or derail us but should be perceived as additional opportunities to share Christ or to become more like Christ.

### **ASSIGNMENT:**

**(1)** Read Phil. Ch.1.

**(2)** Look for ways to be involved with others in sharing the gospel of Christ? Look for ways to honor the Lord in your circumstances, as miserable as you may perceive them to be.

**3)** Get heavily involved in a prayer ministry. Pray personally for God to direct you to be actively serving Him with your gifts and abilities.

**4)** Consider being a home missionary, until God directs you otherwise. Because wherever there is one lost soul, there is need for a missionary.

If we are not reaching those around us, in our home mission field, we will probably never reach the world for Christ. There are Christians in other countries praying for missionaries in America. *And that would be us!*



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# “Faith of the Gospel”

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**Series Title:** *“The Book of Philippians: The Proper Joy-filled Christian Perspective”*

**May 27-June 10, 2018**

**Sermon:** “Faith Of the Gospel”

**Sermon text:** Philippians 1:21-27 – *The Focused Perspective: Paul reveals he has “A Heart of Joy in a Life of Trouble”*

\* We see the **Focus**, of Paul’s focused perspective.

## INTRODUCTION

In life, we tend to choose that which we desire most – the easy responsibilities, the better job, the more convenient, the more attractive possessions or the most pleasurable experiences.

Personal sacrifice is infrequent in today’s culture. “Every man for himself”. “Look out for number one.” “I have to do what ‘s best for me.”

So when someone evidences a perspective on life that is more others focused than self focused; or when someone puts their own desires aside for the sake of exalting Jesus Christ and serving Him first; or when someone is willing to suffer personal inconvenience in order that others might be reached for Christ—those people tend to grab our attention.

I’m thinking of our missionaries at home and on the foreign field. And I’m also thinking of the Apostle Paul who is our example today. I believe becoming like Paul, is something we can aspire to.

**Mat 6:19-21** **ESV** "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal, (20) but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. (21) For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

The thing that we value most, will captivate our affections. Our greatest desire will govern all our lesser desires.

*In this section we see...*

### **PAUL'S GREATEST DESIRE IS TO HONOR GOD (1:20-23**

\* We get a glimpse of Paul's Treasure; that is to be used by God and for Christ to be honored in his life, in every area of his life. His life and ministry were indistinguishable. – Our greatest desires will govern all other desires & will shape our life's perspective.

**Q:** In light of Paul's suffering and hardships, what was his perspective on the quality of the possibility of martyrdom? (20)

*Paul's Desire Reveals a ...*

### **A Missionary's Hope**

\* A Missionary is someone whose life and ministry, work and entertainment are bound up in the person of Christ and honoring Him in all things and in all places.

**Phil.1:20** <sup>20</sup>I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.

\* Paul evidenced an “*eager expectation and hope*” (v20); An eager expectancy of the present reality of living fully for Christ. For Paul, Jesus is his Highest Calling, his Greatest Purpose, his soul's Source and Joy and his All-Consuming Passion. Paul's great desire is to be used by God to reach others. His great hope is that Jesus Christ will be honored or exalted in his life and ministry.

“*Will not be ashamed*” Ashamed refers to being dishonored(v20). He would not be easily embarrassed and he certainly would have no regrets that would cause him to shrink back from his calling to

proclaim Jesus Christ and make Him known. In Romans Paul wrote assuredly;

**Rom 1:16** ESV For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

*“Full courage now as always”* because his concern is not “what is going to happen to him?” or what does the future hold for him in prison? His greatest concern is overshadowed by His greatest Desire, which is that “Christ be honored, exalted or glorified in his life, whether by his life or by his death (v20)

Christ being *“exalted” in his body*; literally means to be magnified or brought up close and clear. The idea is that the person and work of Jesus, would be clearly evident in Paul’s life and would be celebrated, and made much of. If you’ve never seen it before, this is the heart of a true missionary; Christ-serving and self-sacrificing.

*This Missionary Hope presents....*

### **Paul’s Win / Win Perspective**

\* The theme of this book is the Proper Christian Perspective. From Paul’s perspective, there is no way to lose, when serving Christ and being used of Him to make salvation known to those for whom Christ died. And Paul’s perspective reflected a heart of joy in a life of trouble.

**Php 1:20-21** ESV as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. (21) For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

\* It is so easy to become enamored and captivated by the people, things and experiences of this earthly life, that we begin to believe that death really is the worst case scenario.

So what is Paul referring to in v21? To *live* is to serve and honor Christ with our lives. To *die* is to be immediately in His presence for all eternity. So for Paul, this is a win/win perspective. This perspective is no doubt, what drove him, and why his life and ministry were so effective in reaching the lost for Christ.

This focused perspective is what makes life so meaningful for the true believing Christian.

### **“THE GREAT WOUND”**

The gospel is like a great wound. And wounds tend to hurt at first. But later, the pain finally subsides, the wound begins to scab over and it begins its healing process. At one point, probably most of us were wounded by the gospel; we were cut to the heart with the good news of Christ and the need for the lost around the world. And that wounded us. It made our hearts bleed for the lost. It may have even caused us to shed a few tears for the lost. Maybe it compelled someone to go into full time ministry.

But after a while that Great Gospel Wound began scabbing over. Some of our hearts haven't bleed for a long time for the lost. For some of us, its been quite a while since we shed a tear for those on their way to a Christless eternity. What we need is to begin to scrape the scab off the Great wound and allow it to begin bleeding again. Paul's heart was bleeding for the lost and perishing.

I recall a children's crusade we were part of in the Chicagoland and our church trained children's workers and counselors for the crusade. When the time came, many children responded. One of the ladies who was already very active in Awana's, was counseling children and she began crying and could hardly speak clearly. But

as she regained her composure she was able to lead those children to faith in Christ, along with several others. After it was over and we were talking, she said “that was the most wonderful thing I have ever experienced in my whole life.” – *Joy unspeakable!*

**Q:** What is it that gives you meaning in your Christian life? Is what Paul is expressing here, true for you? Are you in that ball park in terms of living and serving Christ, so that all that really matters is to help others come to faith in Jesus Christ and that he be exalted in your life?

*Paul's win / win perspective, expresses ...*

### **A Liberating Ministry perspective**

\* Life is ministry and ministry is life. No categories. Not segmented. Not so scheduled; at least not ministry opportunities. One liberating ministry perspective for Paul is that it is not something that has to be scheduled. Ministry opportunities arise within our own schedule and in our present circumstances, if we will recognize them.

**Phil.1:22** <sup>22</sup>If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean *fruitful labor* for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know!

The body (flesh) is a reference to our human, physical human life and existence. Remember Paul is in prison. He could have had the attitude, “Life in prison is miserable. Lord just take me now”

**Q:** What were the reasons why Paul might choose to remain alive?

Paul could have moped and complained and regretted. HE could have entertained the idea, “Well I tried to serve the Lord and look what it got me.” But Paul did not focus on his circumstances, but on God’s purpose for those circumstances and the opportunities before Him.

Where is Paul again? *Prison*. What is Paul doing? He sees God's purpose in his circumstances and he perceives the opportunities before him and, he begins writing letters to Christians to encourage their faith. Was his life a waste? Only if you consider writing 2/3 of the New Testament a waste of time.

But Paul was more concerned about "*fruitful ministry*". That is what might keep Paul from wishing he was in heaven. But Fruitful ministry for Christ is what would keep Paul's greater focus on this earthly life. Not because it makes him feel so good, but because fruitful ministry honors and glorifies Jesus! His greatest desire was not for this earthly existence, but for service for Jesus Christ.

*Paul finds it difficult to choose between...*

### **Life or death; Good or Best?**

\* Would I rather live or would I rather die? Hmmm.. If you had the choice, which would you choose? Most probably life. It seems like a no-brainer. But not for a man with a focused perspective like Paul's.

**Phil.1:23** <sup>22</sup>If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! <sup>23</sup>**I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far;**

That kind of goes against the mindset that death is the worst that can happen to us. I don't think the American Church really believes that death is a relief and entrance into their eternal home with our Lord Jesus.

**v22)** "*What I shall choose?*" What do I prefer? He would prefer to be out of prison and in his eternal home in heaven with Christ forever. His greatest desire and longing was for heaven. But His other "greatest" desire was to remain alive to help more people

come to faith in Christ and to become fully devoted disciples of our Lord Jesus. To Paul that was most needed.

Paul put his own preferences aside in order to reach the lost and exalt Christ in the process.(v.23) To be torn was to be “*hard pressed...*”; or pressed between 2 options. The imagery is being “sandwiched” between life and death, between serving on earth or resting with Christ. Suffering and hardship often clarify our priorities and cause us to long more for our eternal home.

**Q:** When was the last time you mused over thoughts like that about your own life? Would you prefer the promise of heaven or the needs of those around you without Jesus?

## **PAUL’S DUTY IS TO REACH THE LOST (1:24-26**

\* Duty. Obligation. Responsibility. Is it right to think of Christian service as a “duty”? or an obligation? If we believe that God saved us for the purpose of serving Him, then sanctified duty is right.

A missionary understands the importance of the messenger, even when those who are the recipients don’t fully understand the importance of the message they hear and respond to.

**2Cor. 5:14-15** ESV For the love of Christ *compels* us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; (15) and he died for all, that *those who live might no longer live for themselves* but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

\*Paul’s *Duty* was his responsibility to fulfill God’s calling for him.

*Paul knew he held the key to....*

## **Life and Death for those who hear**

**Phil.1:24-** <sup>24</sup>but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body.

\* Paul's Greatest Desire was to be home in heaven. But His Duty or His highest calling was to reach others for Christ, which brings greater honor and glory and praise and worship to the Savior. Hearing the good news is the difference between life and death; eternal life or eternal separation from God.

It is better for Paul to go to heaven. But it was better for the people for Paul to remain and continue discipling them in the faith.

Did Paul consider his life to be nothing or a waste? (v.24) Was his life focused on himself? Who is Paul especially thinking about? Living for Christ, meant living his life for the sake of other's spiritual well-being. Paul evidenced that he is a choice, self-less servant of our Lord Jesus.

To Depart and be with Christ, which is better? (v23) or remain with the believers which is more needful?(v24) What does this say about Paul's perspective? Is this a proper, perspective for Christians? Is it a *typical* perspective from Christians today?

Paul feels a sense of duty to the believers at Philippi. Not an drudgery of duty or burden of obligation, but a joyful duty and responsibility.

*A person can hold such a perspective because of.....*

### ***Paul's assurance of God's purpose***

\* Being used to reach the lost, is a sobering reality and can become an all-consuming calling, if we allow God to nurture that perspective in our hearts.

**Phil.1:25** <sup>25</sup>Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith,

Do we realize that Paul laid aside his own personal desire to serve Christ and to make disciples? Are we at all convicted by that sacrificial attitude?

**Q: How did Paul expect to be able to help the Philippians?(v25)**

*“Progress and joy in the faith”:* This is nurturing and advancing their faith. This is personal discipleship in action. Not so separated for people relationally, but willingly connecting with them, in order to connect them to Christ and to other Christ followers, which is the church. This is Personal Discipleship. This is obedience and obedience to the Great Commission.

*A Christian’s influence can bring about...*

**Praise to God for God’s purpose in him (v26)**

\* Making disciples, and nurturing the faith of others, can bring them to greater depth and maturity of faith, that they grow in their praise to God, through the ministry of the disciple making process in their own lives.

<b>Phil.1:26</b> <sup>26</sup> so that through my being with you again your boasting in Christ Jesus will abound on account of me.
--

**Q:** How long has it been since you have led someone to the Lord and developed such a relationship with them, that you were able to regularly and foundationally nurture their faith to a point that you could observe their spiritual growth?

That is the Great Commission. Not just sharing the gospel; but making disciples. That is the Great Commission. That is the Great watershed issue as whether or not we are truly fully devoted to Christ.

**Francis Chan** presents a great illustration about discipleship. He says: “Suppose I told my daughter Rachel that I needed her to clean up her room before I got home tonight. He leaves and comes back in the evening and her room has not been touched. He asked her: “Rachel, I asked you to make your room before I got home tonight. You said you would, but you haven’t. What’s up?”

Rachel replied: “Well I thought about your instruction. I wrote it down, several times. I actually memorized your instructions to me. I called some of my friends told them about what you told me. Some folks actually came over to share in a discussion group of what it would look like, if I obeyed you and cleaned my room.”

Was that enough? What he wanted was for his daughter to actually do what he asked, and to simply clean her room.

Many in the Church today are like that. We know all about what God wants us to do and all about the Great commission. We even have month long missions conferences focused on the great commission. And yet what difference does that really make, in terms of how you and I personally, are engaged in and are obeying the Great Commission?

I just ask this, not knowing anyone’s real efforts in disciple making or the lack of it. But as Christians, we need to think about that.

*Paul’s Desire. Paul’s Duty. Now....*

## **PAUL’S DETERMINATION IS FOR MATURITY FOR THE DISCIPLES (1:27-30)**

*\* When our Greatest Desire conquerors all lesser desires.*  
“Motives in Ministry” – in all areas should be, that “Christ will be exalted in my body”; Not merely that he be honored in my lifestyle, but that he be glorified in my service to Christ. Purpose in serving Christ. Motives for serving Christ. My focus in doing what I do in the church or why I do what I do when I reach out to people outside the church.

*\* Our goal as servants of Christ, is not just to be a witness, or to share the gospel, but for people to be truly saved and genuinely nurtured into disciples of Jesus. That involves relational*

*connections* for disciple making ministry. This is the Great Commission.

*Paul's focus is....*

### **Faith of the Gospel Together**

\* Faith of the Gospel seems to refer to the faith, that the message of the gospel can bring about, when it is shared, believed and nurtured in a person's spirit. It is the faith-life of a true disciple of Jesus Christ.

**Phil.1:27** <sup>27</sup>Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit,<sup>e</sup> ***striving together*** as one for the *faith of the gospel*

Unfortunately as Christians, our perspective or attention can sometimes become earthly, scattered, distracted or even unfocused.

Thank God for those who view their involvement here at Christ E Free church as serving Christ Himself. We are called to “strive together”; referring to contending for the faith together. That means fighting the good fight to preserve our faith, our church, our ministries, our purpose and calling, both as a church but as individuals.

Some actually view their involvement in the church as their spiritual act of worship. There are even those who are serving and view it as the call of God for them, for now. Because ***when God calls you to something, you do not walk away from it, until God calls you away from it.***

Paul describes how he desires the Christians to act. Living in a manner worthy of the gospel is a lifestyle that is appropriate for a person who has believed the gospel and appropriate for one who is proclaiming that message.

**Q: So what's he talking about here??** Our Behavior should depict our faith, or that we should live ..

1) as though the gospel is our purpose, rather than an option.

2) as though the gospel has made a profound difference in our lives personally.

3) Unified in Character and Ministry. United in Purpose and Perspective. ---What would that look like?

a. (v27c) that as Christians we would be “**standing firm**” in one spirit (v27). This refers to being immovable; undistracted and undeterred from our goal. It implies being sold out to our cause and persevering in our service to Jesus Christ, even under adverse personalities, unpleasant conditions, or even inconvenient or irksome circumstances.

b. “**one mind** =one (psuche)- mind/spirit or the idea of our thoughts and emotions; the deepest area of our inner most being; All that is within me. Not some people doing the work in the gospel and everyone else watching, or disconnected, or distracted from that great calling to which we are called.

This was not to say that they had no disagreements, but that they shared a single focus of the call of God and the making of disciples together.

c. “**striving together in the faith of the gospel**”

(v27) συναθλέω | Sun / athelo = Together with / Athelete; effort; purpose; endurance; preparation; resolve; It originally referred to an athletic wrestling match. One many attempting to force another man to move. Another man, putting forth great effort to hold his ground and not be moved by his opponent.

This is where Paul's **Focused Perspective** is once again, clearly communicated to us. The forces against us. Our attitudes. The

attitudes of others. Paul had a purpose. He had a calling. He had a reason for living. He had a burden that would not allow Him to be satisfied doing anything other than fulfilling the calling of God upon His life.

What is your greatest Christian Desire? What is your purpose, as a Christian? What is your calling and reason for why God has you on this planet or in your community?

Striving together in the faith of the gospel, is Paul's way of describing not only his own burden and calling in service to Jesus, but what he shared with the saints in Philippi to whom he was writing.

They each had their own personal and individual spiritual journey. They had their unified, joint kingdom purpose. And they each had their own personal location and realm of influence.

*Through Paul, the Holy Spirit urges us to...*

### **Live Courageously and Confidently**

\* And like marriage, the work of the church is not focused on ourselves, it is focused on others around us; the lost and the unsaved.

**Phil.1:28** <sup>28</sup>without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you<sup>[3:19]</sup>. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God.

**v28)** - and not frightened in anything by your opponents. Living in the center of God's will is the best and safest place to be.

“***frightened***” came to describe a startled horse; one which had been spooked and ran off frantic and bucking. This may imply knee jerk reactions or panic responses, by non- purposeful, non-discerning and indiscriminate in our living and in our ministry.

“***oppose you***” = lie opposite – the opposition lying in waiting. like a snake in the grass would spook a horse.

“Don’t let anyone who opposes you and the gospel, startle you or get you spooked; or rattle your cage, or rock you world, or disparage you; or discombobulate you.” Don’t allow people or critics or circumstances rob you of your joy.

**Q: 1:28 What will the courage of the Philippians show to their \*opponents?**

“This is a clear sign...” – what sign? Your peaceful composure & confidence, knowing God will have the last word!

“...to them ...” - To whom? The enemies of Christ and the gospel

- a. “...of their destruction...”
- b. “...but of your salvation...”
- c. “... and that from God...” = that God is on your side.

Confidence, peace, assurance, God’s presence, Promises,

*As We are ministers for Christ we are all....*

**Called to Sacrifice & Suffer?** (v29)

\* Suffer? You mean I am called to suffer? You mean God doesn’t want me happy? You mean a loving God would allow me pain and anguish and to do without something I might really want?

Suffering tests our allegiance to God and strengthens our faith. It is unpleasant. It is not only true but looks like it is required, if we really mean business with God.

**Phil.1:29** <sup>29</sup> For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to *suffer* for him,

The Holy Spirit communicates this also through the Apostle Peter.

**1Pet. 2:21** For to this you have been called, because Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example, so that you might follow in his steps.

The Christian life is not about ease, or comfort, or personal preference; or getting, gaining, things and being enamored and captivated by the things of this world.

**“Love not the world, nor the things of the world.”**(1Jn.2:16)

Some things we give up. Some things we say NO to. Some things we lay aside for the work to which God has called us.

**Heb 12:1-2** ESV Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, (2) looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

(1) Run to win the crown (1Cor.9:24) This is personal sacrifice in order to separate one's self from any distractions, other than doing what God has called or positioned you to accomplish.

(2) Serve to hear “well done”. (Mat.25:23) That is Paul's “pay”, as well as our own; to have a life that honored and exalted Jesus Christ. What is your pay?

(3) Why does God refer to Joy in our sufferings or in our difficult circumstances? Our joy comes, not from the experience, whether it be good or bad, pleasant or unpleasant, enjoyable or detestable. Our joy comes when we are able to look beyond our circumstances to consider God's purpose *in* our circumstances.

**Romans 5:1-** <sup>1</sup>Therefore, since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus

Christ.<sup>2</sup> Through him we have also obtained access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and we *rejoice* in hope of the glory of God.<sup>3</sup> Not only that, but we *rejoice* in our sufferings; knowing that suffering produces endurance,<sup>4</sup> and endurance produces character, and character produces hope,<sup>5</sup> and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Paul didn't focus on his circumstances, but on God's purpose in our circumstances; that being our spiritual growth and Christian joy for God's glory.

*As Christians, both Paul and Jesus gave us examples that we are....*

### **Called to Serve and Struggle**

\* Serving our Lord Jesus means work, time, effort, frustration, inconvenience, effort, endurance.; effort. It means we are resolved to do what it takes to appropriately serve Jesus Christ, and to have no regrets and no excuses for NOT hearing, "well done, good and faithful servant".

**Phil.1:30** <sup>29</sup>For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to *suffer* for him, <sup>30</sup>since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.

**Q:** 1:30 Paul writes about a struggle. What kind of struggle is being referred to? Is that battle over yet, do you think? If not, how are you and I part of it? As we consider God's purpose in our circumstances, it makes sense that we look for the opportunities in those circumstances for us to fulfil God's purpose.

**PLEASE HEAR THIS:** This Struggle that Paul refers to here<sup>[v30]</sup> is what he is indicating is the same struggle as his co-laborers in Christ in Phillipi have experienced. We might think it is the struggle against the outside forces that oppose him and have

imprisoned him. It could be and many commentators take that position here.

But I also see this “struggle” as the inner force within him which is not a negative struggle, but an inner, unidentifiable, inner motivation; a fiery passion that can’t be extinguished. What Paul is referring to here is what many refer to in Christian service as a “burden”. The Struggle Paul describes is his inner passion to fulfil the call of God upon him and to live out the purpose for which God saved him.

Whether we live or die; whether we are free or imprisoned, we live for the purpose of serving our Lord Jesus in order for our lives to exalt Christ.

The conflict, or the struggle, or the battle or the inner suffering is the word “**Agon**”, meaning an inner angst and is short of our word agon-y – “agony”. Paul carried a deep burden for the lost and for God’s calling for him. It was an inner gnawing; an indescribable uneasiness; an unshakable sense of dissatisfaction with earthly life and pursuits of passing things, in light of overwhelming weight of eternal spiritual needs of those around him, and how God wanted to use him to disciple others and to glorify Jesus Christ through that process.

## **CONCLUSION:**

Anybody here carrying around an “**Agon**”, today? a burden in ministry? IF that “**Agon**” is not being lived out in your life, you will most likely become a miserable Christian. You may wonder why your life is so dissatisfying. You may question God’s purpose and direction for your life. You may become angry with God that he would allow such things, or experiences into your life. You may doubt God’s love and His goodness. It can actually go that far, for

a true child of God. When our heart or my purpose, or my desires, or my life pursuits or the things that fill my mind and fuel my desires are not aligned with God's then the things He allows, we will eventually detest. The things He has ordained for us, for you, for me will become so detestable, that we will become so miserable, that we can actually entertain the question: "***How could God do that to me?***"

**Eph 2:10** ESV For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.

God's purpose for each and every believing Christian, is "good works", or areas of serving the Lord so others can become disciples of Jesus, as well.

**Q:** How am I involved in the Great Commission? How many relational connections are in my life, in which I regularly and purposefully nurture the faith of others? How intentional are we in genuinely following the Lord in believer's obedience to be involved in the things He has called or ordained for us to do? How am I viewing the burden God has placed upon my life? How focused is your perspective?

I may have shared this before, but the wife of a friend of ours named AL, was dying of cancer; brain cancer I believe it was. And as Al describes it; he was holding her hand by her bedside praying and calling out to God – out loud - in prayer; "***Why Lord?*** Why her? Why my wife?"

And the answer that came back to him was; "***Why not?*** But you see the answer did not come from God directly, but from his wife. And her answer in full was "Why not **me**?" Why should I be excused from such sufferings? Why Should God exempt me from such faith forging experiences?" And as they talked, during those

last few days of her life, Al discovered that *his* question was “**Why Lord?** Why are you taking my wife?”. But his wife’s question was “**Why Lord?** Why are you keeping me here?”

She shared Paul’s Focused Perspective on life and on death. She was not so focused on her circumstances, but she was most focused on God’s purpose in His circumstances and the things that He allows. Either God’s plan is perfect or it isn’t. Either God is in control, or He is not. Either death really is our doorway or it is our dead end; and if so, then we are all living a colossal hoax and we have been wholesale hoodwinked.

And either God’s commission really is Great and it really is binding upon every one of us, or we have appeased ourselves with a self-concocted, fantasy, that helps us think that life is meaningful, when in fact we are living a life of hopeless, self-deceit.

Some people are miserable in their circumstances, but it is not so much their circumstances that are the source of their misery but the fact that they fail to focus on God’s purpose in those circumstances. What we have, or don’t have. What we get, or don’t get, can never be the source of our joy from the Lord. As circumstances change, then our joy will change. But under the burden; following the calling; pursuing the purpose of God for your life in your situation is the greatest goal of living.

Some Christians live miserable lives of defeat, and depression, and anger and discontent and soul darkness and anxiety, because they are not living to fulfill that inner “AGON” or burden placed there by the calling of God for every true believer in Jesus Christ, as motivation for life and service.

Do you have an “Argon”? What burden do you carry for the Lord’s work? Wherever you are and whatever you do, consider

that to be the call of God in your life, until He calls you to lay it down or walk away from it? There are many people here serving the Lord and you can tell where their hearts are. You can tell that they are giving of themselves fully for the Lord's work – in whatever area it may be. You often can tell those who carry a burden for the Lord's work. They are the ones we tend to view as “fanatics”.

*What are some things ...*

**Reflections Questions: ASSIGNMENT:** *READ chapter 2*

**(1)** Don't just focus on your circumstances, but consider God's purpose in your circumstances. (i) To strengthen your faith. (ii) to develop humility and dependence; (iii) To allow you to experience God's faithfulness in new situations.

**(2)** What are the possibilities in my circumstances? Negative things have a way of dominating our thinking. Focusing on the negatives seems to be a natural, human practice. (i) Consider the possibilities that may be before you. Paul was in prison and wrote letters to the churches.

**(3)** Perhaps we need to pray that the Holy Spirit of God would begin to scrape the scab off the wound of the gospel; that His convictions would cause my heart to bleed again for the lost; that we would become so grieved for the perishing that we weep again. Perhaps we should pray God would place such an unshakeable burden for the lost and such an unquenchable fire for the gospel message upon us as a church, that no excuse would be adequate to keep us from the Great Commission.

**4)** Consider God's call upon your life. Recognize and respond to the burden you carry for the Lord's word.

**5)** Ask God for His call upon your life to become a burden, which you cannot explain away, extinguish or shake off.

There is no place for lackadaisical living within the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ. Repent from it. Seek His “Agon”. Carry that burden with joy until it is accomplished, fulfilled or you are assured God has told you to lay it aside.

- **Part 2** is available for free download at [www.ChristEFCA.org](http://www.ChristEFCA.org). “ENTER” and visit out “sermon” page.





# ***Don't close this booklet yet***

*without considering this all important question.*

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## **Is Jesus Christ the Savior or *your* soul and the Lord of *your* life?**

Every person is born guilty of sin and in need of forgiveness.

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;  
--Rom 3:23

Our sin is against God, therefore our forgiveness can only come  
from God.

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only  
begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should  
not perish, but have everlasting life. --John 3:16

God has appointed His Son as the payment for sins and sent Him  
to die in our place.

For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is  
eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.  
-- Romans 6:23

God's love is demonstrated through the sacrificial payment of  
Jesus Christ in our place for our sins.

...but God shows his love for us in that while we were  
still sinners, Christ died for us. ---Romans 5:8

For "everyone who calls on the name of the Lord  
will be saved." -- Rom 10:13

But to all who did receive him, who believed in his  
name, he gave the right to become children of God,  
- John 1:12

Before you close this book, why not be absolutely certain that you  
are truly a citizen of God's eternal kingdom and loving family?

*Trust in Jesus Christ today and receive forgiveness for your sins  
and citizenship into God's family and His Kingdom.*

## The ABCs

**A** - Admit you have sinned and are in need of a Savior.

**B** - Believe Jesus died in your place, and you can no way help yourself.

**C** - Confess your sins to God. He already knows. Also Confess Jesus as you LORD. He desires and deserves to be your Lord.

**Prayer:** Take time to talk to God right now and open your heart and life to His instruction and leadership.

**Connect** with a local Bible believing, Christ centered church.

**Commit** yourself to meeting regularly with other Christians who are growing in their faith.

**Heb 10:24-25** And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, (25) not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

**Act 2:41-42** So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand souls. (42) And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers.

For more information or for spiritual help, please contact us at:  
Christ E. Free Church, PO Box 619, 19682 Hill Rd,  
Saegertown, Pa, 16433, Ph: 814-763-2934, [www.christefca.org](http://www.christefca.org)

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*It is our prayer that you find **Jesus Christ** to be...  
your highest calling,  
your greatest purpose,  
your soul's source and joy,  
and your all-consuming passion.*



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