



## Restored to Contentment and Joy Part 1: To Live is Christ!

June 7, 2020

### **Text: Philippians Chapter 1 (Reading verses 1-2 to start)**

- Are we tired of the word “unprecedented” yet? What about “challenging times?” :)
- As we minister this Word, we are facing what we hope is the tail end of a global pandemic, national and international protests...and in some cases...riots, global economic challenges, locust swarms in India and Africa, and I believe there was an earthquake in California a few days ago! Have mercy LORD!
- And let us not even mention our theological and moral issues; connected to many of our ills is a widespread rejection of the Word of God as sufficient and the Gospel of Christ as the answer. Again, LORD have mercy!
- Therefore I believe working our way through Paul’s Letter to the Church at Philippi, where non-circumstantial joy and contentment in Christ are key themes, will be a blessing to our souls.

### **Author and Date**

- This wonderful epistle was written by the Apostle Paul likely between 60-62AD from Rome.
- Philippi was in the Roman province of Macedonia (northern Greece).
- Paul was imprisoned when he wrote to Philippi, also writing Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon around the same time.
- Philippi gets its name from Philip II, father of Alexander the Great, who conquered the region in the 4th century BC.
- It was the first church Paul planted in Europe during his second missionary journey (Acts 16:12-40). Some of you might recall a memorable event when Paul arrived. MacArthur summarizes:

The church at Philippi, the first one founded by Paul in Europe, dates from the apostle's second missionary journey ([Act 16:12-40](#)). Philippi evidently had a very small Jewish population. Because there were not enough men to form a synagogue (the requirement was for ten Jewish men who were heads of a household), some devout women met outside the city at a place of prayer ([Act 16:13](#)) alongside the Gangites River. Paul preached the gospel to them, and Lydia, a wealthy merchant dealing in expensive purple dyed goods ([Act 16:14](#)), became a believer ([Act 16:14-15](#)). It is likely that the Philippian church initially met in her spacious home.

Satanic opposition to the new church immediately arose in the person of a demon-possessed, fortune-telling slave girl ([Act 16:16-17](#)). Not wanting even agreeable testimony from such an evil source, Paul cast the demon out of her ([Act 16:18](#)). The apostle's act enraged the girl's masters, who could no longer sell her services as a fortune-teller ([Act 16:19](#)). They hauled Paul and Silas before the city's magistrates ([Act 16:20](#)) and inflamed the civic pride of the Philippians by claiming the two preachers were a threat to Roman customs ([Act 16:20-21](#)). As a result, Paul and Silas were beaten and imprisoned ([Act 16:22-24](#)).

The two preachers were miraculously released from prison that night by an earthquake, which unnerved the jailer and opened his heart and that of his household to the gospel ([Act 16:25-34](#)). The next day the magistrates, panicking when they learned they had illegally beaten and imprisoned two Roman citizens, begged Paul and Silas to leave Philippi. Paul apparently visited Philippi twice during his third missionary journey, once at the beginning (cf. [2Co 8:1-5](#)), and again near the end ([Act 20:6](#)). About four or five years after his last visit to Philippi, while a prisoner at Rome, Paul received a delegation from the Philippian church. The Philippians had generously supported Paul in the past ([Php 4:15-16](#)), and had also contributed abundantly for the needy at Jerusalem ([2Co 8:1-4](#)). Now, hearing of Paul's imprisonment, they sent another contribution to him ([Php 4:10](#)), and along with it Epaphroditus to minister to Paul's needs. Unfortunately, Epaphroditus suffered a near-fatal illness ([Php 2:26-27](#)), either while en route to Rome, or after he arrived. Accordingly, Paul decided to send Epaphroditus back to Philippi ([Php 2:25-26](#)) and wrote the letter to the Philippians to send back with him.

### **Main Themes**

- The focus of the letter seems to be twofold: 1) Becoming more like Christ and 2) Walking in contentment and joy despite present circumstances!
- John MacArthur said, “The major theme of pursuing Christlikeness, as the most defining element of spiritual growth and the one passion of Paul in his own life, is presented in [Php 3:12-14](#). In spite of Paul's imprisonment, the dominant tone of the letter is joyful ([Php 1:4](#), [Php 1:18](#), [Php 1:25-26](#); [Php 2:2](#), [Php 2:16-18](#), [Php 2:28](#); [Php 3:1](#), [Php 3:3](#); [Php 4:1](#), [Php 4:4](#), [Php 4:10](#)).”
- William MacDonald said, “It is truly the Epistle of joy—forms of “joy” and “rejoice” occurring over twelve times in its four chapters. Paul knew how to rejoice in good times or hard times ([Php 4:11](#)).”
- I’ve always found this entire narrative amazing. Paul almost immediately encountered spiritual warfare in Philippi, was arrested, beaten, and thrown in jail. Yet he loved this city and these people, and they loved him!
- Oh if we could attain to a more God-centered, eternal perspective on suffering and trial. Oh if we weren’t so quick to run, but instead, we stood, stayed, and suffered well!

### **Contentment and Joy from Chapter 1**

#### **1. Our fellowship, like theirs, is in the Gospel! (v5)**

- ***Philippians 1:3-5 (KJV)*** *I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, 4 Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, 5 For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now;*
- The word for fellowship here is *koinōnia* in Greek. It means “participation, partnership, benefaction, communion.”
- It suggests a closeness and covenant based on the finished work of Christ, and a unity that God uses for His own purposes.
- The word is famously used in... ***Acts 2:42 (KJV)*** *And they continued stedfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers.*

- You might recall the results of such *koinōnia*: holy fear, unity, common provision, gladness, praise, favor, and salvations! (Acts 2:43-47)
- Beloved, what unites all Christians? Christ! That Jesus Christ is the Son of God and God the Son. That He came to pay the penalty for our sins by His own broken body and shed blood.
- The apostle thanked God and rejoiced because of their unity in Christ! Church, our fellowship is in the Gospel. It is the Gospel that binds us and holds us together.
- Later on in this epistle, Paul pleads for unity and one-mindedness in all things...but the core of such unity is Christ Jesus and Him crucified.
- **Therefore be encouraged! At the cross, you can forgive your brother. At the cross you find strength to persevere. At the cross you can find power to love your enemies.**
- **In any situation, if you can go to the cross together in truth and in humility, you can have the joy of Christian brotherhood/sisterhood.**

## 2. God will finish the work in us too! (v6)

- **Philippians 1:6 (KJV)** *Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:*
- In the flow of thought, Paul says that because of their unity in Christ, he is confident that God who started a good work in them will complete it.
- I'd like to think we can hold on to this verse in our lives as well! Why?
- When the LORD saved us, the work in us began. Since He alone is the author of the work, He alone is also the finisher of the work!
- **Hebrews 12:2 (KJV)** *Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.*
- **Therefore be encouraged! Ephesians 2:10 (KJV)** *For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them.*
- **If you are still alive, God is still working. No situation is unrecoverable in Christ. In Him, all things are possible!**

## 3. Let us let our love and knowledge abound more and more! (v9)

- **Philippians 1:9 (KJV)** *And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment;*
- So since we have the opportunity for such unity in Christ, and the hope that our LORD will hold us and use us until the day of Jesus Christ, we might as well love each other deeply!
- Please know that such love is rooted in our growing knowledge and discernment!
- Sadly, we often experience the opposite: our love grows cold the more we "learn." How tragic! It should be the opposite!
- **Therefore let us be love and grow intentionally! Reach out! Read! Invite! Invest time in one another and the Scriptures.**
- **Growing love and truth needs maintenance; it requires action! (1 John 3:18)**

#### 4. Let us adopt a Gospel perspective about trials! (v12)

- **Philippians 1:12 (KJV)** *But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;*
- Paul, from prison, understood the sovereignty of God. He knew God's purpose for Him (to preach the Gospel to the gentiles) and also knew the LORD promised him suffering:
- **Acts 9:15-16 (KJV)** *But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: 16 For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.*
- **This is the perspective we need to balance out our western pursuit of comfort and our individual sense of entitlement. Sometimes, God calls His saints to suffer for His Name and Gospel.**
- **Matthew 5:11-12 (KJV)** *Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. 12 Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.*
- **Therefore be encouraged! If you are a believer and striving for holiness and ministering the Gospel of Christ in love, the things which are happening to you will work out towards the furtherance of the Gospel!**

#### 5. Let us magnify Christ and not be ashamed! (v20)

- **Philippians 1:20 (KJV)** *According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.*
- Here is perhaps an uncomfortable truth: we all like to be seen in a positive light. Suffering is embarrassing. It can activate our pride.
- But Paul wasn't ashamed. His title, wealth, and prestige had all been swallowed up in Jesus.
- The only thing that mattered to him was honoring Christ in his living, and if necessary, his dying.
- **Therefore let us follow the apostle as he followed Christ with the same heart and attitude!**

#### 6. To live is Christ; to die is gain: Jesus is Enough! (v21)

- **Philippians 1:21 (KJV)** *For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.*
- Yes! Here is the Christian life in one verse.
- All of our living is in Jesus. It is for Him, through Him, and about Him. It is to honor and glorify Him at all costs!
- If such a life costs us our very lives, then bless the LORD! To die in Him is gain!
- **Philippians 1:22-25 (NLT)** *But if I live, I can do more fruitful work for Christ. So I really don't know which is better. 23 I'm torn between two desires: I long to go and be with Christ, which would be far better for me. 24 But for your sakes, it is better that I continue to live. 25 Knowing this, I am convinced that I will remain alive so I can continue to help all of you grow and experience the joy of your faith.*
- **Therefore, be encouraged my friends. Jesus is Enough! Jesus is more than enough!**

- **He's got you in life; He's got you in death! You have victory either way in Him!**

#### 7. Let us live lives worthy of the Gospel! (v27a)

- **Philippians 1:27 (KJV)** *Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;*
- Paul is essentially saying, “So if life is truly about the LORD in your hearts, your lives will match.”
- ESV - “Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ...”
- If we are truly overwhelmed by the immensity of the gospel and the overwhelming nature of the work of Christ on the cross, then this command, although big, makes total sense.
- How can we NOT order our lives to glorify Christ and His gospel?
- **Therefore be encouraged friends as you pursue holy and honorable living! Jesus is worthy of such from His chosen ones!**

#### 8. Let us stand firm in unity! (v27b)

- In that same verse, Paul intimates that such living should produce practical unity.
- That makes sense too! If we are focused on the LORD and dead to ourselves, unity or having “one mind striving together” should be a manifestation.
- Think about this phrase: “one mind strives together.” Is that your home? Is that your church? In Christ, it can be!
- **Therefore be encouraged to stand fast in one spirit! Ephesians 4:4-6 (KJV)** *There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling; 5 One Lord, one faith, one baptism, 6 One God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*
- Amen!

#### 9. Let us choose confidence in Christ instead of fear (v28)

- **Philippians 1:28 (KJV)** *And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.*
- **Philippians 1:28 (NLT)** *Don't be intimidated in any way by your enemies. This will be a sign to them that they are going to be destroyed, but that you are going to be saved, even by God himself.*
- It doesn't matter if you're in some form of “prison” (dealing with tough circumstances). You do not have to fear your enemies.
- Worship God and love them instead!
- Remember Paul and Silas in the Philippian jail? When the jailer saw they hadn't escaped, he was broken. Not only were they not afraid, but they ministered the gospel to him and his whole household was saved!
- **I wonder what sort of worship inspired, God-wrought “earthquakes” might be unleashed in your life with such confidence?**
- **Therefore be confident in the LORD. Choose faith instead of fear!**

#### 10. May we remember that suffering for Christ is an honor! (v29)

- **Philippians 1:29 (KJV)** For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake;
- **Philippians 1:29 (NLT)** For you have been given not only the privilege of trusting in Christ but also the privilege of suffering for him.
- This one of the chief practical lessons we can learn from the apostles. They had a different view—I'd go as far as to say an eternal view—of suffering.
- Remember what they said after being beaten by order of the religious leaders in Jerusalem in Acts 5?
- **Acts 5:40-42 (KJV)** *And to him they agreed: and when they had called the apostles, and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. **41** And they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name. **42** And daily in the temple, and in every house, they ceased not to teach and preach Jesus Christ.*
- They went right back to work after REJOICING OVER BEING BEATEN!
- **Therefore be encouraged in the LORD friends. In the sovereignty of God, as long as we are walking hard after Christ, even our suffering is cause for rejoicing. This literally means that you can rejoice at all times!**

**Psalms 34:1-8 (KJV)** *I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth. **2** My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad. **3** O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together. **4** I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears. **5** They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed. **6** This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles. **7** The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them. **8** **O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.***

Amen!