

Living a Life of Joy

the book of Philippians: July 18-August 8, 2021
St. Stephen's Lutheran Church - West St. Paul, Minnesota



The Letter of Paul to the *Philippians*



Background

This artfully composed letter centers around two early Christian hymns (or confessions) that proclaim Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Around these two centers, the Apostle Paul identifies the reality of life in Christ for the Philippian Christians who will soon experience persecution for the sake of the gospel, just as Paul experiences this reality in his own imprisonment. The letter also emphasizes the joy that life in Christ brings to all believers in spite of the outward circumstances of persecution and life in the world.

Writing in the midst of his imprisonment and possibly facing martyrdom, Paul proclaims that his identity is in Christ. The reality of life is always centered in Christ, as Paul states, "For me living is Christ, and dying is gain" (1:21). Identity in Christ is the source of joy in Paul's letter to a people under persecution for the faith. Jesus Christ has claimed us as his own.

Theological Themes

- **The centrality of Christ.** The Philippian letter is very carefully written and centered on two early Christian hymns, proclaiming who Jesus Christ is as Lord (2:6-11) and Savior (3:20). These two centers of the letter call the Philippians from lives of self-centeredness to experience the gift of life centered in one's identity in Christ.
- **Issues affecting the community of faith.** Paul voices his concerns for issues present in the Philippian community in 3:2-19 and 4:2-3. Warnings in the letter introduce Paul's concern for what is taking place in Philippi. His desire for the reconciliation of Euodia and Syntyche likewise expresses his concern.
- **Joy and rejoicing.** The word joy has a rich meaning in Philippians. Paul's prayers for his readers are "with joy" (1:4); joy is centered "in faith" (1:25); joy is complete in being "of the same mind, having the same love, being of full accord and of one mind" (2:2); joy is in welcoming Epaphroditus back "with all joy, and honoring such people" (2:29); the Philippians themselves are the reason for Paul's "joy and crown" (4:1). Likewise, the call to rejoice is a rich expression of the joy that Paul experiences even in the midst of his imprisonment, because of the reality of the living presence of Christ.
- **Self-centeredness.** Paul describes three concerns that indicate a self-centered life, a life not oriented to the gift of salvation in Christ. The first concern expresses: I earn my own salvation (3:2-11); the second: I am already perfected (3:12-16); and the third: I will do what pleases me (3:17-19).

Outline

I. Opening Greetings (Philippians 1:1-2)

In a section that, in partnership with the letter's closing verses (4:21-23), forms a ring around the letter, Paul and Timothy greet "all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi."

II. Opening Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession (Philippians 1:3-11)

The letter's authors thank God for the Philippians and intercede on their behalf. These prayers express the intimate, personal relationship that the writers share with the believers in Philippi.

III. Life Centered in Jesus Christ as Servant and Lord (Philippians 1:12-2:30)

In a section structured in a concentric pattern, beginning and ending with mention of Paul's imprisonment and proclamation, Paul acknowledges the reality of persecution for the sake of the gospel. At the center of this section, bracketed by discussion of the reality of life in Christ, is a hymn that proclaims Jesus Christ as servant and Lord of all (2:6-11).

IV. Life Centered in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior (Philippians 3:1-4:9)

This section is also structured in a concentric pattern, beginning and ending with Paul expressing concern for issues in the Philippian community and identifying issues that detract from the centrality of Christ by focusing on the self. At the center of this section, surrounded by calls to live in expectation of the Lord's return, is an early Christian hymn or confession that proclaims Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior (3:20).

V. Closing Prayers of Thanksgiving and Intercession (Philippians 4:10-20)

Prayers voice thanksgiving for the Philippians' life in Christ and the riches that are present in Christ.

VI. Closing Greetings (Philippians 4:21-23)

The letter concludes as it begins, with greetings. This completes the book's overall concentric literary pattern.

Resources

Video Introduction to Philippians.

The Bible Project website is an absolute treasure-trove of amazing videos! Each one features line drawing animations that introduce a book of the Bible, as well as specific themes and much, much more. The main website is at BibleProject.com and the following link will take you to the nine minute introductory video for the Letter to the Philippians. <https://bit.ly/3gLKsyn>

Introduction and Background from Luther Seminary.

Another huge resource is Enter the Bible by Luther Seminary (EnterTheBible.org). "Here you'll find a wealth of resources to help you grow in your faith, add depth to your Bible studies and truly discover the people, places and events of the Bible. Think of Enter the Bible as your guide, a helpful reference tool to accompany you in your reading of the Bible." The following link takes you to the page for Philippians. <https://bit.ly/2Sk1DxH>

Online Bible.

There are many sites you can go to and read the Bible online in various versions. Here is the one that is the go-to for Pastor Tim: www.biblegateway.com

Facebook Group for Conversation. Pastor Tim has a special Facebook group set aside for discipleship "excursions" at St. Stephens. Follow this link to be a part of the conversation with him and others throughout the study! <https://bit.ly/FacebookRoadTrip>

Content Acknowledgement (Permission received to reprint)

"Background, Theological Themes, and Outline" were written by Paul S. Berge, Emeritus Professor of New Testament, This article was first published on EntertheBible.org found at <https://www.enterthebible.org>.

SERMON SERIES TIMELINE:

Sunday July 11	10:30 am	Introduction to Philippians and Resources
Monday July 12		Reading Plan Begins
Monday-Friday July 12-16		Reading Plan: Philippians 1:1-30
Sunday July 18	9:30 am	Sermon: "Joy Along the Way"
Monday-Friday July 19-23		Reading Plan: Philippians 2:1-30
Sunday July 25	9:30 am	Sermon: "Joy in the Midst of Suffering"
Monday-Friday July 26-30		Reading Plan: Philippians 3:1-21
Sunday August 1	9:30 am	Sermon: "Surpassing Knowledge"
Monday-Friday August 2-6		Reading Plan: Philippians 4:1-2
Sunday August 8	9:30 am	Sermon: "Contentment and Gratitude"

Philippians Weekly Reading Plan

WEEK One - July 12 thru July 16

Done	Day	Date	Reading
<input type="checkbox"/>	Monday	July 12	Philippians 1:1-2
<input type="checkbox"/>	Tuesday	July 13	Philippians 1:3-11
<input type="checkbox"/>	Wednesday	July 14	Philippians 1:12-18a
<input type="checkbox"/>	Thursday	July 15	Philippians 1:18b-26
<input type="checkbox"/>	Friday	July 16	Philippians 1:27-30

WEEK Two - July 19 thru July 23

Done	Day	Date	Reading
<input type="checkbox"/>	Monday	July 19	Philippians 2:1-4
<input type="checkbox"/>	Tuesday	July 20	Philippians 2:5-11
<input type="checkbox"/>	Wednesday	July 21	Philippians 2:12-18
<input type="checkbox"/>	Thursday	July 22	Philippians 2:19-24
<input type="checkbox"/>	Friday	July 23	Philippians 2:25-30

WEEK Three - July 26 thru July 30

Done	Day	Date	Reading
<input type="checkbox"/>	Monday	July 26	Philippians 3:1-6
<input type="checkbox"/>	Tuesday	July 27	Philippians 3:7-9
<input type="checkbox"/>	Wednesday	July 28	Philippians 3:10-11
<input type="checkbox"/>	Thursday	July 29	Philippians 3:12-16
<input type="checkbox"/>	Friday	July 30	Philippians 3:17-21

WEEK Four - August 2 thru August 6

Done	Day	Date	Reading
<input type="checkbox"/>	Monday	August 2	Philippians 4:1-3
<input type="checkbox"/>	Tuesday	August 3	Philippians 4:4-7
<input type="checkbox"/>	Wednesday	August 4	Philippians 4:8-9
<input type="checkbox"/>	Thursday	August 5	Philippians 4:10-14
<input type="checkbox"/>	Friday	August 6	Philippians 4:15-23

Monday, July 12**Philippians 1:1-2**

1 Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: **2** Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Tuesday, July 13**Philippians 1:3-11**

3 I thank my God every time I remember you, **4** constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, **5** because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. **6** I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. **7** It is right for me to think this way about all of you, because you hold me in your heart, for all of you share in God's grace with me, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. **8** For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus. **9** And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight **10** to help you to determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, **11** having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

Wednesday, July 14**Philippians 1:12-18a**

12 I want you to know, beloved, that what has happened to me has actually helped to spread the gospel, **13** so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to everyone else that my imprisonment is for Christ; **14** and most of the brothers and sisters, having been made confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, dare to speak the word with greater boldness and without fear. **15** Some proclaim Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from goodwill. **16** These proclaim Christ out of love, knowing that I have been put here for the defense of the gospel; **17** the others proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely but intending to increase my suffering in my imprisonment. **18** What does it matter? Just this, that Christ is proclaimed in every way, whether out of false motives or true; and in that I rejoice.

Thursday, July 15**Philippians 1:18b-26**

Yes, and I will continue to 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. **20** It is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be put to shame in any way, but that by my speaking with all boldness, Christ will be exalted now as always in my body, whether by life or by death. **21** For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. **22** If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which I prefer. **23** I am hard pressed between the two: my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better; **24** but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you. **25** Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in faith, **26** so that I may share abundantly in your boasting in Christ Jesus when I come to you again.

Monday, July 19**Philippians 2:1-4**

1 If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, 2 make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. 3 Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. 4 Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others.

Tuesday, July 20**Philippians 2:5-11**

5 Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, 7 but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, 8 he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross. 9 Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, 10 so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

Wednesday, July 21**Philippians 2:12-18**

12 Therefore, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed me, not only in my presence, but much more now in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who is at work in you, enabling you both to will and to work for his good pleasure. 14 Do all things without murmuring and arguing, 15 so that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, in which you shine like stars in the world. 16 It is by your holding fast to the word of life that I can boast on the day of Christ that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. 17 But even if I am being poured out as a libation over the sacrifice and the offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you— 18 and in the same way you also must be glad and rejoice with me.

Thursday, July 22**Philippians 2:19-24**

19 I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I may be cheered by news of you. 20 I have no one like him who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. 21 All of them are seeking their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. 22 But Timothy's worth you know, how like a son with a father he has served with me in the work of the gospel. 23 I hope therefore to send him as soon as I see how things go with me; 24 and I trust in the Lord that I will also come soon.

Monday, July 26**Philippians 3:1-6**

1 Finally, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is not troublesome to me, and for you it is a safeguard. 2 Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of those who mutilate the flesh! 3 For it is we who are the circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and boast in Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh— 4 even though I, too, have reason for confidence in the flesh. If anyone else has reason to be confident in the flesh, I have more: 5 circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee; 6 as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless.

Tuesday, July 27**Philippians 3:7-9**

7 Yet whatever gains I had, these I have come to regard as loss because of Christ. 8 More than that, I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but one that comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God based on faith.

Wednesday, July 28**Philippians 3:10-11**

10 I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, 11 if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead.

Thursday, July 29**Philippians 3:12-16**

12 Not that I have already obtained this or have already reached the goal; but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. 13 Beloved, I do not consider that I have made it my own; but this one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the heavenly call of God in Christ Jesus. 15 Let those of us then who are mature be of the same mind; and if you think differently about anything, this too God will reveal to you. 16 Only let us hold fast to what we have attained.

Friday, July 30**Philippians 3:17-21**

17 Brothers and sisters, join in imitating me, and observe those who live according to the example you have in us. 18 For many live as enemies of the cross of Christ; I have often told you of them, and now I tell you even with tears. 19 Their end is destruction; their god is the belly; and their glory is in their shame; their minds are set on earthly things. 20 But our citizenship is in heaven, and it is from there that we are expecting a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. 21 He will transform the body of our humiliation that it may be conformed to the body of his glory, by the power that also enables him to make all things subject to himself.

Monday, August 2

Philippians 4:1-3

1 Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved. **2** I urge Euodia and I urge Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. **3** Yes, and I ask you also, my loyal companion, help these women, for they have struggled beside me in the work of the gospel, together with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.

Tuesday, August 3

Philippians 4:4-7

4 Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. **5** Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. **6** Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. **7** And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Wednesday, August 4

Philippians 4:8-9

8 Finally, beloved, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. **9** Keep on doing the things that you have learned and received and heard and seen in me, and the God of peace will be with you.

Thursday, August 5

Philippians 4:10-14

10 I rejoice in the Lord greatly that now at last you have revived your concern for me; indeed, you were concerned for me, but had no opportunity to show it. **11** Not that I am referring to being in need; for I have learned to be content with whatever I have. **12** I know what it is to have little, and I know what it is to have plenty. In any and all circumstances I have learned the secret of being well-fed and of going hungry, of having plenty and of being in need. **13** I can do all things through him who strengthens me. **14** In any case, it was kind of you to share my distress.

Friday, August 6

Philippians 4:15-23

15 You Philippians indeed know that in the early days of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you alone. **16** For even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me help for my needs more than once. **17** Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the profit that accumulates to your account. **18** I have been paid in full and have more than enough; I am fully satisfied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. **19** And my God will fully satisfy every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. **20** To our God and Father be glory forever and ever. Amen. **21** Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The friends who are with me greet you. **22** All the saints greet you, especially those of the emperor's household. **23** The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

