

BOOK 1
Philippians:
Twin Passions

**To Know Christ and to
Make Him Known**

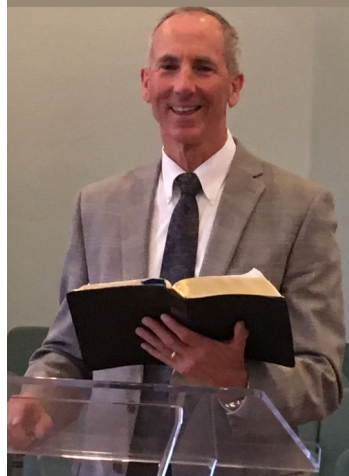
Alaska Christian Ministry to Seafarers

Foreword

I don't know how many times I've read through the Book of Philippians: A dozen times! Two dozen! And yet, I never cease to be amazed at what happens when I return once more to the infinite source, the Word of God, and ask,

"Lord, what do You have for us today?"

Part of the answer I received is in the booklets in our Philippians series, of which this is the first.



In His grace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin Redig". The signature is stylized and fluid, written on a white background.

Kevin Redig

All Scripture quotes have been taken from either the NIV (1984 edition) or the NKJV (1982 edition).

Vistoso Community Church
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Introduction

I want to start our investigation of Philippians by sharing with you what I have found so compelling in this letter from Paul to a church that he planted, and that was very dear to his heart. In addition to being revelation from God to the Church today, it is also a very clear revelation of what is on the heart of Paul. And for me, he reveals it in such a way that it is wonderfully attractive. I find myself being deeply drawn to his example. It is as if I can't help responding deep within my soul and spirit: *"This is what it means to be a committed Christians! I want to be like this!"*

An Initial Glimpse

As we will learn, Paul is under house arrest and things have not been going well for him from a human perspective. Yet, all else seems to fade into the background, so consumed is he with his first passion:

For to me, to live is Christ Philippians 1:21

I want to know Christ and the power of the resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings Philippians 3:10

... I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Philippians 3:12

Can you not just feel his occupation with his Lord and Savior? Do you not have at least the tiniest impulse to share in what he has?

A Second Passion

There is a second passion that exists side-by-side with Paul's passion to know Christ. It is to make Him known! A quick scripture survey reveals that as well.

... I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the Gospel.

Philippians 1:12

... The important thing is that in every way ... Christ is preached. ...

Philippians 1:18

... even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice

Philippians 2:17

All the saints send you greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar's household.

Philippians 4:22

To know Christ is to mature in Him. To make Him known is to fulfill the purpose for which our Lord has left us here on this earth. When I think of it that way, what could be a more compelling picture of the Christian Life than to be fully engaged in those twin passions?

How powerfully Paul, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, develops both of these passions in the four chapters of the Book of Philippians. There is so much for us to understand, and I suspect you may be challenged regarding the focus of your spiritual life like never before.

I trust you will join me as we begin.

To the Saints in Christ at Philippi

Paul begins his letter with the following salutation:

Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with all the overseers and deacons.

Philippians 1:1

So we learn that this portion of Scripture began as a letter from the Apostle Paul to the *saints* in Philippi.

Some Background

That raises the obvious question, "Where is Philippi?"

It is in Greece and named after Philip of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great. Paul visited this city and led its first converts to Christ during a dramatic visit on his second missionary journey.

One item to note about this city is its Roman character. Although in Greece, it was made famous for its support of Rome during its transition from republic to empire.



As a result, Philippi was given special status in the Empire, and was in reality a Roman enclave. The people spoke Latin, followed Roman customs, and the city had many retired legionnaires as part of its population.

As noted, the letter was originally to the *saints* in Philippi. Does Paul have the super-holy in mind? No, he has in mind those who have trusted in Christ for eternal life, for everyone who responds to the Gospel in faith is a saint. In Philippi, that include a shrewd business woman, a formerly demon-possessed fortune teller, and the head jailor!

What made them saints was not their past and not necessarily their present behavior. What made them saints is their association with Jesus Christ as the result of faith in Him! We dare not forget, as believers in Jesus Christ, that association is our only claim to fame as well.

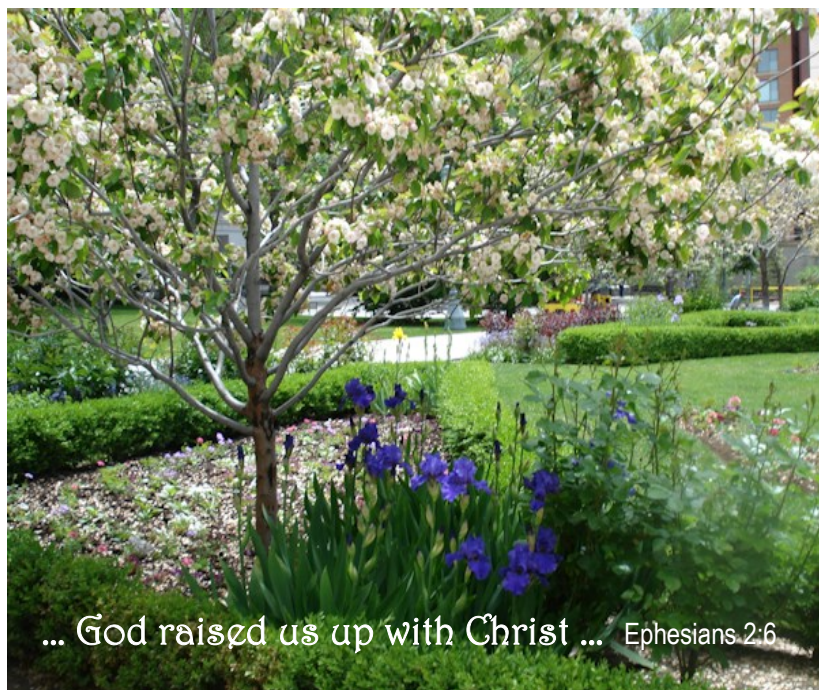
Saints in Christ Jesus

Let's consider this a little more closely.

Faith is the beginning. First, faith in the person and work of Christ leads to eternal life, but that is just the beginning of the *so-great* salvation provided by our God, for faith in Christ leads to an intimacy of relationship with Him that is not only unexpected, but something so spectacular it would be hard to believe if it wasn't so explicitly taught in the Word of God.

... God, who is rich in mercy, ... made us alive with Christ ... raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.

Ephesians 2:4-6



Read Ephesians 2:4-6 a second time. You should be in awe! We started out *dead in trespasses and sin—and an object of God's wrath*. (Ephesians 2:1-3) Now we are alive, raised up with Christ. Not only that, but right now we are seated with Him in the heavenly realms.

This is an example of something called *positional truth*. Any passages of Scripture which speak of something that is ours *in Christ*, apart from our necessarily having experienced it, falls into this category of *positional truth*.

God is the Source

Second, perhaps you wonder how this is possible? How have we become the recipients of such a status?

Let me break the answer into two parts:

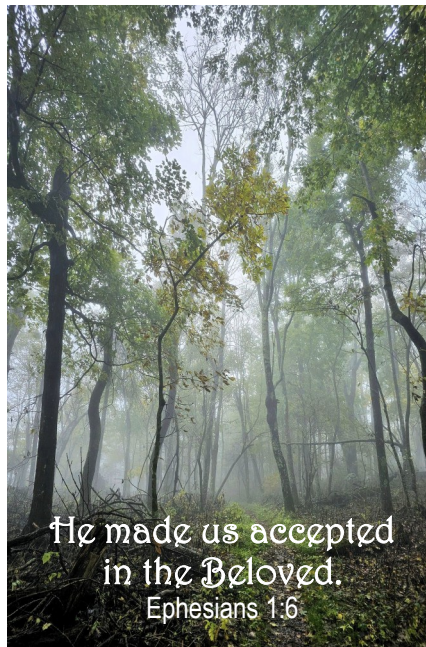
- First, this status is ours for no other reason than the fact that, following our belief in Christ, God placed us in union with Him. It is a union so intimate, that we share in what is His!

It is because of Him (God) that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God—that is our righteousness, holiness and redemption.

I Corinthians 1:30

Do you see it? God the Father did it, and we stand redeemed with a share in the Son's righteousness and holiness. That's grace, as well as a treasure beyond compare! And I cannot emphasize it too much, this is not something that we do, or to which we contribute. This is a work of God through and through.

- Second, to show you the breadth of the blessing associated with positional truth, direct your attention to the following verse:



... He made us accepted in the Beloved.

Ephesians 1:6, NKJV

... **He made us highly favored in the Beloved** (Christ).

Ephesians 1:6 paraphrase

Ephesians 1:6 tells us that God has made us *accepted* in His Son—for that is who the Beloved is in context. Now in the Greek text, the word translated *accepted* is a word meaning that which is given in grace. Thus, some translations use the words *to favor*. This is a very good summation of positional truth. As part of the gift of salvation, we are so intimately related to our Savior, that we have a new *position* in Christ. From the moment of our salvation, we are *highly favored* in one place, and one place only, *in Christ!*

Believers are ALL saints. Every born-again child of God can be labeled a *saint* for the sole reason of his or her position *in Christ*. Thankfully, our position is a permanent and unchanging part of our salvation!

Further, you will find no passage of Scripture that suggests it can be lost or diminished in any way. That's because it is not something that depends upon us or something we have done. It is a work of God and His doing. Our position *in Christ* is the source of our stability on our good days and on our bad days. When we fail, we don't have to spend time wondering about what God is going to do now. We can confess our sin and get back to walking by faith and by the Spirit because we are always *in Christ!*

Our Walk is to match our Position. Now, as part of what it means to be a New Testament *saint*, let's add the concept of our *walk* to that of our *position*. God does not

give us our wonderful and undeserved *position*, and then say, "Do what you want with it." On the contrary:

Since we have these promises, dear friends, let us purify ourselves from everything that contaminates body and spirit, perfecting holiness out of reverence for God.

II Corinthians 7:1

The *promises* mentioned in the verse above certainly includes those related to our position *in Christ*. What is their intended outcome? How about:

... perfecting holiness out of reference for God.

II Corinthians 7:1

And that is a description of the *walk* we are to have as followers of Jesus.

We can see both our *walk* and our *position* in the following very instructive passage:

To the Church of God in Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus and called to be holy, together with all those everywhere who call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ ...

I Corinthians 1:2

At face value, this verse makes little sense, especially when you learn that *sanctify* and *holy* come from the same Greek word. It would seem to claim you are sanctified (holy), and then it turns right around and calls you to become sanctified. How can both be true?

The confusion is solved when we realize that Paul is speaking to the wayward church in Corinth. He is reminding them that they *are Sanctified in Christ* positionally. But he is, at the same time, putting them on notice that when it comes to their walk, there are changes that need to occur that they might *become holy* in terms of their walk such that it matches their position.

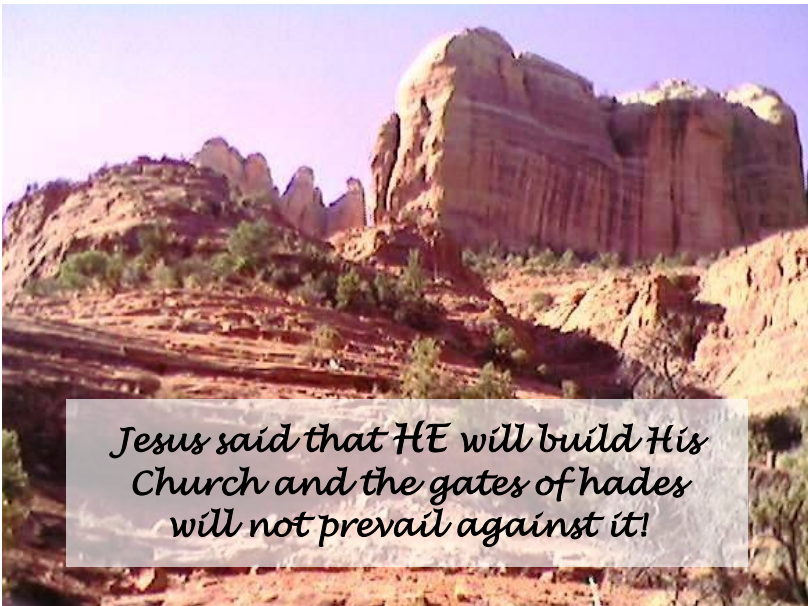
The Lord Jesus is Building His Church

Thus far we know Paul is writing to a fellowship of believers located in the town of Philippi. They are *highly favored in the Beloved* by virtue of their relationship with Christ. Yet, at the same time, they are being called to *perfect their holiness* in the midst of a pagan city trying to *be like Rome* and filled with a lot of rough and tumble legionnaires.

This doesn't seem like a likely place for a church, does it? But the place or people are not really an issue, for there is a Church that Jesus is building. He has told us He would do this very thing:

"... I will build My Church and the gates of Hades will not overcome it."

Matthew 16:18



Jesus said that HE will build His Church and the gates of hades will not prevail against it!

How It Started in Philippi

Every church has a *story*, including ours, and we should not be the least surprised if there are supernatural elements to that story. Because it is part of the Biblical record, let's look at how the church in Philippi got started. To do so, we'll have to turn to Acts Chapter 16. (Before continuing, read Acts Chapter 16. I think you will find it helpful.)

At the close of Acts 15, Paul decides to undertake another lengthy trip in order to visit the churches he had planted on his previous journey. Silas goes with Paul, and so we have the beginning of what we typically refer to as Paul's Second Missionary Journey. The map below provides the itinerary for this trip.

Paul's Second Missionary Journey is much longer than the first and note this is the first record of the Gospel



being carried to Europe. In fact, God specifically superintended over Paul's travel to ensure the Gospel was brought to Europe. It is worth reading how this unfolded in Acts 16:6-12 because this is how Paul happened to arrive in Philippi.

Paul was in the habit of evangelizing Jewish people first, but there were very few of them in Philippi. It is likely that there were less than ten men, since there was no synagogue. Instead, Paul met with those who had gathered for prayer. The next thing you know, a business-woman named Lydia was the first to place her faith in the person and work of Christ. After casting a demon out of a slave girl whose ability to tell fortunes was making money for her owners, Paul and Silas were beaten and thrown into jail as the result of false charges brought by the slave girl's owners. I think it likely that this slave girl also became a believer in Jesus Christ, although there is no way to know for sure.

The Story Continues from Jail

Now we'll pick up the story in more detail. Paul and Silas are imprisoned in the most secure part of the jail.

About midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening to them.

Acts 16:25

Who but those who are *new creations* in Christ, walking by faith in the power of the Spirit, could be singing hymns after such unjust treatment? I wonder how many of the prisoners, who were a captive audience to such a witness eventually became part of the Philippian church?

Scripture continues the story:

Suddenly there was such a violent earthquake that the foundations of the prison were shaken. At once all the prison doors flew open, and everybody's chains came loose. The jailor woke up, and when he saw the prison doors open, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself ...But Paul shouted, "Don't harm yourself! We are all here!"

Acts 16:26-28

Have you ever heard of an earthquake that unlocked prison doors and loosened chains, but didn't damage buildings? Clearly, this is a supernatural intervention by the hand of God!

What about the jailor? Under Roman law, his life would have been forfeit for the loss of his prisoners. So, rather than suffer execution for his failure, he had decided to preemptively take his own life. After hearing Paul:

The jailor called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

Acts 16:29-30

For Those Sharing the Gospel

The answer to the jailer's question is a crucial point of doctrine, but before we consider it, there are some things we should understand.

1. The world, in the persons of those abusing an unfortunate slave girl, lied about Paul's ministry in order to suit its own agenda. Do not be surprised if the world also mistreats you as you seek to share the good news of the Gospel with others!

2. The lost jailor is aware of the general nature of Paul's ministry, but not its specific content. He knows it is a salvation ministry, but not the means of getting saved! This reminds me of our country. People are aware of the idea of heaven, hell, and Jesus, but not the specifics of either their lost condition or how to be redeemed. Like the jailor, they need someone to tell them how to be saved!
3. Who is most directly responsible for the jailor's readiness to hear the Gospel? Think about this for a few moments. Paul and Silas were doing their part, but the jailor wasn't interested—at least not until God shook the jail in a miraculous way. We need to be ready with the truth, but it is God who opens the door to Gospel hearing spiritually, and sometimes literally. We must trust Him to do what He has said He will do—on His timetable:

When He comes, He will convict the world of guilt in regard to sin and righteousness and judgment ...

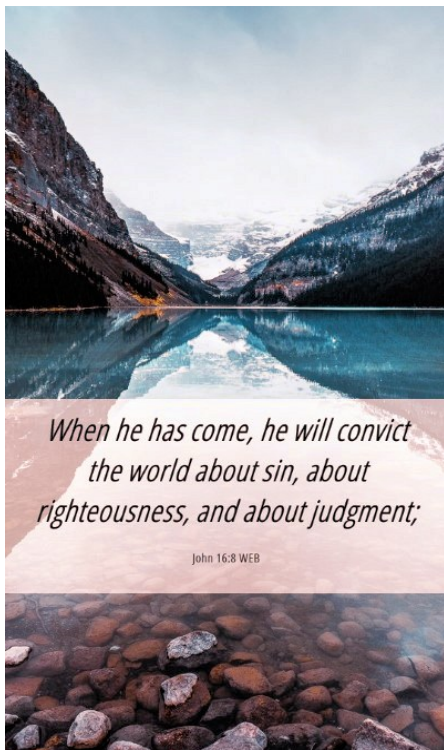
John 16:8



John 16:8

When he has come, he will convict the world about sin, about righteousness, and about judgment;

4. So, let's make sure we understand the *division of labor*: It is not our job to draw people to the Lord—that is the role of the Holy Spirit. Ours is to be ready to bear witness to an accurate and Christ-centered Gospel. Of course, we always need to be ready for life's most important question, "*What must I do to be saved?*" Here is a corollary principle: If you are not sure what to do while you are waiting for the Holy Spirit to work—sing hymns!
5. Notice how the jailor is attempting to come to Paul and Silas as a *religious man*. He is familiar with religious practice, and so he asks, "*What must I do ...?*" The verb is in the present tense, so, it is likely, in his religious mindset, that he is asking, what must I do, do, do ...? Paul is going to shock him with his answer, for it is not going to involve ongoing religious works.



6. Before we get to the answer to this most-important question, we have the opportunity to clear up the confusion regarding the concept of repentance. Thus far in our narrative, the jailor has *repented*, but not yet come to faith. I would tell you that repentance is always necessary prior to coming to faith:

Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent ...

Acts 17:30

But let me suggest that repentance may not mean what you think it does. The Greek word translated *repent* is a compound of two other words which collectively mean to change your mind after receiving information. Repentance is not a change in behavior or a feeling; it is a change of mind.

The supernatural earthquake caused the jailor to *change his mind* about the significance of hearing the salvation message Paul and Silas had been proclaiming. Previously, he had so little interest, he didn't know the content of what they had been proclaiming, but his desperate question shows us that he had clearly changed his mind!

No one is going to respond to God's offer of salvation, until they first change their mind about their need of it. The jailor has repented, and now he is ready to respond to the truth that will save him for all eternity!

Gospel Content Clearly Revealed

Let's reconsider the jailor's question born of desperation, and then we'll look at the answer. I want you to consider the circumstances and look carefully at the answer.

Consider the Situation

Do you think the head jailor of a rough and tumble Roman enclave in Greece was a kind and gentle man? Probably not! If ever it was appropriate to make changing one's behavior part of the Gospel, surely this would be the time. Let's see if Paul and Silas do any such thing.

The jailor called for lights, rushed in and fell trembling before Paul and Silas. He then brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" Acts 16:29-30



So they said, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.” Acts 16:31

Being saved for all eternity is a very, very important issue for each of us, so let’s look at this carefully.

Requirements for Salvation

Our salvation appears to dependent upon three things: *the right person, the right work, and the right response!*

The Right Person. The text tells us Who this is—the Lord Jesus Christ! Notice all three terms for our Savior: Lord, in that He is deity (John 1:1); Jesus, in that He added humanity to His deity at the point of His First Advent (John 1:14); and Christ, in that He came expressly to save lost mankind (John 12:47).

The Right Work. As Savior, God’s plan called for Jesus to go to the cross in our place, bearing the punishment for our sin. (I Peter 2:24) In bearing our sin, he received in Himself the *wages for sin*, which is death (Romans 6:23), and, in doing so, died in our place (Hebrews 2:9). When Jesus declared “***It is finished***” (John 19:30) as His time on the cross came to an end, He was declaring our sin debt was *Paid in full!*

The Right Response. Notice the only response God is looking for from sinners, on their knees realizing their need of a Savior, is to ***Believe!*** Not a single work is mentioned and neither is anything else that might come from our will-power or abilities. The requirement is just faith in the *Right Person* and *Right Work*.

You see, when it comes to saving a lost and spiritually dead individual, God isn't the least bit interested in what we *bring to the table*. He wants our attention fully riveted upon the person and work of His Son! In this way, the glory belongs to the Lord Jesus, and Him alone—which is as it should be!

Now, the Best Part

Now for the best part of this narrative:

Then they spoke the Word of the Lord to him, and to all who were in his house ... he (the jailer) set food before them; and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household.

Acts 16:32-34

Paul and Silas answered all the jailor's questions and further explained the truths associated with the *Right Person* and the *Right Work* of the Lord Jesus Christ. Then, not only the jailor but his entire family believed and were saved! That is the clear testimony of the text.

There you have it! This is the story of the start of the church in Philippi—a Jewish business woman, a jailer and his family, perhaps a former demon-possessed fortune teller, and a few fellow prisoners. You might not think this is a very impressive group from which to start a church, but let me remind you:

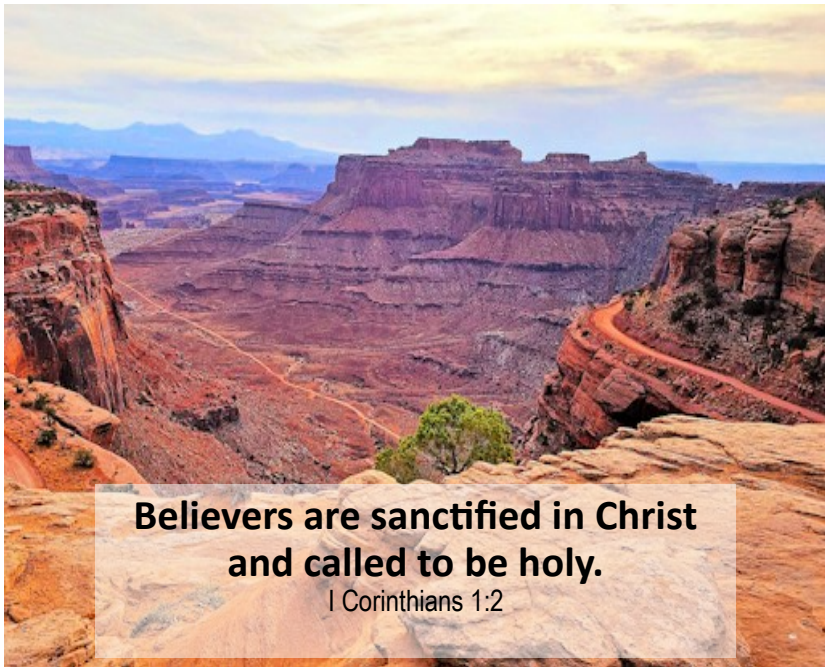
... God chooses the foolish things of the world to shame the wise; the weak things of the world to shame the strong; ... the lowly things of this world and the despised things—and the things that are not—to nullify the things that are, so that no one may boast before Him.

I Corinthians 1:27-29

Once again we see that it is not about the human composition of a church that makes it special. It is all about the One who is both building the church and is its Head! When a church consisting of those who are lowly in the world's estimation accomplishes great things, the Lord Jesus gets the glory.

Although they are in the midst of a hostile environment, the church in Philippi is growing and very precious to the heart of Paul—and to their Savior. It is to this growing church that Paul pens a letter full of deep truths and spiritual guidance, a letter we call the *Book of Philippians*!

As you might imagine, there is so much more to learn.



**Believers are sanctified in Christ
and called to be holy.**

I Corinthians 1:2

A Different Perspective on Life

Before we open the content of Paul's letter to the church he planted in Philippi, allow me to introduce you to one of the most striking (and somewhat intimidating) aspects of the book. Specifically, I want to show you that the letter presents a completely different perspective on life than that to which we are accustomed. The things that were important to Paul are just not the same kinds of things that are important to us—even the most spiritual among us. Paul is living life on a different spiritual plane and calling us to join him.

The First Two Verses

I am going to show you our first hint of this difference in perspective in the first two verses of the book. Before we are finished, you will find it developed to a degree that is very convicting. Let me unfold it as follows:

- *Who are the people who make up the new church at Philippi?* If you have read this far, you know they are a business woman, a jailor, and very likely a demon-possessed slave girl. No, actually they are now *saints in Christ Jesus!* That is what the Scripture calls them and is an identity that stands far above any title man could bestow.

Why is that so important? Consider your lost neighbors, friends, and family members. It doesn't matter how accomplished they have been in this life, at the close of this life, if they are not *in Christ*, a calamity of the greatest proportions awaits!

Philippians forces us to face the truth that responding in faith to the Gospel of Christ and developing a personal relationship with Him is the most important use of the life we have been blessed with—no exceptions!

- To understand this truth and to live as a follower of Jesus is to triumph over circumstances! Paul was a *mover and shaker* of the highest order among the Jews—until he became a Christian. Then, no doubt, many Jewish colleagues shook their heads at what they believed to be a squandered life.

Even Paul describes himself as nothing more than a *bond-servant of Christ Jesus*. For the past two years he has been imprisoned in Caesarea, and now he is facing another imprisonment in Rome.

When we got to Rome ... Paul was allowed to live by himself, with a soldier to guard him. Acts 28:16

Paul was actually chained to one or more guards 24 hours a day. Is this a life wasted? Have circumstances triumphed? This brings us to the second aspect of the message of Philippians.



Paul didn't see this as a setback, but an opportunity:

Boldly and without hindrance he preached the kingdom of God and taught about the Lord Jesus Christ.

Acts 28:31

All the saints send you greetings, especially those who belong to Caesar's household.

Philippians 4:22

Even in prison, Paul is in full teaching mode every day.

This imprisonment is when he wrote a number of prison epistles which are now a precious part of our Bibles.

Then comes my favorite part. When Paul closes his letter, he is passing on a greeting from the believers who are part of Caesar's



household: Who could that possibly be? Why, it was the uncouth, pagan, and tough as nails Praetorian Guardsmen who were assigned to guard Paul night and day. They saw the character of the man, his life well-lived as a servant of Christ, and they heard the Gospel. And, some of them responded in faith.

Thus, we have a second thing to ponder: What does it mean to live a life that has an eternal legacy! This is just a first *blush* of what is to come: A passionate letter from a godly man who is going to force us to look at our own lives and ask:

Am I spending the minutes, hours, days of my life in a way that will matter for eternity? Will my life have resulted in something pleasing to the Lord and earn commendation when I stand before Him.

Being Confident of This

As we continue, we see the intimacy and personal nature of Paul's relationship with the church in Philippi.

I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the Gospel from the first day until now, 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.

Philippians 1:3-6

Thankful for the Philippian Church. Why is Paul thankful for the church in Philippi? Because they are doing something that every church should be doing—taking up the cause of the Gospel of Christ! The external mission of the Church is to:

... go and make disciples of all nations ... Matthew 28:19

To clarify, the Church is a body of those who have trusted in Christ. The ministry of the church *externally* is to proclaim the Gospel of Christ to the lost world outside of the body of believers. Its *internal* mission is to grow spiritually into an ever-deeper relationship with its Savior.

Thus, because the Philippian congregation is taking up at least this one aspect of discipleship, Paul is completely confident of something: God is at work in the lives of the believers in Philippi. God is not just at work, but very intentionally carrying on a program of development that has a very specific outcome in mind.

It is easy to gloss over this as more introductory material from Paul. To do so would be to miss out on something very important. Further, it would be to miss something that every church fellowship, and all believers should desire to apply directly to themselves.

Let's spend time considering this more deeply for the purpose of application. First, note that the intensely personal nature of how things are meant to function in the Church. Perhaps that is why it is referred to as a *body*.

To be clear, there are certain aspects of Christianity that must occur at the level of the individual. We must each, personally, choose to believe the Gospel, and we must each choose to do those things that lead to spiritual growth. No other individual or group can make these decisions for us. But, what God is seeking to do through those who believe cannot be done with *lone ranger* Christians. It is a partnership.

It is the Church that is meant to be the pillar and foundation of the truth. (I Timothy 3:15) It is the church that is meant to evangelize the world. It is the church that is meant to be a *body* consisting of complimentary spiritual gifts all responding to the Lord Jesus as head of the body.

So, although they are geographically separated, Paul finds joy in the midst of his imprisonment because of his personal connection to a body of believers doing what they should. The application is easy! Do we see ourselves in partnership, and do we take joy in that partnership, with the missionaries whom we support—and, in fact, with all those around the world who are seeking to advance the cause of Christ? We most certainly should. Ultimately, we are caught up in something greater than ourselves—what God is doing to reconcile lost mankind to Himself!

Confident of God's ways. Now I want to take a very close look at Verse 6:

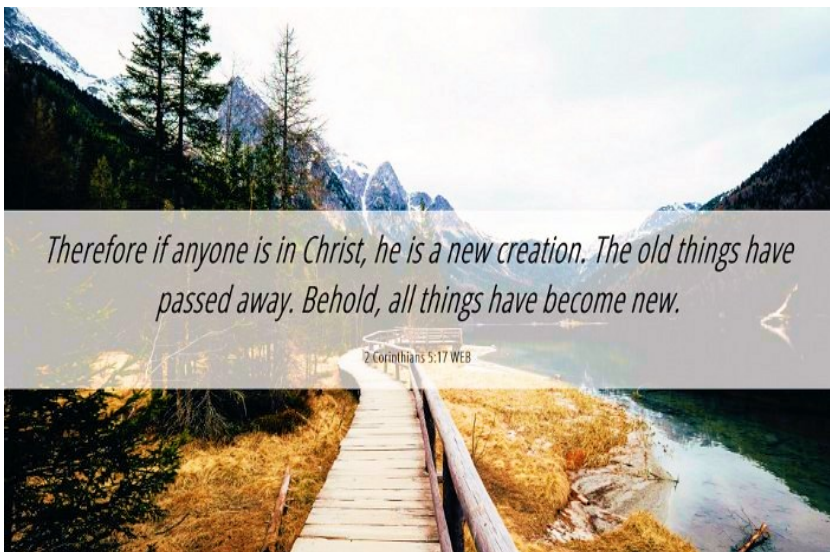
... being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

Philippians 1:6

Paul is telling us something of which he is confident. The Greek word translated *confident* means to be persuaded of something to the point it has become a settled conviction. Paul is sharing an understanding of *God's ways*, of which he is certain. So, what is both certain and important enough to pass on to the believers who make up the Philippian church?

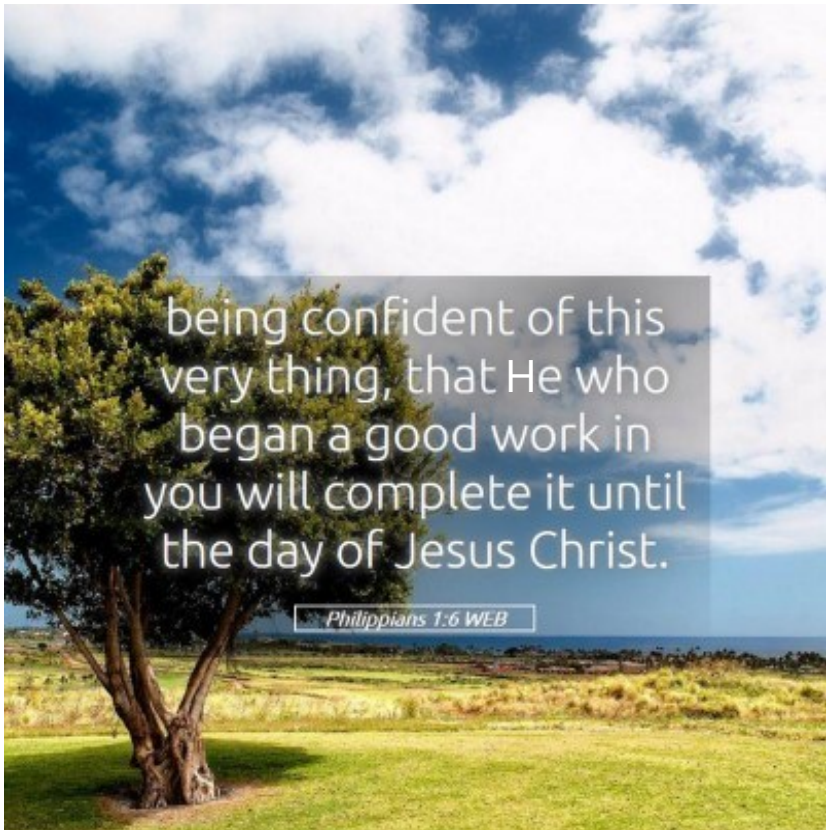
Before Paul tells us what it is, let me remind you that God has begun a good work in the life of every child of God. More specifically, He has transferred each one from Satan's kingdom into the kingdom of His Son (Colossians 1:13-14), He also has made each one a new creation in Christ. (II Corinthians 5:17), and He has given each one eternal life. (John 3:36)

With all this in mind, here is the substance of Paul's confidence: What God has begun, He will complete! God doesn't start projects and not finish them. This should give every one of us a real shot of encouragement when it comes to the Christian Life.



Does it often seem as if we are not making the progress we should? Perhaps this is because we have taken too much upon ourselves, for it is God Who is going to complete the work He began. It is not up to us! As we shall see, we must cooperate with Him, but what a blessing to know that He is at work and has a perfect outcome in mind.

Just how long is it going to take for this work to be completed? Our text tells us: *until the day of Christ Jesus*. I like to think of it as until I go to Him, or He comes for me!



Understanding the Promise

Thus far, we have a wonderful promise of God's intent to be at work in the life of the believer. But at this point we have to do some careful analysis. Let's consider six points.

First, in context, Paul is providing encouragement by revealing a promise from God to a very particular group.

In order to claim this promise for ourselves, we have to know if it applies. So, who is the particular group Paul has in mind? Let me suggest that it is:

1. Those who are recipients of eternal life through faith in Christ.
2. Those who have taken up the call of discipleship, in particular that of Gospel ministry.

Just to be clear, this is not a promise for the lost, nor is it a promise that can be claimed by the carnal Christian.

Second, this passage is not meant to be contorted into a test of salvation!

This happens when someone passes judgment by saying, "I don't see God at work in your life like I think I should—so I don't think you are saved." (Of course, we can make this same assessment of ourselves and, in doing so, question our own salvation!) This is not at all what this passage is teaching. Instead, the promise can be restated like this: If we respond to God in obedience to the extent He has revealed Himself to us through His Word, He will accomplish sanctification in our lives.

This is the way God does things. And, we can find this truth everywhere in Scripture. Consider the well-known passage from John 15:

“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me ... Whoever abides in Me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.” John 15:4-5

Do you see the pattern? If we respond by *abiding* in our Lord and Savior, then He will abide in us and produce fruit that we bear. You see, both John 15 and our passage in Philippians 1:6 make it clear that God is the architect of the Christian Life. If we respond to Him, He will bring the process of our development to a perfect conclusion! What a marvelous promise on days we feel like we are just spinning our wheels!

Third, *God wants us to be confident, but our confidence needs to be in a singular object.*

I find this verse of Scripture to be a helpful reminder:

But we have this treasure in jars of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.
II Corinthians 4:7

What is the treasure? In the context, it is the Gospel of Christ, but it certainly includes many other aspects of God’s so-great salvation: the new life that is ours in Christ, the indwelling and enabling Holy Spirit, and much more. Where are we found in this verse? We are the *clay pot*—and nothing more. The focus is on what God provides. We are just the receptacle. Thus, our confidence is not to be in ourselves, but in our sovereign, omnipotent, and loving God!

Fourth, God who began a work in us in the form of a “new creation in Christ” will carry it on until it is a complete work. And that would be conformity to the image and likeness of Christ!

Am I sure? Absolutely! On the authority of Romans 8:29 that is exactly what God has predestined to occur. But I do have something that needs clarification—an error to avoid. It is very common for the Christian to think of this process as a *remodeling job*—kind of like putting on an addition to an existing home.



But the work that God desires to do is nothing like this.



He is not looking to renovate the old life but to do a completely new work. It is much more like a demolition job and then starting over from scratch. As Romans 6 and 7 make

clear, who we were in Adam was crucified with Christ. Nothing good lives in our sinful nature and from that source, we cannot please God. Ephesians sums this process up very succinctly:

You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, to put off your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; to be made new in the attitude of your minds; and to put on the new self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.

Ephesians 4:22-24

Fifth, I trust that you can see we have a wonderful promise from God that has a narrow scope of application. It applies to what we have come to call the Prevailing Christian!

Now, be sure to hear me on this: Everything we have discussed applies to the confidence we should have regarding God's intent to be at work in our lives—now! We have the opportunity to get a jump-start on eternity by being conformed to the image and likeness of our Savior in this life, and thereby manifesting Him in life and character to others, in order to exalt His name.

The carnal Christian certainly still has a hope of glory, but I am not about to promote that as an acceptable option! To make sure the gravity of what is at stake sinks in, we should have no expectation that God is at work conforming us to the image of His Son if:

- We tolerate ongoing sin in our lives.

If we claim to have fellowship with Him yet walk in the darkness, we lie and do not live by the truth.

I John 1:6

- If we seek to live out the Christian life with *a foot in both camps*.

You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God?... James 4:4

- If we live in such a way that *self* is at the center, rather than Jesus!

Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God.

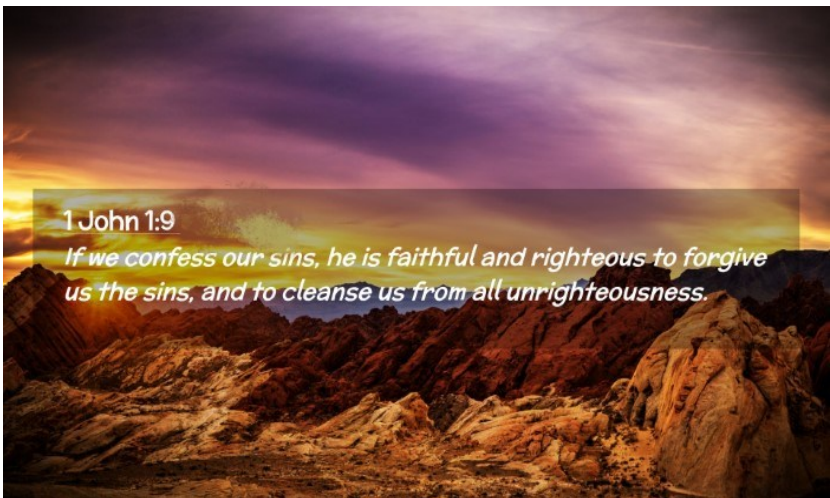
Romans 8:8

You see, it is entirely possible for the Christian to short-circuit the work that God wants to do in each of us.

Although this is possible, it should be abhorrent to us. Is there any pleasure of sin, any shiny bauble offered by the world that is worth this trade-off? Unthinkable! Yet we are tempted to make the trade! May the Spirit of God strengthen us, and draw us into His plans and purposes.

Sixth, finally, as we come to recognize the risks inherent in each of the points above, it should lead us to become proficient at the following:

- Promptly recovering from any sin which hinders our fellowship with God by means of confession (I John 1:9)
- Recognizing and rejecting the constant bombardment of worldliness (I John 2:25-27)
- Pursuing spiritual maturity through the regular and ongoing intake of the Word of God (Ephesians 4:11-15, II Timothy 3:16-17)
- Keeping our eyes steadfastly fixed on Jesus (Hebrews 12:1-2)



A Dose of Practical Encouragement

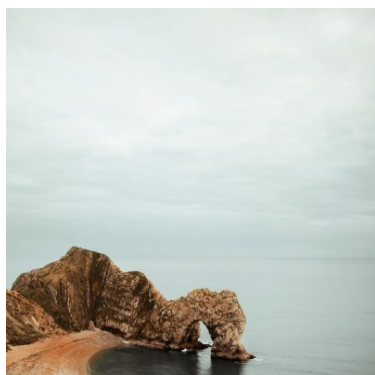
We have just learned that God wants us confident about what He is willing and able to do in our lives—a plan of progressive progress toward perfection that is in His keeping. Yet, in the face of this wonderful promise, I find many a Christian struggling with two things.

Can We Know We Are Saved?

The first of these things is the issue of *assurance*. Specifically, it is the question of whether the Christian can actually know for certain whether or not he or she is saved. There are many theological voices which tell us it

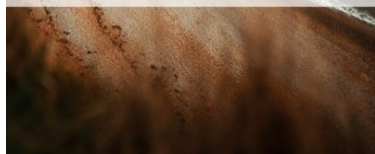
is *not* possible to have assurance. In fact, they claim it is a form of arrogance to believe such a thing is possible. As always, what really matters is: *What sayeth the Word of God?*

And this is the testimony: God has given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son. He who has the Son has life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have life. I write these things to you who believe in the name of the Son of God so that you may know that you have eternal life. 1 John 5:11-13



The testimony is this, that God gave to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

1 John 5:11 WEB



So what do you think? Does it seem as if God wants us to muddle along, uncertain as to whether or not we have eternal life? On the contrary: He has given us eternal life and this life is in the Son! If we have the Son, it is a settled issue! Further, He clearly wants us to **know** whether or not we have this life.

Knowing comes from a very simple test: Have we believed in the name of the Son of God? That is to ask, have we put our faith in the *right person* and the *right work*? To be clear, the right person is the Lord Jesus Christ, and the right work is all that He accomplished at the cross in paying for our sin.

So, can you have assurance of your salvation? That is to ask, can you know whether or not you have believed? If the answer is no, or you are not sure—take the time right now to come before your heavenly Father, sweep aside every other vain hope, and put your faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ!

If your answer is *"Yes, I have trusted Christ for eternal life"*, then on the authority of God's Word, He expects you to **know** that you are saved!

Can We Lose Our Salvation?

Here is the second issue: Can we lose the salvation that God has provided? In the context of our study of Philipians, that is to ask, "Can the Philippian Jailor lose the salvation the Scriptures clearly declare he received?" Of course, it is very hard to be confident that God is bringing our salvation to a perfect conclusion if we are worried about losing it! A complete answer to this question is beyond the scope of this publication, and I have written

extensively about it elsewhere, but I never tire of providing an answer to this dilemma. So, let me give you two things to consider.

First, here is a very simple answer to the question of whether or not we can lose our salvation:

"I tell you the truth, whoever hears My word and believes Him who sent Me has eternal life and will not be condemned; he has crossed over from death to life."

John 5:24

What happens when we believe? We go from condemned to not condemned; we go from death to life! Further, the Greek verb translated *crossed over* is in the perfect tense, which refers to an action that happened in the past with present results. It speaks of a completed action that does not need to be done again. In other words, when we believe our status of being a condemned rebel has been forever removed; our status of death has been replaced with one of eternal life.

And, all of this is a work of God that has been once and forever accomplished. There is not even a hint that it could ever be undone.

Second, let me take this a step further by asking this follow-up question: "If God dogmatically declares that He has caused the believing child of God to *cross over* from death to life, if He tells us He has forcibly removed that individual from Satan's kingdom and placed him or her into the kingdom of His Son, then why do we doubt the security of our salvation?"

Let me suggest a two word answer—our failures! I understand this completely, but it is a sign of spiritual immaturity. By that, I mean we simply have not understood and accepted by faith what God has to say on this

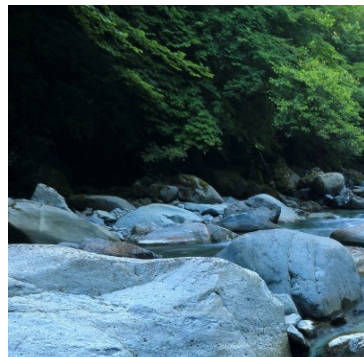
matter. So allow me to share a bit of advice and a portion of Scripture that I hope might help you settle this matter for yourself. Here is the advice:

Get your focus off of your failures and on to what God—all three members of the Trinity—are committed to do for you and through you.

Here is the portion of Scripture I suggest you turn to whenever doubts assail you regarding the secure nature of your salvation. (I have provided an excerpt, but by all means read Romans 8:18-39 in its entirety.)

... the Spirit himself intercedes for us with groans that words cannot express. And He who searches our hearts knows the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints in accordance with God's will ... If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all, how will He (the Father) not also, along with Him (Jesus), graciously give us all things? ... Christ Jesus, who died--more than that, who was raised to life--is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? ... I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Roman 8:26-39



ROMANS 8:31 WEB

What then shall we say about these things? If God is for us, who can be against us?

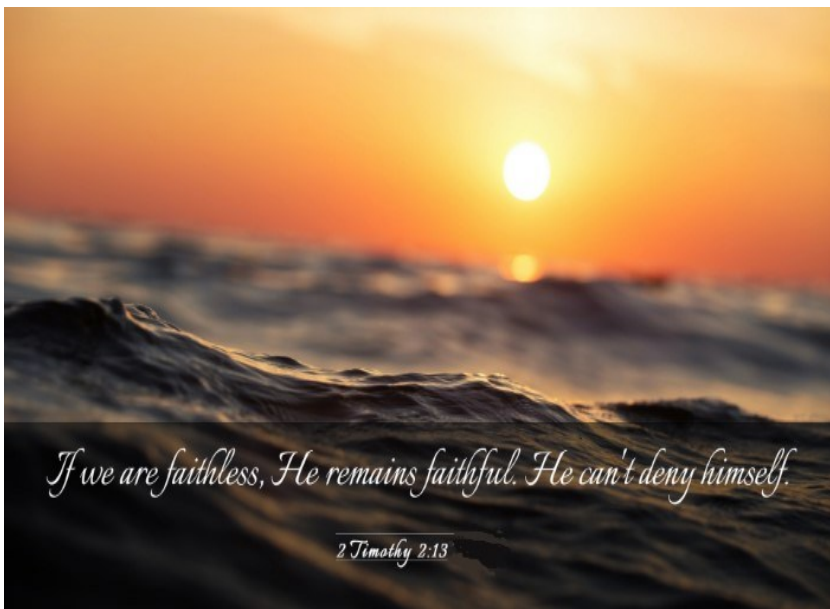
This is a lengthy passage, but one that compiles what the members of the Trinity are doing for you:

- The Spirit and the Son are interceding with the Father on your behalf
- The Father and the Son are now committed to providing all that we need—in grace
- We are an object of the Son's love of such significance that there is nothing that can separate us from that love.

How could we ever doubt the security of our salvation when the entire Trinity is at work on our behalf? As I said, get your eyes off of your failures and get them onto what God is doing for you and willing to do through you! It is as simple as what Paul told Timothy:

... if we are faithless, He will remain faithful, for He cannot disown Himself.

II Timothy 2:13



Paul's Prayer for the Church

Barely into Paul's letter to the church at Philippi, he stops to pray for them. This example of the heart of an Apostle for those to whom he has ministered is a wonderful opportunity to learn, so ponder it closely. It is my intent to show you that, although this is Paul's heart for the church in Philippi, this is also God's heart for our fellowship.

And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

Philippians 1:9-11

The first thing to note is that this is not a prayer focused on fixing a problem or getting through a trial. Rather, it is a prayer about being ever more centered in God's will for His Church. It is about doing the kinds of things that are pleasing in God's sight. As such, it allows us to take it, turn it upon ourselves like a microscope, and ask, *"How are we doing?"*

Paul's Prayer—In Detail

Let's look at what the prayer says.

... that your love may abound more and more ...

To abound is to be filled to overflowing. The lost world around us should take note of the local church because its love overflows and spills out of the church and into the surrounding world! This is not a point at which we

ever arrive. Rather, it is to occur more and more! How can that be? It can be because Christ is our model. As He loved us we are to love one another (John 13:35). That is an example we will have to continually strive to achieve.

... in knowledge and all discernment ...

But wait! The love overflowing within the church does have a qualification placed upon it. It is not a qualification measured by time or dollar amount, but one of wisdom and depth of insight. What does this mean? It means we don't have to love as the world around us defines love—that would be to love that which is depraved. It means that, although we may readily act to feed a hungry soul, there are times we are going to have to think deeply about, and seek the Lord's will regarding, what exactly would be the loving thing to do! Just as parents learn that bailing their children out of trouble is not always *loving them*, so, too, the church needs to act in keeping with the wisdom of God and not that of man.

... *that you may approve the things that are excellent...*

To approve is to first test and then decide. The excellent is that which is best. The church is called to examine carefully and choose what is best from competing options.

Here is our situation: We have only so much time, people, gifting, finances to go around. There are many things competing for our attention. Should we spend our time and energies building a cathedral, developing programs to keep everyone happy, or does the Lord have something else in mind? The answer is obvious when I ask it that way. But I trust you can see that to keep our focus on reaching the lost for Christ, and discipling those

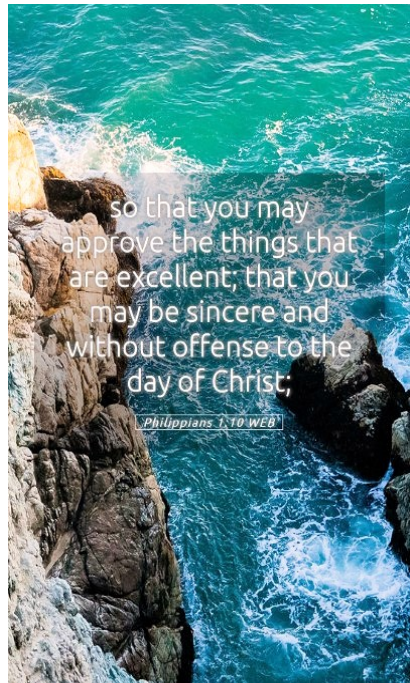
who respond, will be an ongoing process from which we dare not deviate if we desire to go where our Savior is leading. We should always be asking ourselves: “Are we going where the Lord is leading?” Nothing else will lead to the bearing of fruit that He produces.

... that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ ...

A bit of work from the Greek language will be very helpful for this text. God wants something of His church until the day of Christ—that is, until we go to Him or He comes for us. He wants a church that is *sincere*.

This word is a term that relates to, of all things, shopping! It is the idea of purchasing an item that is without flaw. It is holding the clay pot you wish to purchase up to the light to make sure there are no cracks. God desires a church that is without flaw!

Not only that, He desires one that is *without offense*. The Greek word speaks of smoothing out a roadway. We can think of it as *filling in the potholes*. If we put these together, here is what we have: God is looking for a church that is very conscious of identifying and correcting flaws, and of making sure there is no sin within the fellowship.



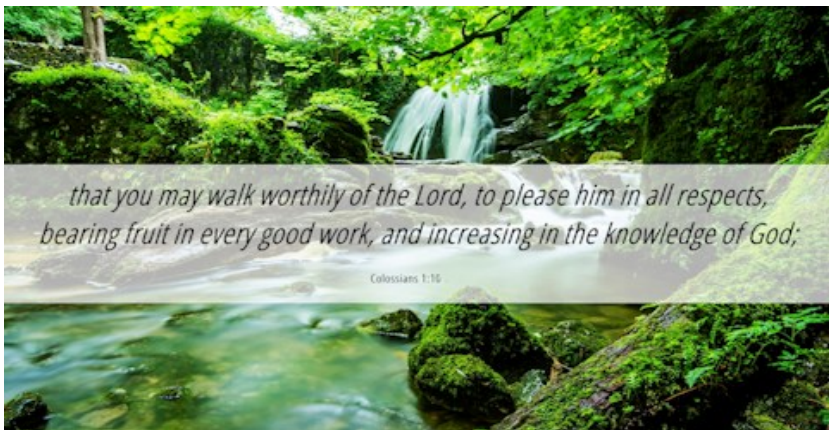
This is making sure there is nothing for Satan to exploit causing division or about which the world can cry *hypocrisy!* God wants His church to present herself as a beautiful bride to a watching world.

... being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

Let me suggest that the richness of this verse can only be understood in light of Paul's many other writings:

- Fruit refers to that which the Spirit produces (Galatians 5:22-23).
- Righteousness is a reference to the believer's justified standing as a result of faith in Christ. (II Corinthians 5:21)

In short, God is looking for the life of Christ to be manifested in the fruits of the Spirit by His Church. This is not something we do in our own strength, but by Christ. And, when it is a work of the Son, it brings glory to the Father. This is a Church that is *always and everywhere ... spreading the fragrance and knowledge of Christ!* (II Corinthians 2:14-16)



Paul's Prayer—In Summary

Having worked our way through Paul's prayer for the church, consider the following summary:

I pray that...

Your love would abound ...

Coupled with knowledge and discernment ...

Carefully choosing what is best over simply better ...

Seeking to address flaws and remove obstacles ...

Bearing fruit the Spirit produces ...

Bringing glory to our heavenly Father!

Is this something to which we too should aspire? Is this God's desire for His Church? I trust by now you can say, "Amen!"

Paul's Prayer—Application

Now let's make some application. Our text is clearly Paul's prayer for a small church he planted in keeping with his twin passions of knowing Christ and making Him known. It should be no great leap to understand that this is the desire of Jesus Christ, as head of the Church, for every local church. This is a call to spiritual maturity within the body of Christ!

Overflowing love. If it is the case that our Savior wants our love to *overflow more and more in full knowledge and with depth of insight*, this is more involved than we might imagine. Overflowing love is a mark of God's people:

**By this all men will know that you are My disciples,
if you love one another.** John 13:35

Components of love. We will go astray unless we understand that God's call to love has three distinct components:

- Love for God, which is obedience to His revealed will.

But if anyone obeys His Word, God's love is truly made complete in him. I John 2:5

This is love for God: to obey His commands. I John 5:3

- Love within the fellowship, which is *family* love within the fellowship.

"By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you love one another." John 13:35

- Love for the lost, which is where lies the greatest challenge. We must be able to distinguish the difference between love within the family and love without. The lost need reconciliation above every other need!

For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that One died for all ... All this is from God who reconciled us to Himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation ... We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.

II Corinthians 5:14-20

Love's definition. If we do not understand the above distinctions, the world will define what our love should be for us. And, if we are not careful, we are going to end up loving what God hates—sin!

Love must be sincere. Hate what is evil, cling to what is good. Romans 12:9

Whether it be marriage, sexuality, or a host of other things, the world will declare us to be *unloving* if we do not love what they love. We dare not succumb to their pressure to love what God hates.

Each and every church fellowship is going to have to choose what is best unto the Lord, for we should want to do only those works which God has in mind for us to do!

For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.

Ephesians 2:10

Response to our love.

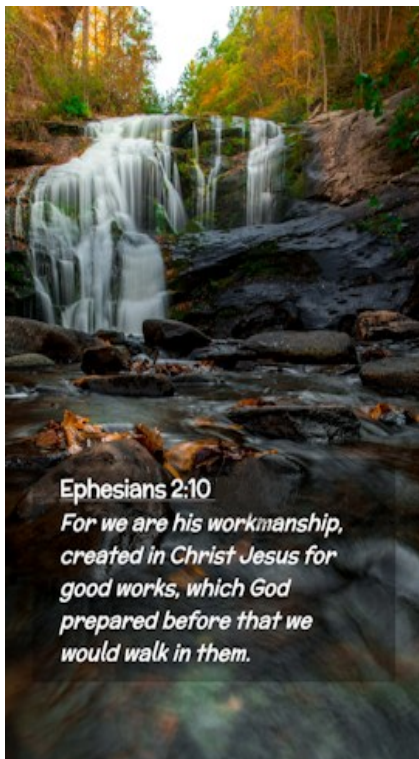
Sometimes what we choose to do in devotion to the Lord is going to bring criticism from believer and unbeliever alike. Remember how the disciples criticized Mary when she anointed Jesus ahead of the crucifixion. (Matthew 26:6-13)

We must learn to ignore such things if we desire to receive the approval of the only One Who really matters! As Paul wrote in I Corinthians:

I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself. My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me.

I Corinthians 4:3-4

Cooperating with God. How are we to cooperate with God when it comes to being a local church *filled with the fruits of righteousness*? If we have learned anything from our recent studies in John and Romans, these actions should immediately come to mind.



Ephesians 2:10

*For we are his workmanship,
created in Christ Jesus for
good works, which God
prepared before that we
would walk in them.*

- As the branch must abide in the vine to bear fruit, so too we must abide in our Savior, and share His life, in order to bear the fruit only He can produce. Jesus was quite clear:

"... apart from Me you can do nothing." John 15:5

- New Testament spirituality as outlined in Romans 6-8 makes it equally clear that *God's ways* include reckoning ourselves dead to (separated from) sin, alive unto God, and enabled by the Holy Spirit.
- In short, our focus is never to be on trying to somehow squeeze out fruit, but on our Savior. As we focus on Him, He is the one who will produce fruit in abundance, for only what Christ has done through us will last when our lives come before Him for judgment.

For we will all stand before God's judgment seat.

II Corinthians 5:10

To act rightly is challenging. When it comes to a body of believers bringing *glory to God*, talk is cheap, while actually doing so is much more challenging. It starts with following the example of Jesus in steadfast devotion to the will of God.

"My food," said Jesus, "is to do the will of Him who sent me and to finish His work."

John 4:34

It continues with obedience to all that God reveals:

But if anyone obeys his Word, God's love is truly made complete in him.

I John 2:5

Finally, giving glory to God comes to pass when we bear the fruit of righteousness which only God can produce in our lives!

"This is to My Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be My disciples."

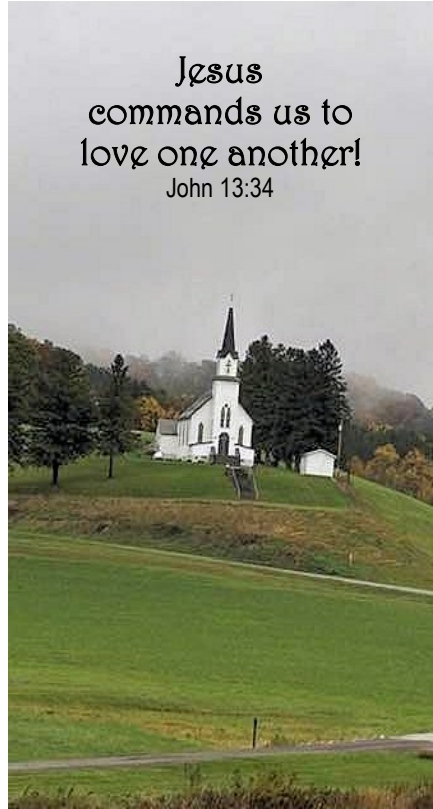
John 15:8

In Closing

In closing this first booklet, I trust you might come back often to Paul's prayer for the local church and pray that it might be true of our fellowship. It is such a practical, nuts-and-bolts kind of prayer. It teaches us these truths.

We are to overflow with God's love:

- *A savvy kind of love for the lost and a family love for those who are saved*
- *Always testing our pursuits against the light of God's Word and the leading of His Spirit*
- *Seeking to be the kind of vessel through which God can work, in which no flaw can be found, and which puts no obstacle in front of another*
- *Bearing fruit, produced by the Spirit, and to the glory of our great God.*



May that be our testimony in exalting the name of Jesus.

There is so much more in this wonderful prison epistle—join us for Book 2 which will be released soon.



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