

**A STUDY ON PHILIPPIANS**  
**Week 1**  
**Philippians 1**

**Joy in it All!**

**Dr. Wynand de Wet**  
**(aka Pastor Wayne)**

# THE BOOK OF PHILIPPIANS

## The Reason for this Letter

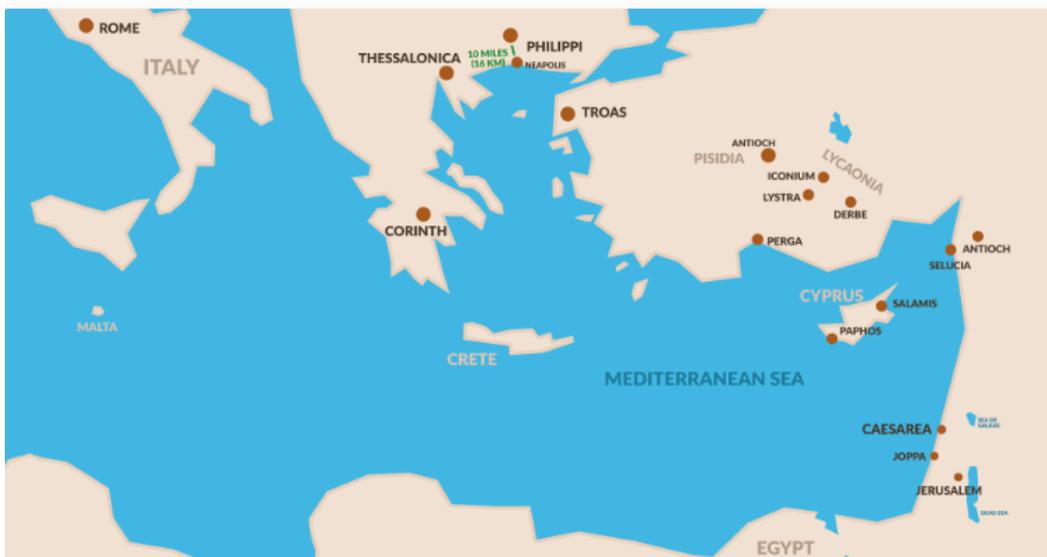
Paul is writing this Letter to address some internal issues in the Philippi Church. He warns against some self-seeking preachers (1:15-18), and others whose lifestyle and teaching poses a serious threat to the believers (3:2-3, 18-19).

Paul also wanted to encourage two women in ministry, Euodia and Syntyche, to resolve their conflict, urging them to agree in the Lord and live at peace with one another (4:2-3).

That Paul is imprisoned didn't make things easier, thus he is expressing gratitude for those staying loyal to his leadership and supporting him with sending a gift to him, delivered by their messenger Epaphroditus (4:10-19). He encourages them in many different ways to stay close to Jesus as He alone is the ultimate Goal of our lives (3:7-16).

## A Few Important Details

Paul wrote this letter with Timothy while he was in prison, most probably in Rome (AD 61-63). He is writing it to the Church that he planted in Philippi.



Key themes in Philippians include rejoicing in Christ and seeing hardships advance the Gospel (chapter 1), living like Jesus through humility and unity (chapter 2), pursuing Him alone by counting everything else as loss (chapter 3), and finding strength to face every circumstance through joyful dependence on Christ (chapter 4).

## Some other Interesting Facts

*It's the "joy letter"* — Though written from a prison cell we have the words "joy," "rejoice," or "glad" appear about 16 times in just four short chapters! That's a lot of joy packed into this brief letter, showing that real, deep joy isn't dependent on comfortable circumstances!

*Philippi was Europe's "ground zero" for Christianity* — The church Paul writes to was the first Christian community he planted on the continent of Europe (Acts 16). It started dramatically with conversions like Lydia (a businesswoman) and the jailer (after an earthquake miracle), making Philippians a letter to the pioneers of the Gospel spreading into a whole new world.

*It contains one of the most beautiful early Christian hymns* — In Philippians 2:5–11, Paul quotes (or includes) an ancient hymn about Jesus humbling Himself to death on the cross and then being exalted. This poetic "Christ hymn" is a stunning summary of Who Jesus is and why humility matters—it's often called one of the richest Christ-centered passages in the New Testament.

*Paul says "to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (Philippians 1:21)* — This bold, famous line captures the letter's fearless perspective: life is all about knowing and serving Jesus, and even death brings us closer to Him!

*Jesus' Name appears more frequently here than you'd expect* — In this short book, Christ (or Jesus Christ) is mentioned around 38–50 times (depending on how you count titles), making Him the absolute center!

## Philippians 1:1-2, Greetings!

This letter is written by *Paul and Timothy*—two men who poured out their entire lives serving our Lord with everything they had (v. 1a). It's addressed to *all God's people in Philippi*, every one who belongs to Him because they know Christ Jesus (v. 1b), including the spiritual leaders and deacons who lead and care for the believers (v. 1c).

All are greeted with the *solid hope* that God our Father and our Lord would be good to all, far beyond what they could ever deserve (v. 2a), and that they would experience the deep, true peace that only God Himself can give (v. 2b).

- ❖ How are you encouraged—and maybe even a little challenged—by the *lives of men like Paul and Timothy*?
- ❖ Now take a moment to reflect on this greeting to the church in Philippi. Do you think we could put a *more effort into how we greet one another*? What might change in our relationships, our Church family, or even our own hearts if we began to greet each other with this same kind of intentionality?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Philippians 1:3-8, Standing Side by Side—With God in the Center!

Paul can't help but praise and thank God for the Philippian believers every single time he thinks of them and talks with God about them (v. 3). *He truly enjoys praying for them* (v. 4), because from the very first day they have stood side by side with him for God's Gospel—*united, with the same passion and conviction* (v. 5).

Paul is convinced that all of these gracious blessings have fallen upon them because of God and that He will continue to do this till Christ returns. *He is a God Who never lets us down*, of this we can be certain (v. 6)!

Paul feels this way about the Philippian believers as he always held a special place for them in his heart (v. 7a). *They always stood by his side, even when he ended up in prison* (v. 7b). It never mattered to them whether he was thrown into prison, treated like a criminal in court, or endured insults for sharing Christ with people (v. 7b). Through it all God had been so good to Paul, and the entire time the Philippian believers experienced that with Paul (v. 7c). Even God will tell them how *Paul always longed for them, and that he cared for them in the same way Jesus does* (v. 8)!

- ❖ The prayers, the care, the compassion, the heartfelt longing Paul has for his fellow brothers and sisters in Christ is truly stunning! And their commitment to him—no matter the circumstances—is just as beautiful! It can only be a *deep, tight-knit bond with Christ that fuses such a relationship*, wouldn't you agree? What can we do to help our own relationships with spiritual leaders and caregivers in our Churches rise to this same beautiful level?
- 
- 
- 
- 

## **Philippians 1:9-11, What can I Pray for?**

Paul continues to share his prayer for the Church (v. 9a). *He prays that they will continue to live closer to Jesus*, something that is only possible if they would *learn from their spiritual experiences* (v. 9). This is how they will make great decisions (v. 10a), so that *when Jesus returns, no one will be able to point a finger* or accuse them of any fault or weakness (v. 10b). In this way, people will clearly see that their relationship with God is in order, and with the help of Jesus they will also *see and talk about the wonder and greatness of God* (vv. 10-11)!

- ❖ We often ask one another: *“What can I pray for?”*. Reread Paul's prayer slowly and thoughtfully. Would you agree that this is so much more than a typical prayer filled with everyday requests—like *“May you travel safely...get through the day well...(basically)... have a hassle-free day with a great ending”*?

*How is this prayer of Paul encouraging you to pray for others with deeper depth and richer purpose?*

*Here is a challenge:* Choose a loved one or a fellow believer, reflect seriously on their life and needs, and then write down a prayer you would now want to pray over them—something shaped by the kind of heart Paul shows here.

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

### **Philippians 1:12-14, A Different Perspective—A Different Reaction**

*Paul encourages the believers to look at things from a different perspective.* For example, what happened to him *might look bad on the surface, but actually it's...good* (v. 12a). Why? Because it has advanced the Gospel (v. 12b)! Not only the guards, but many others have come to see clearly that he is in prison simply for being a Christian (v. 13). And this has had a surprisingly positive influence on most of others who serve the Lord (v. 14a). They now realize that even imprisonment can produce something good, so it has given them fresh courage—they are no longer so afraid to speak out about their faith in Jesus (v. 14b). Where they might have stayed quiet before out of fear, they are now speaking boldly about the Lord (v. 14)!

- ❖ *A different perspective on the same circumstance can often spark a completely different reaction.* Suffering can often paralyze us (physically, emotionally or even spiritually), but shifting our view on it can challenge us and others toward greatness! How are you currently looking at suffering in your own life, and what might change if you adopted Paul's perspective on this hardship?

---

---

---

## Philippians 1:15-18b, Whatever the Reason: Let People Hear about Jesus!

Paul now shifts his attention to the spiritual leaders in the Church. He notices that *some of them eagerly jump at every chance to preach. However they are not always so pure in their intentions. Some do this out of jealousy toward Paul, trying to outshine him and prove they're better (v. 15a). They even try to stir up trouble for him while he's in chains (v. 17b). They're mainly after attention and don't truly care about the people (v. 17a).*

Paul is relieved, though, that others are good and loyal to him, love him, and know that he is in prison for the sake of *spreading the Good News of God, which means everything to him (vv. 15b-16).*

*Paul's conclusion* on all this is striking and surprising: *"But what does it matter?" (v. 18a).* The only important thing is that people hear about Christ! For Paul, the motives behind the preaching matter far less than the fact that *people are hearing the Message—and that reality fills his heart with joy (v. 18b)!*

- ❖ Paul had a remarkable way of identifying what is really important—what is truly worth making a fuss about. Do you agree that we sometimes make a big deal about things that don't really deserve so much of our time and energy? Is there something in your life right now that you might need to reevaluate so you can *refocus on what is truly important and actually brings you deep, lasting joy?*
- ❖ *How important is it to you that people hear about Jesus? In what ways are you actively pursuing opportunities—big or small—to make Him known?*

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Philippians 1:18c-26, To Live or to Die—Let it All be About Christ!

Other things give Paul joy too (v. 18c). It brings him *joy that people are praying for him, and that the Spirit of Jesus supplies all he needs* (v. 19a). Paul has no doubt that everything will always turn out for his good (v. 19b). *Paul has no shame* for what he has done as he always aims at making Christ great (v. 20a). What he has done in the past, *he will keep doing, even if he has to die* doing it (v. 20b).

*For Paul, to live means more time to labor and be fruitful for Christ. But to die? That's actually far better, because then he would be with Christ* (vv. 21-22)! So the choice tears him in two: being with Christ...what could possibly be better (v. 23)?! Yet at the same time, it might be better for him to remain here a little longer with the believers (v. 24), so he can help them grow in faith and fill them with joy in Christ (vv. 25).

Paul is convinced that if he comes to see the Philippian believers again, they will overflow with joy in Christ and won't be able to stop rejoicing over all that Jesus has done through him (v. 26).

- ❖ Paul has an extraordinary way of challenging me to live fully and radically focused only on Jesus, no matter the consequences! Whether you live long and keep pouring yourself out for Christ, or whether you give everything for Him and “die in action” so to speak—what does it really matter, as long as it's all about Christ?!

Does this challenge you too?

*How is Paul's perspective on life and faith in Christ causing you to reevaluate how you live life, and even the way you think about death?*

---

---

---

---

---

---

## Philippians 1:27-30, An Advertisement for Christ: No Fear, No Stopping!

Paul challenges the Philippian believers to always live in a way that makes them look like *walking advertisements for Christ* (v. 27a). They should take this calling very *seriously*. Paul longs to hear only good reports about them, whether he gets to come and see them in person or not (v. 27b). He encourages them to stand together like one man, doing everything they can to convince others that the Good News is truly the Best News (v. 27c)!

*No one should ever make the believers anxious or frightened* (v. 28a). By standing strong and fearless, they will show their opponents clearly that they are on the right path—and that those who oppose them are on the wrong one (v. 28b). This right path leads straight to God, and they *can walk it not because they deserve it, but only because Jesus graciously made it possible* for them (v. 29a).

*So, is it really too much to ask that they should also suffer for Christ* (v. 29b)?

Paul reminds them that as they walk side by side in faith, they *shouldn't be surprised when a difficult path sometimes lies ahead* (v. 30).

- ❖ Take a moment to reflect on this: *I should be an advertisement for Christ, with NO FEAR and NO STOPPING.*

What is the Spirit stirring in your heart?

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---