



# BookbyBook

THE JOY OF MEETING JESUS IN ALL THE SCRIPTURES

## Study Guide



*"Jesus the servant who is God" by Richard Thomas*



BY PAUL BLACKHAM

# Philippians



BIBLICAL  
FRAMEWORKS

# Philippians

Live as a citizen worthy of the gospel of Christ



Copyright © Paul Blackham

The right of Paul Blackham to be identified as author of this work has been asserted by him in accordance with the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988

First published 2006

All Rights Reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical including photocopying, recording, or any information storage and retrieval system, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Unless otherwise stated biblical quotations are taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version, Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 International Bible Society, used by permission of Zondervan Bible Publishers.

Scripture quotations marked (NLT) are taken from the Holy Bible, New Living Translation, Copyright © 1966. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, Illinois 60189. All rights Reserved.

ISBN No: 1-905975-02-3

Published by Biblical Frameworks Limited

Reg. Office: St Paul's Church, Robert Adam Street, London W10 3HW

Cover design, typesetting and production management by Verité CM Ltd, Worthing, West Sussex UK +44 (0) 1903 241975

Illustrations by Richard Thomas

Printed in England

Biblical Frameworks is registered in England No: 5712581

## Contents

<b>Introduction</b> .....	6
<b>The Life of the Apostle Paul</b> .....	10
<b>1. This is my prayer. 1:1-11</b>	
1. To all the saints (1-2) .....	12
2. I have you in my heart (3-8) .....	13
3. This is my prayer (9-11) .....	16
<b>2. Live as a citizen worthy of the gospel of Christ. 1:12-30</b>	
1. "What has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel" (verses 12-18) .....	20
2. "To live is Christ, to die is gain" (verses 18-26) .....	23
3. "Live as a citizen worthy of the gospel of Christ" (verses 27-30) .....	26
<b>3. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus. 2:1-11</b>	
1. Being one in Spirit and purpose (verses 1-4) .....	33
2. Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus (verses 5-11) .....	39
<b>4. Shine like stars in the universe. 2:12-30</b>	
1. Work out your salvation with fear and trembling (verses 12-13) .....	49
2. Shine like stars in the universe (verses 14-18) .....	52
3. Timothy and Epaphroditus (verses 19-30) .....	56
<b>5. The power of His resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in His sufferings. 3:1-21</b>	
1. Confidence in the flesh (1-9) .....	62
2. I want to know Christ (10-14) .....	70
3. Our citizenship is in heaven (15-21) .....	73
<b>6. Rejoice in the Lord, always. 4:1-23</b>	
1. Joy and Peace (1-7) .....	80
2. I can do everything through Him who gives me strength (8-14) .....	87
3. My God will meet all your needs (15-23) .....	91



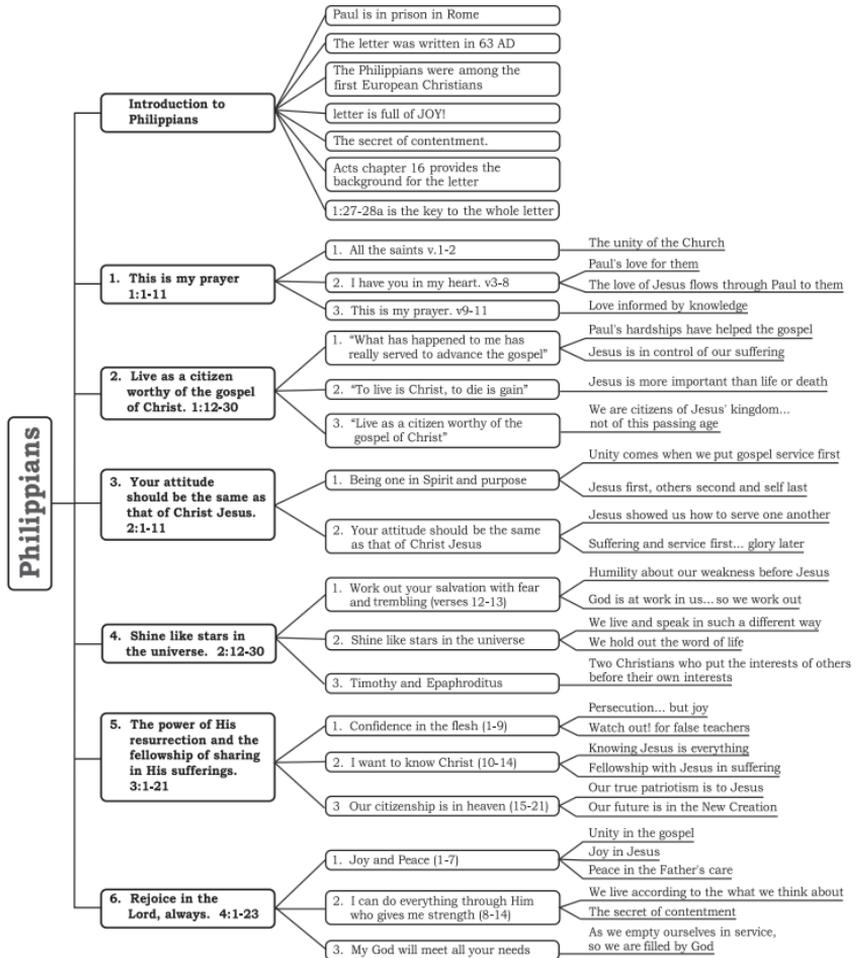


## Bible Study hints and helps

Study 1 .....	95
Study 2 .....	96
Study 3 .....	97
Study 4 .....	98
Study 5 .....	99
Study 6.....	101

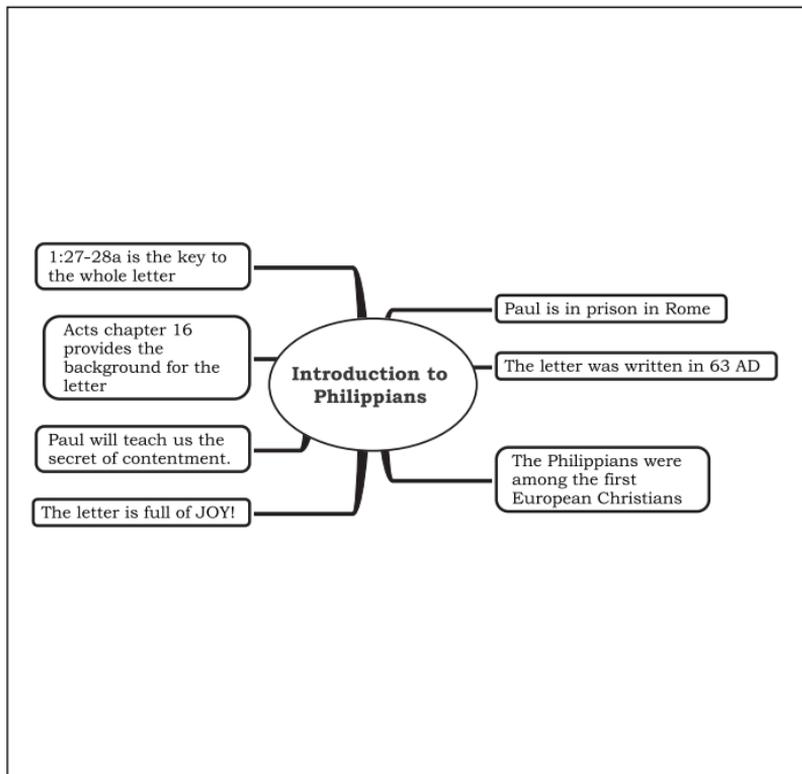


*'Citizens of heaven'*





## Introduction



Be Joyful! "Joy is the music that runs through this epistle, the sunshine that spreads over all of it. The whole epistle radiates joy and happiness."<sup>1</sup>

The letter of Philippians was written by Paul while he was in prison in Rome in about 63AD, but there is no bitterness or disillusionment here. In this letter Paul opens his heart to us, showing us the secret to real joy in every circumstance. The letter speaks of fellowship in the sufferings of Jesus, and yet there is no book of the Bible so full of joy.

<sup>1</sup> Lenski, *The Interpretation of St Paul's epistles to the Galatians, to the Ephesians and to the Philippians*, Hendrikson, 1988, page 691



In this book the apostle Paul will share with us the secret of contentment. He will show us how to know true contentment at all times, no matter what hardships we have to face. He will show us that real joy does not depend on circumstances, but should be the constant possession of every citizen of heaven.

Within probably 50 years of Paul's letter, a great Christian leader called Polycarp wrote a letter to the Philippians where he speaks very highly of Paul's letter:

"These things, brethren, I write to you concerning righteousness, not because I take anything upon myself, but because you have invited me to do so. For neither I, nor any other such one, can come up to the wisdom of the blessed and glorified Paul. He, when among you, accurately and steadfastly taught the word of truth in the presence of those who were then alive. And when absent from you, he wrote you a letter, which, if you carefully study, you will find to be the means of building you up in that faith which has been given you, and which, being followed by hope, and preceded by love towards God, and Christ, and our neighbour, 'is the mother of us all.'"<sup>2</sup>

Polycarp knew that he could never write with the divinely inspired wisdom of the great apostle Paul, so he was happy to point the Philippians to Paul's letter so that they could grow to spiritual maturity.

Why did Paul write the letter? Paul planted the church in Philippi, as we read in Acts 16, but his arrival in Philippi is packed with divine providence. At the beginning of Acts 16 Paul brought Timothy along with him.<sup>3</sup> In verse 6 the Holy Spirit prevented Paul from going into the province of Asia. Then, Acts 16:7-8 "When they came to the border of Mysia, they tried to enter Bithynia, but the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them to. So they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas."

It seemed that every direction they took was blocked by the Holy Spirit. However, a momentous event happened to the apostle Paul; an event that would change the direction of European history.

---

<sup>2</sup> Chapter 3 of Polycarp's Epistle to the Philippians. We have included the complete text of Polycarp's letter on our website: [www.biblicalframeworks.com](http://www.biblicalframeworks.com)

<sup>3</sup> Notice from verse 10 how Luke is also in the party, because he writes using 'we' and 'us'.





**Acts 16:9-12** "Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him, 'Come over to Macedonia and help us.' After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them. From Troas we put out to sea and sailed straight for Samothrace, and the next day on to Neapolis. From there we travelled to *Philippi*, a Roman colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia."

The Holy Spirit was determined to get Paul into Europe, and his first European mission was in *Philippi*.

After Lydia believed the gospel, Paul's mission team had a place to stay. The spiritual world knew the significance of the arrival of the apostolic mission team, and one spirit through a young girl declared, "These men are servants of the Most High God, who are telling you the way to be saved" (verse 17). When Paul drove that spirit out of the girl, in the Name of Jesus, he was involved in a clash with the civic authorities.

Luke is very careful to explain the issues of civic authority and law in *Philippi* because they were critical to life in that city. The crowd (verses 20-21) "brought them before the magistrates and said, 'These men are Jews, and are throwing our city into an uproar by advocating customs unlawful for us Romans to accept or practise.'" Notice how the crowd are so anxious to be the very best Roman citizens. We sense the pride these people felt about having the privileges of Roman law and citizenship. With this in mind, we can understand more of what is going on at the conclusion of Acts 16.

**Acts 16:37-40** "Paul said to the officers: 'They beat us publicly without a trial, even though we are Roman citizens, and threw us into prison. And now do they want to get rid of us quietly? No! Let them come themselves and escort us out.' The officers reported this to the magistrates, and when they heard that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens, they were alarmed. They came to appease them and escorted them from the prison, requesting them to leave the city. After Paul and Silas came out of the prison, they went to Lydia's house, where they met with the brothers and encouraged them. Then they left."

The *Philippians* took Roman citizenship very seriously and were deeply shaken when they saw how they had illegally treated Roman citizens. What would Rome think of this kind of behaviour?



Paul knew that the Church must not be classified as a politically dangerous organisation. It was vital that the Roman Empire realise that the followers of Jesus were the very best citizens. That is why Paul made sure that the magistrates give a public vindication of himself and Silas.

So, the Philippians highly valued *Roman* citizenship and we will see that theme in Paul's letter.

A key theme of the book is the unity of the church in the gospel. How important this message is today! On the one hand, there are those who speak a great deal about church unity, but don't explain what it is that truly unites us in truth and purpose. Truth always runs a very poor second to unity in such thinking. What are we united about if we are not clear on the gospel itself? On the other hand, there are those who love truth much more than unity. For them, specific systems of doctrine will always win over Christian fellowship. They will all too easily divide from gospel-loving fellow Christians. Paul teaches us how to grasp truth and unity in a proper balance.

The letter of Philippians teaches us important lessons. In many ways 1:27-28a is a summary of the whole letter. We have seen that 'being a citizen' was at the heart of life in Philippi, so Paul speaks of being a citizen in 1:27. However, this is not clear in many English translations, so we have corrected the NIV translation below.

**1:27-28a** "Whatever happens, *live as a citizen worthy of the gospel of Christ*. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in one spirit, contending as one man for the faith of the gospel without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you."

Notice the balance of truth and unity. The faith of the gospel is the banner under which the church gathers, when we gather together, united against our real opponents. That is how we are true citizens of Christ's kingdom, which is so much more than all the kingdoms of this passing age.

We know true contentment as we give ourselves away for others in the service of Jesus. You can never grasp fulfilment if you are pursuing it for yourself. It is only when we forget ourselves and live for Jesus that we discover true contentment and joy.



---

**AD THE LIFE OF THE APOSTLE PAUL**

---

10? Born and educated at Tarsus.

---

37-40 Paul's meeting with Jesus on the road to Damascus, followed by three years personal training from Jesus in the desert. Galatians 1:17.

---

45-48 *Paul's first missionary journey.* Antioch, Seleucia, Salamis, Paphos, Perga, Pisidian Antioch, Iconium, Lystra, Derbe, and Attalia. Acts 13:13-14:28

---

49 Council of Jerusalem – Acts 15.

---

50-52 **1 & 2 Thesalonians**

---

50-53 *Paul's second missionary journey.* Jerusalem, Antioch, Derbe, Lystra, Troas, Neapolis, Philippi, Amphipolis, Apollonia, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, Cenchreae, Ephesus, and Caesarea. Acts 15-18:22.

---

55-57 **Galatians**

---

54-58 *Paul's third missionary journey.* Antioch, Ephesus, Thessalonica, Corinth, Philippi, Troas, Assos, Mitylene, Miletus, Tyre, Caesarea, and Jerusalem. Acts 18-21.

---

57 **1 & 2 Corinthians, within a year of each other.**

---

57-58 **Romans**

---

58-60 Paul in prison in Judea

---

60-61 Journey to Rome

---

61-63 In prison in Rome

---

62-63 **Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, Philemon**

---

63-67 Other journeys. He may well have made it to Spain, as he wanted – Romans 1:10, 15:24, 28; 16:1-5. In Clement's first letter to the Corinthians he seems to indicate that Paul accomplished this desire. "After preaching both in the east and west, he gained the illustrious reputation due to his faith, having taught righteousness to the whole world, and come to the extreme limit of the west, and suffered martyrdom under the prefects". *He presumably also visited the Philippians again, as he seems to assume he will be able to do in 1:25-26.*

---

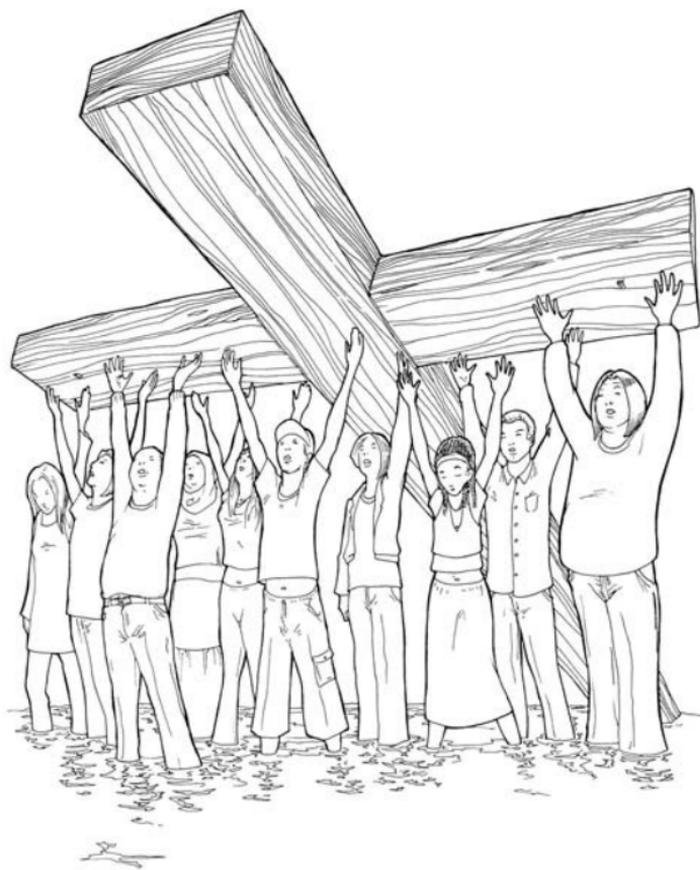
64-65 **Titus; 1 Timothy; (Hebrews – Paul is a possible writer)**

---

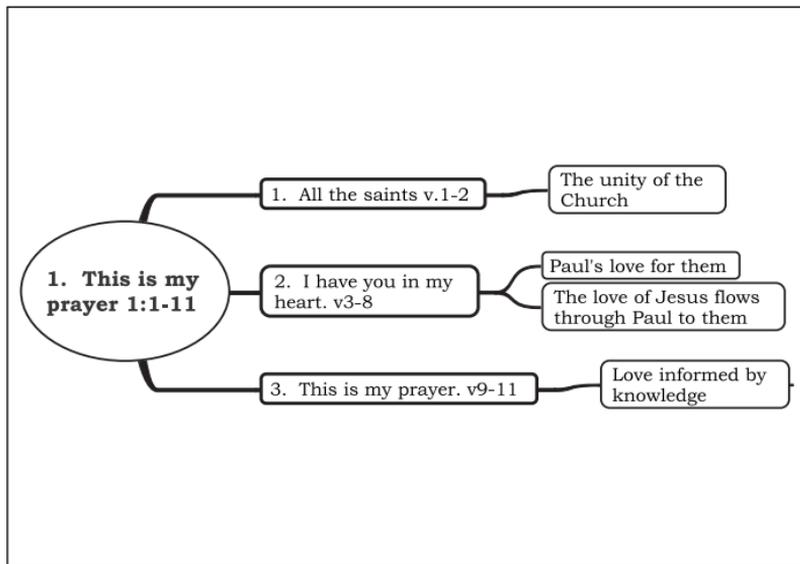
66-67 **2 Timothy**

---

1. This is my prayer. 1:1-11



*'Fellowship in sufferings'*



## 1. TO ALL THE SAINTS (1-2)

The great theme of the Philippian letter is the united fellowship of the Church. We find our joy and fulfilment when we focus on serving the needs of others rather than on our own perceived needs. The Christian family must have a higher priority than our own individual lives.

In the modern world there is so much pressure to focus on our own individual lives and families, to be self-centred. This wonderful part of God's Word shows us how to escape the prison of self-interest into the freedom of Jesus. Putting the needs of others before our own needs may seem unattractive to us, yet this self-sacrifice will set us free and unite us together in Jesus. There is nothing so vital to the health and purpose of the Church of Jesus Christ as her unity in the gospel. We will see that theme in the letter time after time.

We will see how the unity that comes from faithful gospel work is the only way that a local church can experience genuine Christian unity and fellowship. Paul will set evangelism as the rallying point where any church can find genuine, deep unity, no matter how diverse they may be.

As a kind of preview of this we see that the letter is written by both Paul and Timothy, and it is addressed to "all the saints... together with the overseers and deacons" (verse 1). Paul and Timothy are united in their letter writing and the whole church at Phillipi is included in the address.

However, the sense of unity goes even further in verse 2. Grace and peace come from the unity of the Father and the Son. This reminds us that the unity of the Church (and all human love and fellowship) ultimately flows out of the Living God who is a unity! The Father, Son and Holy Spirit have been perfectly united together in love and purpose for infinite ages before the universe began.

We can never claim to be a healthy or truthful church if we are not united in our gospel work together.

It is important that Paul calls the Philippian Christians "saints" – "holy ones". The Hebrew Scriptures define Israel as the LORD's *holy people*. For example, when the Angel of the LORD brings Moses and the people to Mt Sinai in Exodus 19, the first words that the LORD speaks from the mountain define Israel as a holy people.

**Exodus 19:5-6** "Out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites."

As we go through Philippians we will see that there was a problem with unbelievers who wanted to enforce the Law on the Philippian believers. By addressing them as 'the holy ones' Paul is acknowledging that whatever the false teachers say, the Philippians are members of the LORD's holy nation. This will become very important when we begin to study chapter 3.

## 2. I HAVE YOU IN MY HEART (3-8)

Verse 3 poses a slight problem. In the NIV translation of the Bible it reads "I thank my God every time I remember you", but it could equally well be translated "I thank my God every time *you* remember *me*."<sup>4</sup>

The second option is perhaps slightly more likely, because of the way that it leads into the next verse. Paul thanks the Father every time the Philippians think about *him*, and he wants *them* to know how he remembers *them* in his prayers all the time.

---

<sup>4</sup> The Greek is literally – "every remembrance of me". Does that mean 'every time I remember' or 'every time I am remembered'?



We know that the Philippians have been thinking about Paul's gospel work because they have sent him money. In 4:15-16 Paul describes how they kept giving money to him while he was in Thessalonica.

**Philippians 4:15-16** "...as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, *except you only*; for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need."

Given that he was only in Thessalonica for about a month, it shows how passionate the Philippian church was towards him. So, it makes sense that Paul would acknowledge their generosity at the beginning of the letter, as well as his proper 'thank you' at the end.

So, Paul is full of joy because he knows that the Philippians are fully behind him in his evangelism. When we are facing fierce opposition from the world and false teachers, nothing is as precious to us as genuine, practical fellowship with other gospel-centred Christians. When we speak about the need for "Christian fellowship" or the "lack of community" in the church, what are we really looking for? It is not just a matter of having a cup of tea after a Sunday service. We need to be 'gospel-partners' together, sharing our lives as we put the mission of Jesus ahead of everything in life. It is when we are serving each other in the service of Jesus that we find genuine fellowship.

Hugh Palmer, the minister of All Souls church in London, points out that every person we meet needs to be a gospel partner. If we meet a non-Christian person, our desire is not just that they be saved from hell, but that they become a gospel-partner in the church in this life. The gospel sets us free from a wasted life now and sets us free from hell in the future.

Paul uses the Greek word '*koinonia*' (English – 'partnership') to speak of the way the Philippian Christians are joined with him in the gospel work. This is the word that later Christians used to describe the way in which the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are united together.<sup>5</sup> The Philippians share their lives (and money) with Paul in the work of the gospel.

---

<sup>5</sup> Although no-one in the Bible uses the word to describe the Trinity, it seems a reasonable word to summarise all that Jesus says about the Trinity in John 17, for example.

Paul points out that 'from the first day' the Philippians were like this. This was a very clear mark that the Father was genuinely at work in them. We all come across those who appear to begin the Christian life, but they are reluctant to be sacrificial gospel-partners. This naturally makes us hesitant about their true spiritual state. Paul had no such hesitations with the Philippians. He was confident that the Father had begun the work of salvation in them (verse 6) and would certainly complete it, so that on the day when Jesus returns they would be welcomed into the New Creation.

There is such warm affection in these opening verses and Paul explains why he feels like that. "I have you in my heart" (verse 7) shows us the deep love that the apostle has for them.

Why does he love them in this way?

- the Philippians share in God's grace with Paul (verse 7);
- and the love of Jesus flows through him to them (verse 8).

Verse 7 – while Paul is in prison his apostolic ministry is limited, but when he is out of prison he "defends" and "confirms" the gospel. Paul *defended* the gospel from false teaching from within and criticism from outside. He also *confirmed* the gospel in preaching as a witness appointed by Jesus. We see this kind of language in Hebrews 2:3-4 – "This salvation, which was first announced by the Lord, was *confirmed* to us by those who heard him. God also testified to it by signs, wonders and various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his will."<sup>6</sup>

So, as an apostle, Paul was establishing the gospel wherever he could... and the Philippians shared with him in this. The "grace of God" in verse 7 could refer to this apostolic work, but also to the fact that both Paul and the Philippians were united in the grace of God in the gospel. The apostle and the saints all stand together in the undeserved friendship of the Living God.

In verse 8 Paul calls the Father as a witness of how much he longs to be with the Philippians, but the love that Paul feels is not of his own making. Paul is so joined to Jesus, so in harmony with the mind and heart and agenda of Jesus, that he loves the Philippians with the love of Jesus.

Too often Paul is caricatured as simply a tough-minded debater, yet in these opening verses we are shown the true heart of the great apostle. He was a man whose life was Jesus. His heart was beating in time with Jesus' heart. Jesus love for the Church flowed through Paul.

---

<sup>6</sup> See also Acts 14:3



Paul is studied by thousands of scholars around the world for the content of his mind, and yet we must also study the content of his heart.

We must not only agree with the *doctrine* of Paul but also the *love* of Paul, drawn from the love of Jesus Himself.

### 3. THIS IS MY PRAYER (9-11)

Paul made it clear that he often prayed for the Philippian church. What did he pray for them? That is what he explains in these verses.

We saw the great love in Paul's heart, so we are not surprised to see that it is the great theme of his prayer. We can break the prayer up to understand what he is saying.

that your *love* may abound more and more  
in knowledge and depth of insight,  
*so that*  
you may be able to discern what is best  
and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ,  
filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ –  
to the glory and praise of God.

Paul asked for *love* for the Philippian church. That tells us right away what this letter is going to be about – love between the saints at Philippi.

It is not as if they don't have love already. If their love must "abound *more*", then it indicates that their love already abounds! We have seen evidence of that in their generosity in supporting Paul. However, perhaps Paul is asking that their love abound more and more *with knowledge and insight*. He wants the Father to grant them knowledge and insight so that their love could be focused more fruitfully.

The connection between love and knowledge is always in Paul's mind. In Romans 14 he explains how knowledge in eating practices must be controlled by love. In 1 Corinthians 13, in his great exposition of love, he begins by stating that all knowledge without love is *nothing*. In those cases, knowledge must be controlled by love, but here he wants the Philippians' love to be informed by knowledge. Their love is evident in their support for the gospel, but is it being lived out as it should in their local church fellowship? They need to understand more about what the love of Jesus looks like in the Church family.

One of the mistakes I have made is thinking that the love shown in evangelism is more real than day-to-day church family love. This letter shows us that we need a fully informed love, a love for the lost and for the saved, a love for souls and bodies.

Paul's request for a "knowledgeable love" is for a purpose (verse 10). Knowledgeable love would make them able to test and discern the best way for them to live. This, in turn, would have two results: the glory of God; and their purity and fruitfulness when they stand before Jesus on the Last Day. In 2:14 he will show that 'purity' involves "doing everything without complaining or arguing".

In 2 Timothy we see how Paul had a great passion for Christian fruitfulness. The Christian might make bad, worldly choices and end up 'ashamed' before Jesus. So, the Christian must keep their eyes on the future, making the right (though costly) choices now, so that they will be unashamed and fruitful before Jesus. One of the key things that Paul is doing in this letter is instructing the Philippians (and us) exactly what is "the best" way to live. What way of life will unite the church family together? What purpose can unite our minds and hearts, leading us into the joy, contentment and love that are in Jesus? What is "the best" that will ensure that we are profitable, fruit-bearing servants of Jesus?

This is what Paul wants for the Philippians. He wants them to be full of righteous fruit, produced by Jesus through them, when they enter into the New Creation.

Paul's prayer has such depth. We learn so much truth as he allows us to listen in on his prayers for the Philippians.

As we study this letter together, let's take Paul's prayer for ourselves and our own church family. We must abound in love, and this love must be guided and directed by the deep insights that the Bible will show us as we study it. In this way our local church family will be full of righteous fruit and we need have no shame when the Lord Jesus gazes upon us with his flaming eyes on that Last Day.



## SUGGESTED QUESTIONS FOR BIBLE STUDY ON PHILIPPIANS 1:1-11

1. To which members of the church do Paul and Timothy write according to verse 1? What might this tell us about Paul's thinking as he writes?
2. Who are the "saints" of verse 1 (compare Exodus 19:5-6)?  
What difference does it make to be referred to as a saint?
3. What does Paul mean when he speaks of the Philippians' "partnership in the gospel"? In what ways have they demonstrated this partnership?
4. How does Paul describe the way he prays for the Philippians in verses 4-6?
5. Why could Paul speak with such confidence about the future of the saints at Philippi in verse 6?
6. Why does Paul have such affection for the believers at Philippi?  
What lessons might we learn concerning our attitude to other believers from this verse? How do we "share in God's grace"?
7. What is the specific request of Paul in his prayer to God for the Philippians in verse 9?  
What will be the effect of this prayer according to verses 10 and 11?
8. What might be the effect on our church if we prayed as Paul does in verses 9-11?