

# “Philippians – Week 1”

SUNDAY, APRIL 26, 2026 - MICHAEL BOWERS



## Summary - “Press On!”

This week we began a six week series into the book of Philippians, entitled "Press On," one of the themes of this short letter. Our prayer is that as we dig into this letter from the apostle Paul to the believers at the church of Ephesus, that we will be encouraged, challenged, and uplifted, in keeping with the letter's direction. As we dive into Philippians, we need to know where this church began and how it began. Paul's story of transformation (see Acts 8-9) led him to travel to various locations to preach the good news of Jesus. In many of those cities, it led to Paul's imprisonment, beatings, and great opposition; yet in the midst of those moments, God began to work, and people committed their lives to Jesus Christ. One of the cities Paul traveled to was Philippi. Paul was not planning to go to Philippi, but the Lord led him there in a miraculous way according to Acts 16:9-10. Philippi was under Roman rule, and even the streets and scope of the city were designed to model the pattern of Rome itself. It was a very influential and important city. As Paul begins to plant the church in this region, we see in Acts 16, three of the first converts to Christianity: 1.) Lydia (a prominent business woman), 2.) a previously demon-possessed fortune-telling slave, and 3.) a converted prison guard and his family. These are the folks that the Gospel message is reaching in this area and the church begins to grow very quickly. This is Philippians and this church has a special place in Paul's heart! He is writing to encourage them and deliver JOY to them as they face circumstances that would have impacted Christians in this region under Roman rule. As Paul is writing, we must also remember that he is not writing from the comfort of home, but rather, he is writing this letter, and several other letters to other churches he had planted, while he is in prison. Through this letter, Paul encourages the Ephesian church then, and us as believers today, to understand that our ultimate joy comes from the work of Jesus Christ. In these four chapters, there are reminders of Jesus first and foremost, partners in the gospel, strength in God's word, maintaining joy, hope, resilience, dependence upon our relationship to Jesus Christ, so that when we find ourselves alone, in hardship or in difficulty, we understand that we have a firm foundation to stand upon. We can "press on". We can trust in a lasting joy that is not tied to this world, but is rooted in Christ Jesus.

## Scripture - Philippians 1:1-7

Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers<sup>[b]</sup> and deacons: <sup>2</sup> Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, <sup>4</sup> always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, <sup>5</sup> because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. <sup>6</sup> And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. <sup>7</sup> It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.

# Key Apps, Websites, and Online Tools for Further Study

- <https://www.blueletterbible.org/>
- <https://www.biblegateway.com/>
- <https://biblehub.com/>
- <https://www.youversion.com/>
- <https://www.bibleref.com/>
- <https://bible.org/>
- <https://netbible.org/>
- <https://enduringword.com/bible-commentary/>
- <https://www.desiringgod.org/>
- <https://www.gty.org/>
- <https://www.gotquestions.org/>
- <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/>
- <https://carm.org/>
- <https://dwellapp.io/>

## Further Scripture Study

**Acts 6:1-6; Acts 8-9 & 16; 1 Corinthians 12:12-14; Ephesians 2:10; Philippians 1:1-7; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18; 1 Timothy 3:1-13**

As you study the scripture verses provided for this week, study for right context and right questions...

### Right Context:

- The verse itself and key word(s) that stand out in the verse (meanings)
- The verses around the verse, the section of scripture, the chapter, the book, old/new testament, and relation to the rest of scripture
- Author and Date (Who wrote the book and when?)
- Audience (Who is the book written to? Main characters in the story and/or text?)
- Main points and overall purpose of the book
- Historical background, cultural significance, setting, people, rulers, etc.
- Scripture references; let scripture interpret scripture as much as possible

### Right Questions:

- What does this passage say?
- What does this passage mean to its original audience?
- What is this passage teaching me about God?
- What does this passage tell us about man?
- What does this passage demand of me? (Is there a command to obey? Is there a promise to claim? Is there a sin to avoid? How is this applicable to me?)
- How does this passage change the way I relate to people? (What actions must I take in response to this passage?)
- What does this passage prompt me to pray? (For God, for others, for my community, for family, etc.)

# Key Thoughts

"To all the saints..." (vs. 1). This is an important greeting. To all the saints. The word saint here is very important. It is the called-out, holy, set-apart followers of Jesus Christ. In this Roman-controlled region, these followers of Jesus Christ, the saints, were living lives marked by dramatic and oftentimes misunderstood obedience.

These early Christians have been transformed by the grace and truth of Jesus Christ and are living lives of obedience wherever God has placed them and wherever God is sending them.

As Christians (saints), we are called out. We are separated, but not separated to keep our distance from the world, but to impact the world.

Saints: (according to GotQuestions.org) - Saints refers to the church/Christians at Philippi and, by extension, all followers of Jesus. It signifies a change in identity, being set apart by God's grace rather than through personal sinlessness or meritorious works. Paul addresses all believers as "saints" to highlight their identity and call to live according to their set-apart status in Christ. It is a collective term for the "body of Christ".

As followers of Christ Jesus, they have an eternal address, but they are also citizens of Philippi. As Christians (believers in Jesus Christ), we have two addresses: eternal and earthly. Eternal hope in/through Christ Jesus; mission and authority to impact our local (earthly) community.

What we will hear throughout this letter, that will challenge, encourage, and even convict us, is this: J.O.Y. delivers vision, mission, and gospel unity.

If we can allow Paul's words in Philippians to reinforce the foundation of our faith and to shape how it impacts our relationships, then we can be a church (called-out saints) known for our communication of the gospel of Jesus and for how it transforms us and our obedience.

J.O.Y. → Jesus, Others, Yourself

- Jesus - a relationship with Jesus Christ that is for eternity, but also for every day.
- Others - How can we help others? How do we approach a broken, sin-filled world?
- Yourself - Are we growing and living in partnership and in obedience to Christ and His word, trusting that he who began a good work in us will bring it to completion?

The further Paul was removed from this congregation, the things he desired to remember were not the hardships or imprisonments, but the moments of fellowship and joy he shared with them through Jesus Christ. (vs. 3)

# Key Thoughts

Paul viewed the church at Philippi as partners in ministry through Jesus Christ. We must have this view as well here at Rich Fork, regardless of circumstances that we may each be walking through together or individually. We are all members of one body working together for the glory of God.

J.O.Y.-filled churches are prayerful, joyful, and partnered in the gospel. (verse 4).

The word for partnership is derived from the word fellowship, and the Greek word for that is koinonia. There is an emphasis on relationships and community. We are created through our relationship with Jesus Christ and our love for others to become co-laborers and partners through Jesus Christ.

In today's world we talk about fellowship (koinonia) as simply hanging out. We must be careful not to water this down. Koinonia is more than hanging out together; it is being invested in each other. The driving vision for their unity in the early church was the message and hope of Jesus Christ. The unity in their partnership was an understanding that their city needed Jesus; they could put certain preferences aside, but hold fast to the promises and hope of Jesus Christ.

The truth of Jesus Christ entering the world, becoming an offering, a payment for the sins of mankind and conquering death through resurrection, offering us an eternal and conquering life. We confess, we believe, he transforms us! When we have a shared vision and direction, even when difficulties arise and personality conflicts emerge, we will remain committed to them.

Paul is reminding them of these things at the very beginning of the letter to ensure that they do not lose Christ centered mission. When the church loses sight of the biblical mission, it fights over individual vision.

J.O.Y. filled people are always a work in progress. (verse 6)

- We must admit we are not finished.
- We must believe that God is completing us.
- We must rejoice that God is moving in us.
- But we also can't blame our sinful actions and make light of them because we are still a work in progress.(covered by grace, but we cannot take advantage of this grace)

Spiritual joy is almost always under construction. Spiritually, we want to be complete, no blemishes, no outbursts of impatience, no lack of self-control. However, we are all a work in progress. (This is not an excuse to keep on sinning.). God is not finished with any of us. (verse 6)

# Key Thoughts

As one pastor put it, “We need to be reminded that salvation is not a matter of our working for God’s acceptance, but it is God working for us and in us. None of us can work our way into earning God’s favor, nor can any of us, through our work, maintain God’s ongoing favor. God has done the work on the cross, and then he equipped us with the Spirit in each of us to complete this work.

This is God’s work. And this is good work.

- When someone gives their life to Christ. This is God’s work, and this is good work.
- When an adult proclaims to a leader this week that they have trusted in Jesus in the middle of turmoil: This is God’s work, and it is good work.
- When someone turns from an addiction. This is God’s work, and this is good work.
- When countless people work to serve foster families in a host of ways. This is God’s work, and it is good work.
- When people gather together around a table to talk and share about grieving the loss of a loved one. This is God’s work, and it is good work.
- When someone faces less-than-ideal circumstances and responds with JOY. This is God’s work, and this is good work.
- When cancer markers go up, not down, and the person says to me, “I’m not worried, I’m good no matter what happens.” That is God’s work, and it is good work.
- When we face our temptations. This is God’s work, and this is good work.
- When we explore scripture, it reveals areas of our lives that need to be taken away or changed. This is God’s work, and this is good work.

Pastor Kent Hughes, reflecting on God’s continual working in our lives through Jesus Christ, once said, “As I reflect on my fifty plus years in Christ it is indeed God who has kept me. It is not my grip on God that has made the difference, but his grip on me. I am not confident in my goodness. I am not confident in my character. I am not confident in my history. I am not confident in my “reverend/pastor” persona. I am not confident in my perseverance. But I am confident in God.”

Paul says, “I am a partaker with you through the grace of Jesus Christ and hold you in my heart (verse 7). Paul, chained, writing this letter through a possible assistant of Timothy, quite honestly, with tear-filled eyes, or maybe with a smile on his face, saying, “I remember you, I am grateful, God is not finished with you yet. Keep pursuing JOY. Jesus. Others. And the change in You.”

# Reflect & Respond

How did you and/or your family do in the weekly challenge to read Philippians daily (Jesus)? Who did you partner with this week to encourage (others)? What is an area in progress that you are trusting to God (yourself)?

In verse one we read that Paul and Timothy are servants of Christ Jesus. What does this mean to you? How are you currently living as a servant of Jesus Christ?

"To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons" is a powerful verse that sets up so much of what a healthy church should look like. What are some important things that we see in this verse, especially as we aim to understand it from the idea of being in "partnership in the gospel" (vs 5) and as "partakers together of grace" (vs 7).

- Overseers (Elders/Pastors) - 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-3; Acts 20:28
- Deacons - 1 Timothy 3:8-13; Acts 6:1-6

Paul feels joy and gratitude for the Philippians because of their "partnership in the gospel." (vs. 3-5). Who are you thankful to God for within the local body as you remember them? How do you define "partnering in the gospel"? What does this look like in your daily/weekly life as a believer? If you are not thankful for or partnering with others in the gospel, what needs to change?

What good work has God begun in you (vs. 6)? Is there any area of your life where you believe that God has either not begun a good work in you, or that He has or will abandon you in the work that He has begun? What brings you assurance that He will finish what He has started?

How can we as a group do a better job of partnering with one another as partakers in the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

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## Jesus:

Read through or listen to Philippians every day (<https://www.bible.com/events/49599028>). Shaped by Jesus; He began the work, let Him keep working.

## Others:

Text or call one person today and encourage them spiritually. Pray for them before sending the text or making the call.

## Yourself:

Identify one area you've excused as 'in progress', confess, and ask God to forgive you. Replace guilt with J.O.Y.