

# “Philippians – Week 2”

SUNDAY, MAY 3, 2026 - MICHAEL BOWERS



## Summary - “Press On in Prayer and Proclamation”

Last week we saw that Philippians is a letter, and a prayer, from Paul to the church in Philippi and that he is writing them while imprisoned in Rome. It is a warm letter that is filled with encouragement, yet does not negate the suffering that Christians are going through. It is an affectionate letter, yet also shows concern for fellow believers. It is a letter that reminds believers in Philippi, and also us today, of the joy they have in Christ, and that if we allow it to infiltrate our hearts, souls, and minds, it can impact how we walk through our daily lives. We saw also last week, through verse six, that as believers we are: 1.) God’s work, and it is good work, 2.) We are not finished, 3.) We are being sanctified (becoming more like Christ), and 4.) We can trust God to complete the work in us that He has begun. This week, as we work through verses 8-18, we will be reminded to press on in prayer and in purpose, to do so in love that is rooted in the knowledge and discernment of God and His word, and to do so in order to proclaim Christ in any and all circumstances. Again, Paul reveals to us that this is possible through Christ; we must not forget that this letter is being written from prison while chained to a Roman guard. This must cause each of us as believers to ask: How am I living out the grace and truth of Jesus Christ (His word and His gospel) in my life and in all circumstances that I find myself in this week (at work, in my family, in my marriage, with my neighbor, regarding my health, etc.)? Is my love of Christ abounding more and more with His knowledge and discernment? Is Christ and His gospel being proclaimed through my life in a way that brings glory and praise to Him, not self, and leads myself and others to rejoicing in Christ alone?

## Scripture - Philippians 1:8-18

Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons: <sup>2</sup> Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. <sup>3</sup> 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. <sup>8</sup> For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. <sup>9</sup> And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, <sup>10</sup> so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, <sup>11</sup> filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. <sup>12</sup> I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, <sup>13</sup> so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. <sup>14</sup> And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear. <sup>15</sup> Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will. <sup>16</sup> The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. <sup>17</sup> The former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment. <sup>18</sup> What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice.

# 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

**Deuteronomy 10:12-13; Proverbs 2; John 15:1-17; Romans 12:2; Ephesians 3:14-12; Philippians 1:8-18; Colossians 1:9-12; 1 Thessalonians 3:11-13**

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

## 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?

If we desire to live with J.O.Y., then we must be people who pray for others.

Paul's current imprisonment may have cut him off from daily conversation with those on the outside, but it did not hinder his communication with God through prayer. Paul modeled, valued, and practiced praying for other followers of Jesus. (vs. 8-11)

"And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more with knowledge and discernment."

Love: (agape) - affection, good will, love, benevolence, brotherly love. It is not a mushy-gushy, feel-good love, but rather a self-sacrificing, giving, growing love. It is a love rooted in our relationship with God and blooms in our love for others. But it is also a love with guardrails or, possibly, a better picture, love with banks, as in a river...

Paul is telling us to grow in love, but not without parameters/banks (knowledge and discernment) to our love, to contain and direct that love for others.

We dare not distance our love for others from our love for the things of God. We see this throughout scripture and as far back as Deuteronomy 10:12-13: "And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to walk in all his ways, to love him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments and statutes of the Lord, which I am commanding you today for your good?"

Love rooted in the depth of truth in God's word, authority, and teaching. Yes, because love has banks that set the direction of our love. If we declare love without the guardrails of God's love and His word, then we are not offering agape love to those in our lives and those around us.

Knowledge: (epignōsis) - precise and correct knowledge; used in the N. T. of the knowledge of things ethical and divine. This is not a general knowledge of having an understanding of a subject, not that this is a bad thing, but not the direction of Paul's instruction. As one pastor put it: "This knowledge is more related to relationships and having a heart understanding of people's lives that perceives their deepest needs and how we can best meet those needs."

# Key Thoughts

Knowledge is the ability to ask of our lives and others: What is right in a situation? Through the truth of God's word. Paul is not praying for them to become more academic in their care for others, but rather for a more complete understanding of how to love others, best.

This love, filled with knowledge, is also coupled with all discernment.

Discernment: (aisthēsis) - perception, not only by the senses but by the intellect; cognition, discernment; of moral discernment in ethical matters

In this instance, Paul's discernment refers to moral discretion, depth of insight, and understanding.

Biblical love based on the knowledge and understanding of God's word, compassion for others, and moral integrity, coupled with discipline and ongoing wisdom. Those characteristics are the banks, the guardrails on their love for each other. Paul gives us the call to love, but he puts banks around it to guide, lead, and direct it.

Love + knowledge + discernment equips us to examine what is excellent for our lives (vs. 10). Paul is encouraging this group of believers to pursue love through knowledge and discernment, equipping them to examine what is authentic, real, excellent, and most beneficial.

He is praying for them to grow in the qualities of vs. 9-11, that will allow them to make decisions that are best for their daily lives, best for their communities, most excellent for their friendships, and kingdom-minded decisions, in all aspects of their lives. This pursuit, Paul advises, will also equip us to examine the directions and decisions in our lives, leaving us blameless for the day of Christ.

We often equate blameless with perfection. To be absolutely clear on this, Jesus Christ is the only human being who lived a perfect life without blemish. We are not Jesus, and we can therefore agree that we are not declaring perfection as the spiritual mountaintop.

It is easy for us to make perfection and the pursuit of perfection the spiritual goal in our lives. But Paul later reminds his friends in Philippi that they are to be filled with the righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ. This pursuit to be pure and blameless is rooted in our love for Jesus Christ, in our salvation found through Jesus Christ.

We must be careful not to place the striving to be pure and blameless above our need to simply become more like Jesus Christ.

# Key Thoughts

If you desire discernment, knowledge, love and excellent decisions, quit trying to do those things absent of a relationship to Jesus Christ. We cannot do this without a growing relationship with Jesus Christ. He is the source of our pursuit of this kind of love and prayer. It is an incomplete view of love if we think we can accomplish any of it apart from our relationship with Jesus Christ and His word.

Love + knowledge + discernment allows us to glorify God. (vs. 11). Paul is praying for his friends, partners, and ministry, and he is reminding them of the greater goal they will accomplish as they love through knowledge and discernment: bringing glory to God.

The reminder from scripture is that in everything we do, regardless of our circumstances, we are to bring glory to God. His prayer is that the Philippians pray, love, discern, and live in such a way that they point to what Jesus Christ has done in their lives.

Our prayer for others is for Jesus Christ to be known (vs.9-11). Our prayer for our own lives is to be living testimonies of Jesus Christ (vs. 12-18). Don't forget the location of Paul in this writing: prison. Yet, even in this circumstance, he is continuing to trust that the LORD is advancing the Gospel.

Press On: Circumstances do not stop the spread of the gospel. Paul is in Roman prison, partially by choice. When given the option to be set free in Caesarea, Paul chose to have his case heard by the emperor. This decision and request by Paul would place the gospel message at the heart of Roman culture and also place the message of Jesus Christ at the epicenter of trade, commerce, and transportation. Paul's request to go to Rome was not random; it was a strategic move to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ into new territories, geographic locations, and directions.

The calling to preach, teach, and to live lives that reflect the gospel is for all believers, no matter their location or circumstance.

Press On: Courage multiplies courage. Paul's focus on preaching the gospel also led those around him to have more confidence in their preaching. (vs. 14)

The majority of us will not endure Paul's situation due to proclaiming the gospel. Our circumstances are not Paul's. Our struggles are not as extreme, but they may feel equally constraining, challenging, and difficult to us. Whatever the case, Paul reminds us: Have J.O.Y. and keep speaking the message of Jesus Christ. (vs. 18)

# Reflect & Respond

How did you and/or your family do in the weekly challenge to read Philippians daily (Jesus)? Who are you praying for in the way that Paul prays in vs. 9-11 (others)? How is praying for this person changing you and your view of them, even if nothing has changed yet in them (yourself)?

Read Philippians 1:8-11. Why is it so important that love is guardrailed/banked by knowledge and discernment (see definitions of all on pages 3-4 of guide)? Where in your life, the church, our culture have you seen love that abounds more and more, yet is out of control with no banks or guardrails to guide it and keep it in check?

Love + Knowledge + Discernment = making better decisions in our daily lives that also allows us to glorify God. How have you seen this play out in your life and/or the life of other believers?

It can be easy to equate the words excellent, pure, and blameless to perfection in our own lives thus causing us to also equate that perfection to our own righteousness (vs. 10). Why is perfection not the goal and what is this verse really getting at in our everyday lives? Where do we see that our righteousness comes from and why is this so important? To whom does glory and praise go to? Where in your life are you perhaps getting off track with these things (perfection, self righteousness, your own praise and glory)?

Read vs. 12-13: Paul's imprisonment actually helped the gospel spread. What "chains" or circumstances in your life (social, physical, emotional, financial) are currently limiting you, and how might God be using them for His glory?

In verse 14 we see where other believers are encouraged and made more confident in the Lord due to Paul's imprisonment and how he is living this out for Christ and the gospel. Can you share a time when you saw or heard of someone else struggling in life, yet they endured with faith and joy in Christ and His word rather than with bitterness, anger, or pessimism? How did this encourage and embolden you in your faith?

In proclaiming the gospel are you more focused on self (envy and rivalries) or on the goodwill of others? Are you concerned with who gets the credit or are you more concerned that the gospel was shared? (vs. 15-18)

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## Jesus:

Read through or listen to Philippians every day (<https://www.bible.com/events/49599028>). Read it as if you are a believer, going through difficulties and your mentor, friend, writes you a letter.

## Others:

Who are you praying for like we see Paul praying for the church in Philippi; (vs. 8-11) that love may abound more and more with knowledge and discernment and in this approve what is excellent and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. Pray for them each day this week

## Yourself:

This type of prayer by Paul, even if they don't change, will change us. It makes us people who see clearly, who love rightly, and who live boldly—even in the places that feel like chains.