

# “Philippians – Week 3”

SUNDAY, MAY 10, 2026 - MICHAEL BOWERS



## Summary - “Press On: Victory in Life or Death”

This week we continue in our study of Philippians; this great book of encouragement, instructions, and JOY (Jesus, Others, Yourself). Philippians is written by the Apostle Paul, who was imprisoned and wrote several letters to the early churches during his stint in Roman prison. Paul had spent time in Philippi and had developed a deep love for this church, as they did for him. As we wade into this letter from a prisoner to his dear friends, Paul says, “Yes, and I will rejoice.” Once again, it is appropriate to stop and ask, “Rejoice? Paul, in case you forgot, you are in prison.” The words joy and rejoice are used no less than sixteen times in this short letter from Paul to his friends in Philippi. But how? Why? Paul lived every day with the knowledge that prior to his radical life-changing, saving moment recorded in Acts 9, his earthly life would end in death, and hell was his eternal destination, yet he rejoices often because he is facing death with full trust and knowledge that Jesus took the punishment Paul deserved, and that the resurrection of Jesus was the promise of his eternal life in heaven. Paul’s confidence in his eternity led to rejoicing in his daily life. The truth is, the reality of our despair, the greater our rejoicing when we exit the situation. The difficulty for many of us is that many days we need the reminder that the wondrous work that took place on the cross by Jesus Christ and His resurrection from death to life, not only promises us the hope of eternity, but also strengthens us to live rejoicing in this life we live now. We need the reminder that our sin separates us from a holy God, in the same way Paul’s did, yet God’s grace and mercy have us. This is the foundation of Paul’s rejoicing and it should be our foundation for rejoicing as well; yes eternally, but also in the here and now, and in all circumstances.

## Scripture - Philippians 1:18-30

What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice, <sup>19</sup> for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, <sup>20</sup> as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. <sup>21</sup> For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. <sup>22</sup> If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. <sup>23</sup> I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. <sup>24</sup> But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. <sup>25</sup> Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith, <sup>26</sup> so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again. <sup>27</sup> Only let your manner of life be worthy<sup>[a]</sup> of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, <sup>28</sup> and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God. <sup>29</sup> For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, <sup>30</sup> engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

# 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

**Matthew 5:11-16; Acts 9; Romans 14:8-9; 2 Corinthians 5; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 4:1-3; Philippians 1:8-18; 2 Timothy 4:1-8; Hebrews 10:32-39**

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?

Paul's confidence in his eternity led to rejoicing in his daily life. Paul is not saying, "Keep praying, I'll get out of jail soon." Instead, "Keep praying for the power of the Holy Spirit living in me, I'll be delivered, I'll be restored in life, or yes, even in death. (vs. 18b-20)

Paul talks and writes while chained to a Roman guard; yet he can envision eternity, while those around him can't quite get the same view.

It's hard for us to imagine someone, like Paul, who had people plotting to kill him, persecuted, stoned, and left for dead, imprisoned, could rejoice. But Paul lived with heaven in view, even when no one else could see it, or grasp it, he was confident, content, courageous, because of the hope in front of him. He never let the reality of the gospel slip from his mind. He knew how sinful he was and how great God was in his life. And how great His promises were for him, and for those who heard the truth of the gospel.

Paul trusted in the plan and purposes of God, not his own plans or the thoughts and expectations of others. Paul is declaring, "I'll either get out of prison, or I'll die in this setting and scenario, or I'll keep preaching and one day die, but in either scenario, I have an eager expectation that I'll spend eternity in heaven." He says, "I will be delivered." (vs. 20)

Paul is not sitting in prison, fearfully awaiting his trial. He is leaning into the hope he has in Christ.

What gave Paul this eager expectation and hope? Verse 19 tells us, "the prayers of other believers and the Spirit of Jesus Christ." The Spirit of God living in Him and the prayers of other believers transformed his mentality to hope and expectation. He was eagerly looking ahead to whatever God had in store for him, to the point that he repeated a verse: Philippians 1:21, "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain."

Paul's life was for Christ. What Paul considered valuable prior to encountering Jesus, he later would call rubbish (trash, or one translation, dung.)

When you follow the teachings of this young religious movement. You were a Christian. You were a Christ follower. You were a little Christ.

# Key Thoughts

By associating with Jesus Christ and his followers, it placed you into a segment of society that was viewed as radical, compassionate to the least of these; you held onto your beliefs no matter the cost. You were a Christian first and foremost and out of that title and reality, everything else poured out.

Being a Christian was a designation, and holding to this commitment might bring great joy, but it may also cost you relationships, leadership roles, business deals, and family. And you would suffer.. But that is what makes Paul's words in Philippians 1:12-30 so important because Paul, imprisoned and shackled, writes this letter to people he loves, Christ followers, and he is going to remind them that the journey they are on will not always be an easy path.

Yet, he is going to preach Jesus, teach Jesus, live Jesus and it may lead to prison, and if so, he will share Jesus with the prison guards; if it leads him to Rome, he will share Jesus with the leaders of Rome.

He has exchanged the promises of this world for the promises of eternity. He was growing more confident in his going, proclaiming Christ, because of his promise of eternity. Again, confidence in eternity delivers rejoicing in our daily living.

Heaven is better than earth, but I may have to hang around a little longer and keep preaching Jesus. (vs. 22-24)

While I'm around, I'm going to keep preaching, teaching, and living with JOY. (vs. 25)

Have courage! The world can't really harm you because of the promises of eternity; you gain heaven. (vs. 26-28)

Our hope in heaven does not diminish suffering. Paul trusted the eternal promises of God. That gave him joy in suffering. That joy gave him the courage to keep preaching through persecution. And it made him a living example of Christ. (vs. 28-30)

Paul confessed and believed in his eternal home with his Lord and Savior; he threw off his earthly lenses in exchange for eternal ones, yet this did not make him ineffective in his preaching or persecution; it prepared him for those moments. He is wrestling with this: living on earth vs. eternity in heaven. Leaving to be with Christ, but staying in order to care for and show concern to the followers of Christ.

# Key Thoughts

Estimated Date	Event	Location	Biblical Reference
AD 37–39	First Plot to Kill Paul: Forced to flee in a basket lowered through a wall.	Damascus	<u>Acts 9:23–25</u>
AD 39	Second Plot to Kill Paul: Threatened after debating Hellenistic Jews.	Jerusalem	Acts 9:29–30
AD 46–48	Maligned & Driven Out: Persecuted by Jewish leaders during the 1st Journey.	Pisidian Antioch	Acts 13:45, 50
AD 47	Attempted Stoning: Opponents embittered the crowd against him.	Iconium	Acts 14:2, 5
AD 48	Stoned and Left for Dead: Dragged out of the city after being pelted with rocks.	Lystra	<u>Acts 14:19</u>
AD 51	Imprisonment & Beating: Beaten with rods and thrown into the "inner prison."	Philippi	Acts 16:16–24
AD 51	Forced out by Mobs: Rioters attacked his host's house; Paul fled by night.	Thessalonica	Acts 17:5–10
AD 52	Brought to Judgment: Brought before Gallio's judgment seat; charges dismissed.	Corinth	Acts 18:12
AD 55–56	Riot & Danger: Great disturbance caused by the silversmiths of Artemis.	Ephesus	Acts 19:23–41
AD 57	Violent Arrest: Beaten by a mob and seized by Roman soldiers.	Jerusalem	<u>Acts 21:27–36</u>
AD 57–59	Two-Year Imprisonment: Held under Felix and then Festus.	Caesarea	Acts 23:33–26:32
AD 60	Shipwreck: Adrift at sea for 14 days before crashing on an island.	Malta	Acts 27:1–44
AD 61–63	First Roman Imprisonment: Two years under house arrest.	Rome	Acts 28:16–31
AD 66–67	Final Imprisonment: Awaiting execution in a cold dungeon (Mamertine Prison).	Rome	2 Timothy 4:6–13

# Reflect & Respond

How did you and/or your family do in the weekly challenge to read Philippians daily (Jesus)?

For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain (Vs. 21). One way to examine our lives through this phrase and this passage today is to create this fill-in-the-blank: "For me, to live is \_\_\_\_\_" (money, power, academics, sports, pleasure, beauty, relationship, fame, etc.). What are you currently living for that may be in competition or being set up as a false idol in your life over Christ?

But realize that when we live for anything else, we can logically fill in the other part of Paul's proclamation: "to die is \_\_\_\_\_". (eg. For me, living is money; dying is being broke). What have you perhaps been living for, that when you die, is not going to lead to gain; not going to lead to something greater than what you are actually living for?

In this short life we live, grasp this...the only "for me to live is \_\_\_\_\_, to die is \_\_\_\_\_" that makes logical sense must ultimately be built upon our confidence in the eternal promises of God. Remember, confidence in our eternity leads to rejoicing in our daily life. What do you find that you are most rejoicing in daily?

Are you regularly living with eternity in mind, or are you simply living for the here and now? As a believer, why does it matter? How might living with the eternal, and earthly, perspectives that Paul has here in Philippians change the way you view your current, stressful circumstances? How might it change the way in which you see and live your life? Explain.

Read verses 22-24. What is the fruitful labor that God has for you in this season (vs. 22)? As you look at your current circumstance in life (regardless of good or bad), what is God currently doing through you, or perhaps who is He currently shaping through you, that you could say, "to remain in the flesh is more necessary?"

Looking at verses 27-28, would you say that your manner of life is worthy of the Gospel of Christ? Are you (and are the Christians you are doing life with) "standing firm in one spirit, with one mind, striving side by side for the faith of the Gospel, not frightened in anything by your opponents?" What does this look like in your marriage, family, parenting, workplace, community?

Read verses 29-30. When and/or how have you suffered for the sake of Christ? This may not look like first-century Roman persecution, but what are some ways that you have perhaps suffered for the sake of Christ and His gospel? Please share.