

the journey of Faith

Philippians 1:3-11

▶ Read Philippians 1:3-11

- ▶ Underline the words and phrases that show how Paul felt about the Philippians.

- ▶ What do his comments reflect about his relationship with this church?

- ▶ Why is it important for the Christian to know that Jesus is going to finish the things that He has started in him or her?

- ▶ Look again at verses 6-9. What do these verses tell you . . .
 - a. about the current status of the Philippians' faith?

 - b. about the ongoing process of their faith?

- ▶ Paul gives his prayer list for the Philippians in verses 9-11. If you were going to be praying these things for someone very close to you, what specifically would you be asking of God?

Philippians 1:3-11

³I thank my God every time I remember you. ⁴In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy ⁵because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, ⁶being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

⁷It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart and, whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. ⁸God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.

⁹And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, ¹⁰so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, ¹¹filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God.

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Read Philippians 1:12-14. What awful circumstance was Paul in when he wrote this? Under what circumstances is it hardest for you to pray? Ask God for strength when it's difficult to pray.

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Paul says he prays for all the church at Philippi. Remember to pray thankfully and joyfully, as he did, for others who have experienced God's grace.

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We often try to complete goals, make decisions, and do the right thing on our own. God reminds us here that we can't do these things without the help of Christ. Ask God to open your eyes to those areas in which you need help.

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Paul prays that his readers will abound in love and knowledge and depth of insight. These abilities do not come through our own efforts but are gifts of God. Ask God to increase these traits in you.

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"Being confident of this . . ." One way to build your confidence is to look to the past trials when God really carried you. Since God doesn't change, He will continue to carry you in the future. Ask God to increase your confidence as your experience with Him grows.

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This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment because God is continually making us like Jesus (1 Jn. 4:17). Look back and see how God has been making you more and more Christlike. Thank Him for His "craftsmanship" in your journey of faith.

Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

—Philippians 1:6

Second Calling

The apostle Paul didn't set out to be a missionary—far from it. His original agenda, while he was still called Saul, was to wipe Christians out, period. Jesus had something else in mind, though. Out of nowhere, while Saul was riding his horse near Damascus, Jesus blinded him with a bright light and spoke from heaven, saying, "Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?" Saul didn't really have a good answer. A reality check from Jesus and being blinded temporarily was just what he needed to turn from Christian-persecutor Saul into Christian missionary Paul. (Read Acts 9:1-19 to get the whole story.)

How about you? Let's consider Paul's second calling? Missions. After

Jesus rose from the dead, He had a specific agenda of His own, to gather His followers and give them a job to do. Right before Jesus ascended to heaven, He gave a mandate—known as The Great Commission:

"Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19-20).

Those aren't just words meant for Jim Elliot, Hudson Taylor, or David Livingston, all famous missionaries, by the way. Those words are directed at all followers of Jesus Christ—you included.

Attitude of Joy

Write down one thing that happened this week that was a "low" point. _____

What was your attitude? _____

Who held the power in that situation? _____

Paul was a prisoner in Rome when he wrote this letter, awaiting trial for his life. Yet the key words of this epistle are "joy" and "rejoicing."

An attitude of rejoicing is characteristic of the Christian life. And this is not mere positive thinking. We see Paul's secret in 4:12-13. In himself he was limited. But by having the Holy Spirit in his heart and being controlled by Christ, he was capable of facing any emergency with full confidence that victory was already assured. This confidence is the source of real joy.

When problems come, our initial reaction may be frustration, anger, resentment, sorrow, or self-pity. But these human feelings do not have to dominate or control our thoughts. Our faith in the Lord can go beyond emotional turbulences. We can have confidence that although He seems silent, He will reveal Himself again. Whatever happens, we can learn joy (4:11-12).

Look back at the situation you wrote down earlier. If your attitude had been joy, how would the situation have changed?

Think about the week ahead. Make a list of the situations you will be facing. How can you face them with the joy Paul talks about? Write a verse from Philippians 4:4-13 that will help your attitude this week.

COUNTING THE COST

The theme of suffering recurs throughout the Book of Philippians.

After all, Paul wrote while awaiting trial before Caesar. And persecution was a constant threat to the early church. But in chapter 1 Paul tells his readers that suffering for Christ is actually a privilege: "For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him" (vs. 29). Why do people ask others to pray for them when they are suffering?

What good does that do?

Read through Philippians 1:3-11. Write down Paul's prayer list found in verses 9-11.

Write a list of prayers people have asked you to pray for.

How could you combine the two lists?

Paul's devotion to Christ was absolute. He was anxious to participate fully in all that it meant to be a Christian. Elsewhere he speaks of being dead to sin and alive to Christ (Rom. 6:1-6; Gal. 2:20). He also talks about dying to sinful self—the kind of self-sacrifice Jesus said was necessary for a person to be a disciple (Mark 8:34).

How does your life reflect your devotion to Christ?

Suffering is not only inevitable for the Christian, it also brings us closer to Christ. In order to know Christ's resurrection power, we must be willing to share in His sufferings. This is not martyrdom, necessarily; it's counting the cost.

God doesn't want you to waste time worrying about death. So He's provided you with a glimpse of eternity in Scripture. Case in point: In 1 Thessalonians 4:13, Paul describes death for believers as "those who sleep in death" until the Lord Himself sounds a wake-up call.

And you won't be alone. In Revelation 19:6, John hears the sound of "a great multitude" in heaven shouting, "Hallelujah! Our God reigns!"

It's hard not to fret over the fate of people who refuse to believe in Jesus. But Paul says: "Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:6-7). As you live in Christ Jesus, God will use your example to reach hearts for His kingdom.

"Brothers and sisters, we do not want you to be uninformed about those who sleep in death, so that you do not grieve like the rest of mankind, who have no hope. For we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him... For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever" (1 Thess. 4:13-14, 16-17).



**Our
WAKE-UP
Call**