

Philippians: Living Like Jesus

Week 1: To Live is Christ

→ *Survey: Let's understand the background and context of the passage.*

Paul is the author of Philippians. Despite at one time being a Jewish leader who persecuted Christians, Paul became an important leader in the early church after encountering Christ on the road to Damascus. His life was changed, which led him to carry the Gospel to the Gentiles (non-Jews) throughout the Roman Empire. At the time of writing Philippians, Paul was unfairly imprisoned for sharing the Gospel, and was awaiting a trial that would determine his fate - would he be released from prison, or would he be executed?

The recipients of the letter were the members of the church in the city of Philippi, located in Macedonia. Paul and his fellow workers had gone there prior in response to a vision Paul had in a dream (found in Acts 16). During the few days they stayed in Philippi, a handful of people came to believe the good news of Jesus, and a small church was planted. Despite their small size, this church had given generously and sacrificially of their finances to support Paul's ministry and churches elsewhere. They had sent one of their members, Epaphroditus, to Paul's prison to deliver a financial gift and to hear about his condition. Epaphroditus became very ill during his stay with Paul, nearly dying. When he recovered, Paul sent him back to Philippi with this letter. The letter is written to thank the Philippians for their gifts, and to encourage them and urge them on in their journey of faithfulness to Christ. Together we'll explore the common theme of joy seen throughout Paul's letter, and learn what it truly means to live like Jesus.

Read: Philippians 1:1-26

→ *Observe: Let's take a close look at what the text is saying.*

- How does Paul identify Timothy and himself (v. 1)? Who is he writing to and how does he identify them?
- How does Paul feel about the Philippians (v. 3-8)? What are some words or phrases that show his heart towards them?
- What is Paul's prayer for the Philippians (v. 9)? What specific reasons do you see as to why this is his prayer (v. 10-11)?
- Paul is in prison as he writes this letter. What has his imprisonment led to (v. 12)? Who has been impacted (v. 13-14)?
- What are some of the reasons people are preaching about Christ (v. 15-17)? How does Paul respond to the differences (v. 18)?
- What else is Paul confident and joyful about (v. 19)? What ultimately is his goal (v. 20)?
- As Paul waits to see if he will be released from prison or executed, what does he wrestle with (v. 21-24)? Who benefits if he lives? Who benefits if he dies?

→ *Interpret: Let's seek to understand the meaning of this text in its original context.*

- Throughout his letter, Paul mentions defending, proclaiming, and advancing the Gospel. What even is the Gospel? Why is it necessary to be proclaimed?
- How can the fact that the gospel was advanced while Paul was imprisoned help us better understand God and His plan?
- Joy is a central theme in this letter. How does joy differ from happiness? In what ways do we see Paul express joy in this first chapter? What does this teach us about godly joy?
- What might Paul mean by "to live is Christ and to die is gain" (v. 21)? Why would he be struggling with this? What does that reveal about where Paul's hope lies?

→ *Apply: Let's explore where the text intersects with our lives and our world.*

- As we see Paul's joy despite his circumstances, where are the places in your life where you let your circumstances dictate how you feel? What would it look like for you to have true joy & hope this week even in the midst of suffering?
- Are there places in your life where you're questioning where God is and what He is doing? Maybe you feel stuck, even like a prisoner... Do you believe God could use those circumstances in your life to advance the gospel just as he did for Paul in v. 12? How might a perspective change help you live differently this week?