

PHILIPPIANS 1-2

Joy No Matter What!

DATE	BIBLE	DATE	BIBLE
29 & 31 Mar	Good Fri & Easter Sun	8-14 Apr	Philippians 1:12-26
1-7 Apr	Philippians 1:1-11	15-28 Apr	Small Groups on Break

Paul writes to the Philippians who have partnered with him in sharing the gospel from the very beginning of his ministry. He wants to make sure they're not discouraged by their own struggles, and by the news that he is in prison for the gospel... again.

So (in chapters 1-2) Paul reminds them of his love for them, his prayers for them, that he's still dedicated to sharing the gospel for their sakes, not to be surprised or discouraged by suffering (as God is sovereign over suffering and Christ told us to expect it), and he urges them to imitate Christ and live a life worthy of the gospel – and all “to the glory and praise of God” (1:11), “so you too should be glad and rejoice with me” (1:18).

How do you find joy no matter what? And what do you find joy in? In these 2 gold chapters from the Philippians we'll find stable joy no matter what.

PHILIPPIANS 1:1-11 • 1-7 APR

DIRECTION: The letter to the Philippians is one of Paul's most personal letters. The next 2 weeks will be answering these 2 questions: What does Paul want for the Philippians? And what does Paul want for himself? This week we'll see that what Paul wants for the Philippians (and for us) is our maturity, "to the glory and praise of God." This study differs from others by slowly building the ideas, so each question builds upon the last.

PRAY: Ask God to teach us to have joy in him no matter what.

LAUNCH: → If you could achieve 1 big thing this year, what would it be?

READ: Philippians 1:1-11

This week we'll be working through the passage, verse by verse, to find Paul's ambition for the Philippians and for us.

OBSERVATION:

→ From w 1-2, how does Paul describe the Philippians?

People made holy by Christ Jesus.

→ From w 3-6 what is it about the Philippians that Paul thanks God for?

Their constant partnership in the gospel, that they share in God's grace together, and that God will complete the work he has started in them.

→ From w 7-8 how does the way Paul feels about them affect his prayers?

→ Using w 9-11 for inspiration, draw a picture of you on the "day of Christ"

MEANING:

→ Why does Paul feel the way he does for the Philippians?

He holds them in his heart (v7), they share in God's grace with him (v7), Christ feels this way about them too (v8) and he shares Christ's affection.

→ Try to map the links in vv 9-11 and how the logic flows. You could use a flowchart or use maths symbols.



++ Verses 9-10 makes it seem like our love and growth will lead us to be “pure and blameless for the day of Christ.” But v 11 reminds us only Jesus’ work makes us blameless. How do we reconcile these 2 truths?

Love is one of the “Fruit of Righteousness” that comes THROUGH Jesus Christ. His work is the CAUSE of our abounding love (Gal 5:22-24).

→ Why does Paul pray for these things? OR: why does he pray for their growth, even though he’s so confident God will finish his work in them?

Because ultimately, it’s only God that can cause these things in us. (Let the Leader understand). His confidence in God’s work (v6) leads him to ask God to work. God loves to use our prayers to act “according to his will” (1 John 5:14-15).

APPLY:

→ What do you want for your life? What does Paul / God want for your life? How much do they overlap? How could you bring them into alignment?

Paul: to be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, and mature. (cf. Col 1:28)

→ What would Salt Church look like if we “longed for [our brothers and sisters] with the affection of Christ Jesus”?

→ What do you mostly pray for? How can *this* prayer shape our prayers?

++ What does “partnership in the gospel” look like for us?

v7 has a few options. In Phil 4:14-16 Paul mentions a financial gift they shared (so e.g. missionary support, giving to church, supporting an MTS apprentice). Eph 4:15-16 reminds us that maturity is impossible without the input of our Christian friends.

PRAY TO END: vv 9-11 are a great thing to pray. Split into pairs and pray this for each other.

PHILIPPIANS 1:12-26 • 8-14 APR

DIRECTION: This week we peer into Paul's own heart to see what he wants for his own life - answer: *"I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death."* (1:20) This is a great opportunity for us to see Paul's model and to *"follow [Paul's] example, as [he] follows the example of Christ"* (1 Cor 11:1). It's a window into his motivation as he fights with fear. But ultimately, it's an awesome passage to just dwell, with Paul, on the incredible worth of Christ.

PRAY TO START: Pray for God's priorities to become our priorities.

LAUNCH: → How do you personally overcome fear?

E.g. psych yourself up, talk through the likely scenarios, rush in without thinking, etc.

READ: Philippians 1:12-26

OBSERVATION:

→ 3 things are happening for Paul here. How would you expect him to feel? How does he actually feel? What outcome is he seeing or expecting?

Scenario	Expected Feeling	Actual Feeling	Outcome
Paul is in chains for Christ (vv 12-14)	<i>Bummed out</i>	<i>Confident trust in God</i>	<i>Christians confident & fearless to preach the gospel!</i>
People preaching to hurt Paul (vv 15-18)	<i>Betrayed! Wounded!</i>	<i>Rejoicing!</i>	<i>Christ is proclaimed!</i>
Paul pondering the end of his life (vv 19-26)	<i>Tired, fearful, depressed</i>	<i>Confidence & courage</i>	<i>Him delivered, Christ exalted in his body, them boasting in Christ Jesus.</i>

MEANING:

→ What is Paul's ultimate goal and aim in his imprisonment and life?

For Christ to be preached / exalted / boasted in / honoured. His life is Christ!

→ Where do you think Paul's courage comes from?

His convictions that Christ's renown is the most important thing, even in his own life. He has a greater goal in life than his own comfort / safety / longevity.

→ Why do you think Paul is writing this to the Philippians?

To give the Philippians courage, as they might have feared the spread of the gospel had been halted when Paul was imprisoned (in fact his imprisonment advanced it, vv 12-14) and as they go through the same struggles as Paul (vv 29-30).

APPLY:

→ What do you get most anxious about?

There are obvious superficial answers (e.g. heights, snakes) but the underlying fear is what we're after (e.g. heights / snakes → death). Don't be pushy, but encourage your group to open up and model honest deeper answers yourself.

→ How can we have Paul's courage in the face of our fears?

By having the same convictions! Life is about Jesus and living for him, not our own comfort, having everyone like you, etc.

→ What do you think of this quote:

My only comfort is this: That I am not my own, but belong body & soul, both in life & in death, to God & to my faithful Saviour Jesus Christ.

(New City Catechism Qu. 1)

→ Is this quote true for you? How might you draw comfort from this truth?

→ What about Jesus makes you want to worship him, no matter what?

PRAY TO END: Split into pairs and pray vv 20-21 for each other, asking God to help and cause this to become true for us, no matter what.

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I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

Philippians 1:20-21