

PHILIPPIANS

Author: Paul the Apostle

Date: Written sometime between 52 - 62 AD.

Original Recipients: Gentile Christians, living in the areas of modern Greece.

Type of Literature: Historical Narrative and Personal Letter

Content: This is one of Paul's most personal letters, with personal pronouns used over 100 times. Paul uses upbeat language with "*rejoice*" used 10 times and "*joy*" 6 times with this young church. He had a lot to say about the legalistic Jews that were plaguing this and many other Gentile churches. This gracious letter thanks the Philippian Church for their continued support and commends them for their steadfast stand in the face of many years of persecution. Paul was also concerned about two female leaders that seemed to be in conflict within the church.

Background: Paul established the Church in Philippi on his 2nd Missionary Journey around 51 AD and he visited the church a second time on his 3rd Mission around 57 AD. (Acts 16:9-40 and Acts 20:1-6) Written while Paul was in prison, possibly under house arrest in Rome.

Acts 16:9 During the night Paul had a **vision of a man of Macedonia** standing and begging him, "**Come over to Macedonia and help us.**" 10 After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that **God had called us to preach the gospel to them.** 11 From Troas we put out to sea and sailed straight for Samothrace, and the next day we went on to Neapolis. 12 From there we traveled to **Philippi, a Roman colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia.** And we stayed there several days.

Unusual Features: Many have suggested this is a combination of two or more letters. (see v.3:1)

Phil 3:1 Further ("*Finally*" in KJV), my brothers and sisters, **rejoice in the Lord!** It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you.

Philippians 1 Exhortation to stand firm in faith. (30 verses)

1) Apostolic introduction from the servants of Jesus Christ.

v. 1 **Paul and Timothy**, servants of **Christ Jesus**, **To all God's holy people in Christ Jesus** at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons: 2 Grace and peace to you from **God our Father** and the Lord **Jesus Christ.** 3 I thank my God every time I remember you.

2) He who began the good work in us will continue until He finishes it.

v. 4 In all my prayers for all of you, **I always pray with joy** 5 because of your **partnership (cooperation, prayer and contributions) in the gospel** from the first day until now, 6 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 (judgement day)**. 7 It 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. 8 God can testify how **I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus**.

3) Paul's prayer for you and me.

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

4) Paul's incarceration is again alluded to.

v. 12 Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that **what has happened to me** has actually served to advance the gospel. 13 As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that **I am in chains for Christ**. 14 **And because of my chains**, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear.

5) There are various motivations for preaching, but Jesus is still preached.

v. 15 It is true that **some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry**, but others out of goodwill. 16 The latter do so out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. 17 **The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains**. 18a. **But what does it matter?** The important thing is that in every way, **whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached**. And because of this I rejoice.

6) We must all continue to follow Jesus, whether by life or by death.

v. 18b. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, 19 for I know that through your prayers and **God's provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ** what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance. 20 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**. 21 **For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain**.

Story: BRSM Moto, "by life or by death."

7) Paul is torn between going to be with Jesus and staying to help others.

v. 22 If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! 23 **I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; 24 but it is more necessary for you that I**

remain in the body. 25 Convinced of this, **I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith,** 26 so that through my being with you again your boasting in Christ Jesus will abound on account of me.

8) Stand firm in the Holy Spirit.

v. 27 **Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ.** Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you **stand firm in the one Spirit,** striving **together as one** for the faith of the gospel 28 without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved—and that by God.

9) Paul considered it an honor and privilege to suffer persecution for Jesus.

v. 29 **For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him,** 30 since you are going through the same struggle you saw **I had,** and now hear that I still have.

Philippians 2 Jesus is our forerunner and prototype. (30 verses)

1) In all of your Christian relationships you should try to have spiritual unity.

v. 1 Therefore if you have any encouragement from being **united with Christ,** if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, 2 then make my joy complete by **being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.** 3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, **in humility value others above yourselves,** 4 not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

2) Consider the perfect example of Jesus who was God, but came as a man.

v. 5 **In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus:** 6 Who, being in very nature God, **did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage;** 7 rather, **he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness.** 8 **And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself** by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!

Note: This is an extremely important passage and a key to understanding how Jesus temporarily relinquished his own power and functioned as a man. He “emptied Himself” to be in Partnership with Holy Spirit. Paul defined the “kenosis,” or self-emptying, by using the word “servant” or “slave.” In the days of His flesh, Jesus functioned as a man empowered by the Holy Spirit.

v. 5 **Have this same attitude in yourselves which was in Christ Jesus** [*look to Him as your example in selfless humility*], 6 **who, although He existed in the form and unchanging essence of God** [*as One with Him, possessing the fullness of all the divine*

attributes--the entire nature of deity], **did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped or asserted** [*as if He did not already possess it, or was afraid of losing it*]; 7 but **emptied Himself** [*without renouncing or diminishing His deity, but only temporarily giving up the outward expression of divine equality and His rightful dignity*] **by assuming the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men** [*He became completely human but was without sin, being fully God and fully man*]. 8 **After He was found in** [*terms of His*] **outward appearance as a man** [*for a divinely-appointed time*], **He humbled Himself** [*still further*] **by becoming obedient** [*to the Father*] **to the point of death, even death on a cross.** AMP

Phil. 2:5 Make your own attitude that of **Christ Jesus**, 6 who, **existing in the form of God**, did not consider equality with God as something to be used for His own advantage. 7 Instead **He emptied Himself** by assuming the form of a **slave, taking on the likeness of men**. And when **He had come as a man in His external form**, 8 He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death—even to death on a cross. CSB

Jesus was full of the Holy Spirit, led by the Holy Spirit, and functioned in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Isa 11:1 A shoot will come up from the stump of **Jesse**; from his roots a **Branch** will bear fruit. 2 **The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him—the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the LORD—** 3 and he will delight in the fear of the LORD.

Luke 4:1 **Jesus, full of the Holy Spirit**, left the Jordan and was **led by the Spirit** into the wilderness,... 14 **Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit**, and news about him spread through the whole countryside.

Jesus was "anointed" as Christ by the Holy Spirit, to minister on Earth.

Isa 61:1 **The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me**, because **the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor**. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, **to proclaim freedom for the captives** and release from darkness for the prisoners, 2a. To proclaim the year of the LORD's favor...

Luke 4:16 He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. He stood up to read, 17 and the scroll of **the prophet Isaiah** was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: 18 **"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners** and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, 19 **to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor."** 20 Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him. 21 He began by saying to them, **"Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."**

Jesus was “anointed” by the Holy Spirit to “proclaim good news.” (Lu 4:18)
Jesus was “anointed” by the Holy Spirit to “bind up the broken hearted.” (Lu 4:18)
Jesus was “anointed” by the Holy Spirit To “proclaim freedom for the prisoners.”
Jesus was “anointed” by Holy Spirit to bring “recovery of sight for the blind”
Jesus was “anointed” by the Holy Spirit to “release prisoners from Darkness.”

We must be "anointed" in the power of Holy Spirit, like Jesus was, to function.

Acts 1:8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses...

3) Jesus is like His Father Yahweh.

v. 9 Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, 11 and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

4) Cooperate with the Lord as He works in you.

v. 12 Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—**continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, 13 for it is God who works in you** to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose.

5) Salvation assumes continued obedience in the face of difficulties, so rejoice.

v. 14 **Do everything without grumbling or arguing,** 15 so that you may become blameless and pure, "children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation." Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky 16 as you **hold firmly to the word of life.** And then I will be able to boast on **the day of Christ** that I did not run or labor in vain. 17 But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, **I am glad and rejoice with all of you. 18 So you too should be glad and rejoice with me.**

6) Paul intended to send his spiritual son Timothy to help the church.

v. 19 **I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy** to you soon, that I also may be cheered when I receive news about you. 20 **I have no one else like him, who will show genuine concern for your welfare.** 21 For everyone looks out for their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. 22 But you know that Timothy has proved himself, because **as a son with his father he has served with me in the work of the gospel.** 23 I hope, therefore, to send him as soon as **I see how things go with me.** 24 And I am confident in the Lord that I myself will come soon.

7) Epaphroditus was a Philippian who had been sent to Paul. (see 4:18)

v. 25 But I think it is necessary to send back to you **Epaphroditus, my brother, co-worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger, whom you sent to take care**

of my needs. 26 For he longs for all of you and is distressed because you heard **he was ill.** 27 Indeed **he was ill, and almost died.** But God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, to spare me sorrow upon sorrow. 28 Therefore I am all the more eager to send him, so that when you see him again you may be glad and I may have less anxiety. 29 So then, welcome him in the Lord with great joy, and honor people like him, 30 because **he almost died for the work of Christ. He risked his life** to make up for the help you yourselves could not give me.

Philippians 3 Warning against the circumcision faction. (21 verses)

1) Apostolic exhortation to rejoice.

v. 1 Further (“*Finally*” in KJV), my brothers and sisters, **rejoice in the Lord!** It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you.

2) We serve God through His Spirit versus through Judaism.

v. 2 Watch out for those dogs, those evildoers, **those mutilators of the flesh.** 3 For it is we who are the circumcision, **we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh—** 4 though I myself have reasons for such confidence.

3) Paul’s religious pedigree from Judaism.

v. 4b. If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: 5 **circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; 6 as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless.**

4) Jesus is all the pedigree we need.

v. 7 But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.

5) Knowing Jesus well is all that matters.

v. 8 What is more, **I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord,** for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, **not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ—the** righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. 10 **I want to know Christ—** yes, to know the power of his **resurrection and participation in his sufferings,** becoming like him in his death, 11 and so, **somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead.**

Phil 3:11 That if possible I may attain to the [*spiritual and moral*] **resurrection** [*that lifts me*] **out from among the dead** [*even while in the body*]. AMPC+

- 6) **No rearview mirror for debilitating regrets. (Paul and Steven's martyrdom).**
v. 12 Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but **I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me.** 13 Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: **Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead,** 14 **I press on toward the goal to win the prize** for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. 15 **All of us, then, who are mature should take such a view of things.** And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. 16 Only let us live up to what we have already attained.
- 7) **We must continue forward towards maturity in Christ Jesus.**
v. 17 **Join together in following my example,** brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, **keep your eyes on those who live as we do.** 18 For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. 19 Their destiny is destruction, **their god is their stomach,** and their glory is in their shame. **Their mind is set on earthly things.** 20 **But our citizenship is in heaven.** And **we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ,** 21 who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.

Philippians 4 Paul's closing remarks and conclusion. (23 verses)

1) Stand firm in the Lord.

v. 1 Therefore, my brothers and sisters, you whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, **stand firm in the Lord** in this way, dear friends!

2) Two female co-workers are specifically named and called out for discord.

v. 2 I plead with **Euodia** and I plead with **Syntyche** to **be of the same mind in the Lord.** 3 Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, **help these women** since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with **Clement** and the rest of my **co-workers,** whose names are in the book of life.

“Clement may be the author of 1 Clement, a late-first-century Christian letter from Rome to Corinth, as tradition suggests, although Clement is a common Roman name.”
IVP Bible Background Commentary

3) How then should we live?

v. 4 **Rejoice in the Lord always.** I will say it again: **Rejoice!**

4) Let your gentleness be like Jesus to others.

v. 5 Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near.

5) Share every detail of your life with the Lord as your days progress.

v. 6 Do not be anxious about anything, but **in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God.** 7 And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

Story: 2009 China trip conversations.

6) Your thought life should be focused on the Lord and His ways.

v. 8 **Finally**, brothers and sisters, **whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.** 9 Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—**put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you.**

7) Paul acknowledges and appreciates their personal concerns for him.

v. 10 **I rejoiced greatly in the Lord that at last you renewed your concern for me. Indeed, you were concerned, but you had no opportunity to show it.** 11 I am not saying this because I am in need, for **I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances.**

8) The secret of overcoming is living with an awareness of Jesus at your side.

v. 12 **I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content** in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. 13 **I can do all this through him who gives me strength.**

9) Paul's thanks them specifically for financial support and extends blessings.

v. 14 Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. 15 Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, **not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only;** 16 for even when I was in Thessalonica, **you sent me aid more than once when I was in need.** 17 **Not that I desire your gifts;** what I desire is that more be credited to your account. 18 **I have received full payment and have more than enough.** I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus **the gifts you sent.** They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. 19 **And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.**

10) He closes with final blessings and salutations.

v. 20 **To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.** 21 Greet all God's people in Christ Jesus. The brothers and sisters who are with me send greetings. 22 All God's people here send you greetings, especially those who belong to **Caesar's household.** 23 **The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen.**