

## Philippians

Primary Teaching theme: *Encouragement of Faith- (Doctrine of Suffering)*

The letter written to the Church at Philippi occurred while Paul the Apostle was incarcerated. He was initially taken into custody and held until Roman authorities could hear him and determine if there were valid charges against him. Over time, his incarceration became more for his protection and the indecision on how to handle Apostle Paul as a Roman citizen being charged by Jewish leaders.

The incarceration did not prevent the Apostle from corresponding and continuing to influence the Churches he had started or supporting those outside of Jerusalem. From the vantage point of those outside of his prison, many became distraught, wavering in their faith because the man they trusted was vilified by Orthodox Jews and other scorners who took advantage of his disposition.

The Church at Philippi was among those who were vulnerable to naysayers and false representatives of the gospel. The letter from the Apostle offered encouragement for them to remain resilient in their faith and not to consider his tribulation and suffering as meaningless, but rather to see it as serving a greater purpose.

### ***The Apostle's affliction expanding the spread of the Gospel cp 1-3***

The Apostle appealed for the Church at Philippi to understand how God used his affliction to expand the reach of the gospel further. Some men used the Apostle's imprisonment as an opportunity to benefit from the void left by his physical absence from preaching the Gospel. At the same time, they gained notoriety within their spheres of influence. Some of them believed that amplifying the gospel would increase the punitive measures against the Apostle while he was incarcerated.

Apostle Paul wanted the Philippians to view his fate differently. He told them the motives others had for spreading the gospel did not matter. If the gospel reached more people because of his suffering, the results of his suffering served a greater purpose.

The Apostle Paul boldly accepted that his physical suffering could be used for God's glory, whether in life or in death.



### ***The Apostle's expectation of the Philippian Church cp 1-2***

The Apostle was torn between the desire to remain alive and present to spiritually sustain and mentor the Church at Phillipi and other Churches under his care or to relinquish his desire to depart into the eternal presence of the Lord. To remain present would undoubtedly be beneficial to the Church.

If he sacrifices his desire to depart from this world, he implores the Church to stand fast in their commitment, striving together for the faith of the gospel. He demanded that they be like-minded, sharing the same love for one another, living in harmony without strife or vanity. They were instructed to live in humility, esteeming others above themselves.

To follow the model of humility demonstrated by Christ Jesus, whose mind did not allow Him to pursue a reputation for Himself, but instead took on the form of a servant, although He was equal to God, He humbled Himself and took on the form and likeness of a man. (2:5)

### ***The Apostle's warning "Beware of dogs, evil workers, and the concision" cp 3***

The Apostle did not hesitate to include a warning for the Church to be aware of "dogs", evil workers, and Jewish believers in the Messiah who demanded Gentiles to be circumcised (the concision).

The term "dog" was generally used to identify someone without rights to the inheritance of Abraham or a person not associated with the House of Israel. The Messiah used the reference when approached by a non-member of the House of Israel requesting healing for her daughter. (Matthew 15:26) The Apostle uses the term to identify individuals who are not true believers in the Messiah or who do not correctly represent His truth. They are workers of evil hoping to disparage the truth of the gospel and to undermine attempts to maintain allegiance to the Apostolic leader and his teachings. There were also Jewish believers in the Messiah who continued to challenge the salvation authenticity of Gentiles who were not circumcised.

The Apostle validated his circumcision as a member of the tribe of Benjamin, representing his Jewish legacy, and how, at one time, he was an opponent of the Church, persecuting Christians because of his commitment to Judaism. In his testimony, he reveals how he counts the gains of his heritage as a loss to embrace the excellence of knowing Christ. To win Christ is the greater reward above all personal gains.

The righteousness found in the law of circumcision, or any other segment of the law, cannot be compared to the righteousness of God that man receives by faith. To know Christ in the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings allows the believer to apprehend, seize, fully grasp, and possess the Christ that has apprehended them. (3:12)



### ***The Apostle's identifying supporters of the Gospel cp 3-4***

After identifying those who work to undermine the gospel, he instructs the Church to mark or “identify” those among them who walk in the example of the apostles' teaching.

They must be separately identified from those that are known enemies of the cross of Christ. (3:17-18)

The final chapter opens with a list of who can be trusted with the work. Two women, Euodias and Syntyche, are highlighted specifically with an appeal for them to be of the same mind in their work together for the gospel. The Church is admonished to support them as true yokefellows ( co-workers) who have assisted Paul and others in the work of the gospel. (4:3)

The Apostle discloses the working relationship between the two women of the Church at Philippi and Clement of Rome, a historical Church Father of the early Church (88-99 AD). It is the only mention of Clement in scripture. He is believed to be the second or third successor over the Church after Peter. His writings to the Church of Corinth were widespread and read among several Churches in the first century. The volume is lengthy, twice the size of the book of Hebrews, with numerous references to Torah and other Old Testament texts. The First Epistle of Clement is considered the oldest Christian epistle outside of the formal writings of the New Testament. (4:3)

### ***The Apostle's Declaration of Truth cp 4***

Before closing, the epistle offers a declaration of truth. The truth is at the center of the gospel. Without truth, the gospel is compromised. The end of everything said or done must be evaluated by what is true.

The truth will naturally produce what is honest. Honesty is the offspring of truth. From what is honest, justice can be determined. Justice is equity (right measure), the balanced result of truth and honesty.

Justice will result in offering what is pure, without a mixture of foreign substances that would taint or defile its content. Purity is an offering of what is lovely, acceptable, and of good report. The ultimate goal is to produce a clear, acceptable, and good report of the gospel. It all begins with a true gospel. The Apostle adds an inspirational advisement to think of these things, the things that extend from truth.



### ***The Apostle's Final Declaration cp 4***

The Apostle closes the epistle with gratitude for the monetary support he received from the Church at Phillipi. Their support allowed the Apostle and, subsequently, the work of the gospel to flourish.

His testimony is included to reflect his spiritual flexibility in adapting to life's circumstances as they arise. He has learned how to be content with whatever status is assigned to him. He knows how to be abased or abound, meaning he can adapt to the lowest provision or the highest level of providence. He has been instructed, taught, and prepared to be full and to be hungry; to have access (abound) or to suffer in need. His contentment level will adjust to any status he is required to face.

The inspiration behind his testimony is the Apostle's confidence that in Christ, he can do all things because the strength of Christ prevails in him. (4:13)

