

STUDY GUIDE



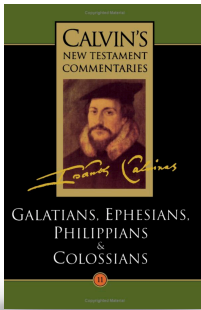
PHILIPPIANS

THE SURPASSING WORTH OF KNOWING CHRIST 

B.A. B.A.

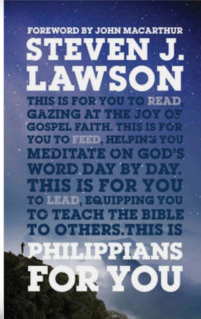
RECOMMENDED HELP FOR STUDYING *PHILIPPIANS: the surpassing worth of knowing Christ*

From accessible to technical



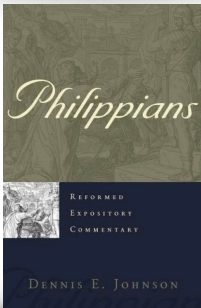
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GALATIANS, EPHESIANS, PHILIPPIANS, & COLOSSIANS
by John Calvin



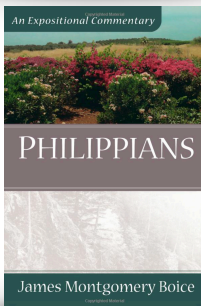
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PHILIPPIANS FOR YOU
by Steven J. Lawson



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PHILIPPIANS (Reformed Expository Commentary)
by Dennis E. Johnson



Very Accessible

PHILIPPIANS (An Expositional Commentary)
by James Montgomery Boice

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The study questions were written and the excerpts were compiled by Brett Baggett. It was edited by Brandon Allen, Shaun Blankenship, Joseph Tiger, Jayson Pickering, and Jenny Yarbrough. The excerpts contained are from sermons, books, and articles by various pastors, authors, and theologians, both current and from church history.

HOW TO USE IT

This Study Guide is designed to help you study the book of *Philippians* in 20 weeks. This contains one week of introduction and 19 weeks of Bible study. I pray this will be a great tool for personal study, small groups, and leadership training of various kinds.

PURPOSE

My hope for this study guide is to equip the people of Jesus Christ to understand, love, and obey the written Word of God. I believe when that happens they will more joyfully understand, love, and obey the Incarnate Word of God—Jesus Christ the Righteous.

For God's glory and the joy of all people,



PHILIPPIANS

the surpassing worth of knowing Christ

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Study 0

INTRODUCTION

THE SURPASSING WORTH OF KNOWING CHRIST BY BRETT BAGGETT

The Apostle Paul's letter to the church at Philippi is laser-focussed on "the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:8). In this letter, he reminds the Philippians who Jesus is, what He has done, and what that means for those of who belong to Him. Paul is pouring his heart out while sitting in a prison cell for the sake of the gospel. To think—one of his most encouraging epistles was written while in chains!

In Philippians Paul presents Jesus as the one who makes us saints,¹ works in us both to will and to work for His good pleasure,² and as the one who will bring us to completion when He returns,³ having secured our citizenship in heaven.⁴ In other words, He has justified us, is sanctifying us, and will one day glorify us to the glory of God the Father.

But that is not all Philippians contains. In this heartfelt correspondence, Paul explicitly reveals the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus personally. He proclaims knowing Jesus is better than being free from prison or free from suffering.⁵ Being like Christ is superior to being selfish or apathetic.⁶ Cherishing the Lord exceeds clinging to self-righteousness or obtaining worldly gain.⁷ Being accepted by Christ Jesus the Lord is more desirable than living in the past with regret or living now for the praise of men.⁸ The great promise of Philippians is this: if you know Jesus personally you have everything you need for everlasting happiness. You can suffer, hunger, be brought low or in great need—and yet joyfully face it all through Christ who strengthens you.⁹

Jesus accomplished all of this by emptying himself of his glory, taking the form of a servant, and submitting to death on a cross for our sakes.¹⁰ Great was the cost and great are the promises he bought! May God use this study of Philippians to broaden our understanding of who Jesus is, grow our desire for holiness, strengthen our hands to serve one another, and deepen our love for Jesus as the one of surpassing worth.

¹ Philippians 1:1

² Philippians 2:13

³ Philippians 1:6

⁴ Philippians 3:20-21

⁵ Philippians 1:13, 29

⁶ Philippians 2:3,12

⁷ Philippians 3:3-8

⁸ Philippians 3:12-19

⁹ Philippians 4:12-13

¹⁰ Philippians 2:7-8

1. What stood out to you in this section and why?

[illegible]

DATE THE LETTER WAS WRITTEN THE ESV STUDY BIBLE

Scholars have debated Paul's location when he wrote Philippians. Caesarea, Ephesus, and Rome have been the three most commonly proposed locations. Paul was in fact imprisoned in the "praetorium" of Herod the Great in Caesarea (Acts 23:35; cf. ESV footnote on Phil. 1:13) around A.D. 60. But his statements to the Philippians about his possibly imminent death (e.g., 1:20) would be puzzling if coming from Caesarea, since he would have been able to request a trial in Rome, as in fact he did. Ephesus was close enough to Philippi for Paul to receive regular news from there, but there is no mention of his ever being imprisoned in Ephesus. On balance, it seems most likely that the letter was written from Rome, c. A.D. 62. This also fits most naturally with the mention of the praetorium and "Caesar's household" (1:13 and 4:22).

— Crossway Bibles. *ESV Study Bible* (Kindle Locations 144964-144971). Good News Publishers/Crossway Books. Kindle Edition.

2. What stood out to you in this section and why?

The church at Philippi had a special significance for Paul, since it was the first church he founded in Europe (see Acts 16:6–40). The first convert was Lydia, a seller of purple goods, and women continued to have a prominent role in the Philippian church (e.g., Phil. 4:2). Paul and Silas were imprisoned there for exorcising a demon from a fortune-telling slave girl, but God miraculously delivered them, and they proclaimed the gospel to the Philippian jailer. Paul likely visited the Philippians a few times after his initial departure, and they maintained active support for his ministry (4:15–16).

Paul wrote to the Philippians from prison (see above), prompted in part by his reception of their latest gift, sent with Epaphroditus (himself a member of the Philippian congregation). But the letter is far more than an extended thank-you note. Paul wanted to pass along the important news that Epaphroditus had recovered from a serious illness (2:25–30), and that he was sending him along to them with the hope that soon he might also send Timothy for a visit (2:19). Timothy and Epaphroditus were also mentioned because they exemplified the Christ-centered, gospel-focused life Paul wanted the Philippians to live.

Paul himself also wanted to encourage the Philippians in their faith, and his imprisonment meant he could do that only through a letter. Even a house imprisonment (assuming Paul was in Rome, Acts 28:16) could have been a source of great anguish, particularly with the possibility of execution looming, and so Paul wanted to assure the church that he was still in good spirits through his faith in Christ (Phil. 1:12–18). He was also eager to thank them for their continued support: imprisonment carried with it a social stigma, and it would have been easy for the Philippians to turn their back on Paul at this point. But they had remained faithful to him.

Yet Paul's purpose in writing goes even further. He is above all concerned that the Philippians continue to make progress in their faith (1:25). While there were no doubt conflicts within the congregation (notably that of Euodia and Syntyche, 4:2), the Philippians appear to be a healthy congregation, in contrast to the troubled groups in Corinth and Galatia. Can they then relax and rest? Paul's answer is an emphatic no. The world is too perilous, and the gospel too glorious, for them to be content with past achievements (3:12–16). They must follow Paul's example and "press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (3:14).

Paul explains what spiritual progress will look like. Christian maturity does not come through special mystical insights available to only a few, but rather through the patient practice of the familiar virtues of love and service to others. Paul presents himself as one model for such a lifestyle (1:12–18; 3:17; 4:9), and he commends Timothy and Epaphroditus in similar terms (2:19–30). But the supreme model for progress in faith is Jesus himself, and the centerpiece of Philippians is the magnificent "hymn of Christ" in 2:5–11. Jesus willingly let go of the privileges of divine glory to take up the form of a servant, and even

embraced the ultimate humiliation of the cross, in order to liberate the world from sin. He is thus accorded the highest glory, receiving universal worship as God's Messiah.

Those who follow Christ's example have the hope that God will also vindicate them on the day of Christ, and thus they can rejoice (1:18; 3:1; 4:4). They can also be confident that God will not leave them alone to make their way through the world as best they can. Spiritual progress involves effort: they are encouraged to "work out [their] own salvation with fear and trembling" (2:12). But they can do so knowing that "it is God who works in [them], both to will and to work for his good pleasure" (2:13).

– Crossway Bibles. ESV Study Bible (Kindle Locations 144974-145004). Good News Publishers/Crossway Books. Kindle Edition.

3. What stood out to you in this section and why?

[illegible]

Study 1

GREETING AND THANKSGIVING

Philippians 1:1-5

A PERSONAL LETTER BY STEVEN J. LAWSON

Can you imagine receiving a handwritten letter from the apostle[1] Paul addressed to you personally? How excited you would be to receive a piece of inspired writing from the leading spiritual teacher of the day. That is precisely what the early believers in Philippi must have felt when this correspondence was delivered to them. There was Paul's name on the epistle—and their name right beside it! We can count on both hands the number of churches in history that have been so privileged—and the Philippians church was one such body of believers.

Yet in a broader sense, every authentic church in every generation has been so privileged. Far more than this being merely an ancient letter, this letter is intended for every church and every Christian in every generation. In this letter, God himself is still speaking to each one of us today. Though this letter was written two thousand years ago to the church at Philippi, it finds itself in the Bible for our spiritual good and growth, preserved for you and me and our benefit as well. This epistle is for you and me even today. As we begin this study of the book of Philippians, it is my prayer that there will be ignited within your heart a growing closeness to the Lord, and a new joy in him. In this chapter, we will consider together the first two verses of this highly personal epistle, which form the opening section known as a salutation.

– Lawson, Steven. *Philippians For You: Shine with joy as you live by faith* (God's Word For You Book 18) (pp. 15-16). The Good Book Company. Kindle Edition.

OF THE CHURCH THE 1689 BAPTIST CONFESSION OF FAITH

8. A particular Church gathered, and completely organized, according to the mind of Christ, consists of Officers, and Members; And the Officers appointed by Christ to be chosen and set apart by the Church (so called and gathered) for the peculiar Administration of Ordinances, and Execution of Power, or Duty, which he entrusts them with, or calls them to, to be continued to the end of the World are (p) Bishops or Elders and Deacons.

(p Act. 20:17, with v.28. Phil. 1.1.)

– The 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith, *Chapter 26 - Of the Church*, <http://www.ekkleSIamuskogee.church/the-1689-baptist-confession/>

[illegible]

1. Who is the author of this letter according to **verse 1**? What do we learn about Paul from **Acts chapter 26**? Who is with Paul as he writes? What do we learn about Timothy from **Acts 16:1-5, Romans 16:21, 1 Corinthians 4:17, 2 Corinthians 1:19, 1 Thessalonians 3:2, 1 Timothy 1:2, and 2 Timothy 1:2**?

2. What title does Paul give both himself and Timothy in **verse 1**? What does this word mean? How should this help us understand a key component of the Christian life?

3. Who is Paul writing to according to the second half of **verse 1**? What title does he give them and what does that word mean? How should this make us joyful? Where do these “saints” reside? What do we learn about the origins of the church at Philippi in **Acts 16:6-40**?

4. Which two church offices does Paul mention in **verse 1**? How does **1 Timothy 3:1-13** shed light on these offices? What do we learn about Church government in **verse 1**?

5. What does Paul want the saints at Philippi to receive, according to **verse 2**? What do these words mean? Who is the source of this “grace...and peace”?

6. What do we learn about Paul and the Philippians in **verses 3-5**?

Paul's emphasis on servanthood can be seen in two small but significant variations to the standard opening of a first-century letter. First, with respect to authorship, Paul groups Timothy's name with his own, and then shares with Timothy the title servants or, more precisely, slaves.³ In other letters Paul included the names of his colleagues with himself as virtual coauthors (2 Corinthians, Colossians, Philemon, and 1 and 2 Thessalonians). But when he attached titles to names, he affixed one title to himself and another to his colleagues. We read, for example, of Paul the apostle and Timothy the brother (2 Corinthians; Colossians), or of Paul the prisoner and Timothy the brother (Philemon). Only in Philippians does Paul open an epistle by associating a colleague with himself and then link their names with a shared title, "slaves of Christ Jesus." Why would he do this here and not elsewhere—and, specifically, why choose the title slaves to describe himself and Timothy?

The Philippians need to see dramatized in Paul and in Timothy the counterintuitive truth that these men bear God's authority because Christ has captivated them as his slaves. Paul and Timothy are living proof that those whom Jesus saves he enslaves. In their self-centered preoccupations and competing agendas, Paul's Philippian friends need to see what joyful slavery looks like, up close and personal.

– Johnson, Dennis E.. *Philippians (Reformed Expository Commentaries)* (p. 8). P&R Publishing. Kindle Edition.

Study 2

HE WILL BRING IT TO COMPLETION

Philippians 1:6-8

WE ARE THE WORK OF HIS HANDS; THEREFORE HE WILL COMPLETE WHAT HE HAS BEGUN IN US BY JOHN CALVIN

An additional ground of joy is furnished in his confidence in them for the time to come. But some one will say, why should men dare to assure themselves for to-morrow amidst so great an infirmity of nature, amidst so many impediments, ruggednesses, and precipices? Paul, assuredly, did not derive this confidence from the steadfastness or excellence of men, but simply from the fact, that God had manifested his love to the Philippians. And undoubtedly this is the true manner of acknowledging God's benefits when we derive from them occasion of hoping well as to the future. For as they are tokens at once of his goodness, and of his fatherly benevolence towards us, what ingratitude were it to derive from this no confirmation of hope and good courage! In addition to this, God is not like men, so as to be wearied out or exhausted by conferring kindness. Let, therefore, believers exercise themselves in constant meditation upon the favors which God confers, that they may encourage and confirm hope as to the time to come, and always ponder in their mind this syllogism: God does not forsake the work which his own hands have begun, as the Prophet bears witness, (Psalms 138:8 ; Isaiah 64:8;) we are the work of his hands; therefore he will complete what he has begun in us. When I say that we are the work of his hands, I do not refer to mere creation, but to the calling by which we are adopted into the number of his sons. For it is a token to us of our election, that the Lord has called us effectually to himself by his Spirit.

– Calvin, John. Calvin On The Bible: John Calvins Bible Commentary (Kindle Locations 240187-240201). Kindle Edition.

PERSEVERANCE FLOWS FROM JUSTIFICATION BENJAMIN KEACH

Q. 40. What are the benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification?

A. The benefits which in this life do accompany or flow from justification, adoption, and sanctification, are, assurance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Spirit, increase of grace, and perseverance therein to the end. (Rom. 5:1-5; 14:17; Prov. 4:18; 1 Peter 1:5; 1 John 5:13)

– Benjamin Keach, *The Baptist Catechism Question 40*. <http://www.ekklesiamuskogee.church/the-baptist-catechism/>

[illegible]

1. What is Paul sure of in **verse 6**? Who is the “he” in **verse 6**? What will “he” do? What does Paul mean by “began a good work in you”? What does he mean by “will bring it to completion”? What is “the day of Jesus Christ”? How does **Romans 8:28-30** help clarify?

2. In **verse 7**, why does Paul say “It is right for me to feel this way about you”? **hint. Notice the word “because.”* What does Paul mean by “I hold you in my heart”? How does **2 Corinthians 7:2-4** help clarify? What do you think Paul means by “for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel”?

Study 3

PAUL'S PRAYER

Philippians 1:9-11

A WAR TIME WALKIE-TALKIE, NOT A DOMESTIC INTERCOM

BY JOHN PIPER

If you are like me, you find that from time to time your prayer life needs a jolt out of the rut it has fallen into. We tend to use the same phrases over and over. We tend to default to worn out phrases (like the word *default*). We fall into patterns of mindless repetition.

The devil hates prayer. Our own flesh does not naturally love it. Therefore, it does not come full-born and complete and passionate from the womb of our heart. It takes ever renewed discipline.

Years ago, when I wrote *Let the Nations Be Glad*, I argued that prayer is a wartime walkie-talkie, not a domestic intercom. God is more like a general in Command Central than a butler waiting to bring you another pillow in the den. Of course, he is also Father, Lover, Friend, Physician, Shepherd, Helper, King, Savior, Lord, Counselor. But in this fallen “world with devils filled,” prayer will function best when we keep the frequency tuned to Command Central in the fight of faith.

So when I wrote that book, I gathered into one place all the things the early church prayed for. I printed this out for myself, and it has proven to be one of those “jolts” that I need. I thought you might find it helpful. You might want to print it out and keep it for a while in your Bible to guide you in your praying.

It is a great confidence-builder in prayer to know that you are not quirky in your praying. To pray what the New Testament prays is a safe and powerful way to pray.

Prayer remains one of the great and glorious mysteries of the universe — that the all-knowing, all-wise, all-sovereign God should ordain to run his world in response to our prayers is mind-boggling. But that is the uniform witness of Scripture. God hears and answers the prayers of his people. Oh, do not neglect this amazing way of influencing nations and movements and institutions and churches and people's hearts, especially your own.

— John Piper, in an article titled *What Should We Pray For?*, <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/what-should-we-pray-for>

[illegible]

1. What does Paul pray for according to **verse 9**? What do these words mean? Is this like or different than typical prayer requests you have witnessed? How can you better pray like the Holy Spirit guides us to in the Bible rather than how our flesh would guide us to?

[illegible]

2. What does Paul desire to come about from answered prayer, according to **verse 10**? **hint: notice the words “so that.”* What do these words mean in **verse 10**? What is “the day of Christ”?

[illegible]

3. According to **verse 11**, what does Paul desire the Philippians to be filled with? What does he mean? How can **Galatians 5:22-24** help clarify? Where does this “fruit of righteousness” come from? Why does it come through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone, according to the last part of **verse 11**?

OF GOOD WORKS THE 1689 BAPTIST CONFESSION OF FAITH

1. Good Works are only such as God hath (a) commanded in his Holy word; and not such as without the warrant thereof, are devised by men, out of blind zeal, (b) or upon any pretense of good intentions.

(a Mic. 6.8. Heb. 13 21. b Mat. 15.9. Isa. 29.13.)

2. These good works, done in obedience to Gods commandments, are the fruits, and evidences (c) of a true, and lively faith; and by them Believers manifest their (d) thankfulness, strengthen their (e) assurance, edify their (f) brethren, adorn the profession of the Gospel, stop the mouths of the adversaries and glorify (g) God whose workmanship they are, created in Christ Jesus (h) thereunto, that having their fruit unto holiness, they may have the end (i) eternal life.

(d Ps. 116.12,13. e 1 Joh. 2 3.5. 2 Pet. 1.5-11. f Mat. 5.16. g 1 Tim. 6.1. 1 Pet. 2.15. Phil. 1.11 h Eph. 2.10. i Rom. 6.22.)

– The 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith, Chapter 26 - Of Good Works, <http://www.ekkleIAMuskogee.church/the-1689-baptist-confession/>

Study 4

THE ADVANCE OF THE GOSPEL

Philippians 1:12-14

WILL YOU BE ABLE TO REJOICE? BY JOHN PIPER

We all dream now and then of suffering for righteousness' sake. We dream of suffering nobly — even heroically — for Jesus's sake. But what will you feel when the authorities and the crowds and the media distort your cause and tell the whole world not that you are a noble person with courage suffering for righteousness but that you are a deluded, extremist fanatic? In following Jesus you are following just another Theudas, just another Judas of Galilee, just another David Koresh.

Will you be able to rejoice with the apostles that you were shamed in this way — that you were misunderstood and misinterpreted and slandered?. Will you be so secure in God and so confident in his truth that you will rejoice?

– John Piper, in a sermon titled *Fearlessness as a Sign of Destruction and Salvation*, <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/fearlessness-as-a-sign-of-destruction-and-salvation>

[illegible]

1. What does Paul want his brothers and sisters in Christ to know, according to **verses 12-13**? What is he referring to when he says “what has happened to me”? What has his imprisonment produced in the “imperial guard”? Who is this all “for” according to the end of **verse 13**? What can we learn here concerning how Jesus advances the gospel in the world?

2. What did Paul’s suffering for Jesus’ sake do to “most of the brothers” according to the first part of **verse 14**? This is crucial: who are they confident “in”? What can we learn here concerning how Jesus advances the gospel in the world?

3. According to the second part of **verse 14**, what did this “confidence in the Lord” result in? What can we learn here concerning how Jesus advances the gospel in the world?

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

GOD HAS ORDAINED THE ENDS AND THE MEANS

THE 1689 BAPTIST CONFESSION OF FAITH

6. As God hath appointed the Elect unto glory, so he hath by the eternal and most free purpose of his will, fore-ordained (o) all the means thereunto, wherefore they who are elected, being fallen in Adam, (p) are redeemed by Christ, are effectually (q) called unto faith in Christ, by his spirit working in due season, are justified, adopted, sanctified, and kept by his power through faith (r) unto salvation; neither are any other redeemed by Christ, or effectually called, justified, adopted, sanctified, and saved, but the Elect (s) only.

(o 1 Pet. 1.2. 2 Thes. 2.13. p 1 Thes. 5.9,10. q Rom. 8.30. 2 Thes. 2.13. r 1 Pet. 1.5. s Joh. 10.26. Joh. 17.9. Joh. 6.64.)

– The 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith, *Chapter 3 - Of God's Decree*, <http://www.ekklesiamuskogee.church/the-1689-baptist-confession/>

Study 5

IF CHRIST BE PROCLAIMED WE MUST REJOICE

Philippians 1:15-18a

PROCLAIMING CHRIST BY R.C. SPROUL

“Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ” (Col. 1:28).

Addressing a congregation that struggled with false teachers who promoted elitism, the apostle Paul has been unafraid in Colossians 1 to stress that the gospel is for everyone. Instead of a message that bears fruit only among the most educated or most spiritual, the true gospel finds adherents the world over (vv. 5a–6). It will achieve a cosmic restoration, for nothing can go untouched by the Savior’s work (vv. 19–20). Furthermore, if these statements of the universality of the gospel and the sufficiency of the Savior are not enough, Paul tells us in verse 28 that his ministry is to proclaim Christ, “warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom.” Jesus is not to be proclaimed to a mere few — He must be preached to everyone.

Warning and teaching are the two sides to the apostle’s work. The warning aspect of Christian proclamation entails admonishing professing believers who are tempted to stray from the faith. Following the apostolic model, we exhort others, whether or not we are ordained pastors, to hold fast to the biblical Jesus in all circumstances (Acts 20:29–31; 1 Cor. 4:14; Heb. 6:1–12). Teaching sets forth Christian truth to edify the body of Christ (1 Tim. 4:13; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 John 9). All believers have a share in the teaching ministry. Some may be ordained to the teaching office, but all believers, in whom Christ’s Word dwells richly, teach and admonish one another in all wisdom, at least informally (Col. 3:16). Likewise, we must readily hear instruction in the Word at all times and throughout our entire lives. John Calvin writes, “No one is so eminent in respect of wisdom as to be entitled to exempt himself from tuition [instruction].”

Paul — indeed all Christians — work to present “everyone mature in Christ” — equipped and ready to fulfill the specific work that the Father has given to each of us (Col. 1:28). This can be a toil and a struggle (v. 29), as any full-time preacher would readily confess. But the work of Christian instruction is indeed difficult for us all, for even if our children are our only students, it can be discouraging to instruct them again and again when it seems that they are just not understanding Jesus and who they are to be in Him. Thankfully, like Paul, we have been empowered by the Spirit and will receive the strength necessary to endure in teaching His truth as we rely on Him (v. 29; see also Phil. 4:13).

Coram Deo

God calls all of us to take part in the teaching ministry of the church, though not all of us have the same role. Some will be ordained teachers. Others will

1. What are the two groups of gospel preachers Paul lists in **verse 15**? What do these words mean? What can we learn from this?

2. Why do those who preach the gospel “from good will” do what they do, according to **verse 16**? Why do those who preach the gospel “from envy and rivalry” do what they do, according to **verse 17**? What do these words mean? What can we learn from this?

3. In **verse 18a**, how does Paul respond to these two groups of gospel preachers? Does this mean Paul does not care about the particulars of the gospel message? How does **Galatians 1:6-9** help clarify? Therefore, what *does* Paul mean and what does he *not* mean here in **Philippians 1:18a**?

[illegible]**FOR THAT HE COULD REJOICE** BY R.C. SPROUL

“Now therefore, my son, obey my voice. Arise, flee to Laban my brother in Haran and stay with him a while, until your brother’s fury turns away” (Gen. 27:43-44).

In Philippians 1:15–17, the apostle Paul expresses his great joy over the advance of the Gospel. Though it is true that some were preaching about Christ out of sinful motives like envy and rivalry, Paul is still encouraged by the truth that is pouring forth from the lips of such preachers. The kingdom of God was increasing in his day, and for that he could rejoice.

Throughout the history of the Lord's people, the message of salvation has continued its march even though believers have not always been true to the Master's call. People have been slaughtered in the name of Jesus. Church offices have been bought and sold. Christians have oftentimes willingly equated the Gospel with a particular culture. Yet for all this error, the kingdom keeps growing and spreading even into the darkest corners of the earth (Matt. 16:18).

Isaac's blessings on Jacob and Esau show that, from the beginning of His church, God's kingdom has grown despite the sin of His people. No one in Genesis 27 has behaved admirably. Isaac favors Esau, ignoring the usual custom of blessing both sons at the same time (vv. 1–4). Rebekah favors Jacob

to the point where she deceives her husband without calling him to heed the Lord's word for their boys (vv. 5–17). Jacob willingly stoops to deception (vv. 18–29), and Esau fails to repent for earlier despising his birthright (vv. 30–40). Yet in the end, the Lord's election of Jacob is confirmed (25:23; 27:27–29), albeit through the twisted machinations of His servants.

God will have His way, even if He chooses to use our weaknesses to achieve His purposes. Yet Genesis 27 also shows us that we must not stoop to deception to achieve His good ends. Lasting hatred between the sons of Esau and Jacob results from this episode (vv. 39–41). Rebekah and Jacob get the blessing they wanted, but Rebekah will have to send her favorite son away, never to see him again (vv. 42–45). Others will get the better of Jacob (29:1–30), and he will spend most of his final years mourning for the loss of his own son, Joseph (37:12–36; 42:36; 45:28). Our disobedience cannot thwart God's plans, but He will surely discipline His children for sinning against Him (Heb. 12:7–11).

Coram Deo

Though God's grace was poured out lavishly despite His people's wickedness, we must never sin so that grace may abound (Rom. 5:12–6:4). Are you guilty of using an “ends justify the means” theology to achieve a good goal? For example, maybe you have taken a job that troubles your conscience in order to get through school or earn extra money. Whatever the case, strive to please God with the ends you seek and the means you use to get there.

– R.C. Sproul, in a devotional titled *A Mother's Advice*, <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/mothers-advice/>

Study 6

TO LIVE IS CHRIST AND TO DIE IS GAIN

Philippians 1:18b-26

IMMEDIATELY PASS INTO GLORY BY BENJAMIN KEACH

Q. 41. What benefits do believers receive from Christ at death?

A. The souls of believers are at death made perfect in holiness, and do immediately pass into glory, and their bodies, being still united to Christ, do rest in their graves till the resurrection. (Heb. 12:23; Phil. 1:23; 2 Cor. 5:8; Luke 23:43; 1 Thess 4:14; Is. 57:2; Job 19:26)

— Benjamin Keach, *The Baptist Catechism Question 41*, <http://www.ekklesiamuskogee.church/the-baptist-catechism/>

READY TO DIE; ABLE TO LIVE BY STEVEN J. LAWSON

No one is ready to live until they are ready to die.

You must know that the end of your life is certain before you will joyfully risk danger day by day. The end of your life must be secure before the present can be stable. It is only when you know that death will usher you into the presence of God that you will live with fearless faith.

This is precisely where the apostle Paul finds himself. He is a man staring death square in the eyes. Yet he is living with an unwavering mission for the gospel. As the apostle awaits his trial, the news of his imprisonment in Rome has reached the church in Philippi. His former flock is deeply concerned for the welfare of this man who is their spiritual father. In response, the believers in Philippi have taken up a collection to pay for the rent he must pay for his house arrest. He is the one who first brought the gospel to them, and so this church is deeply troubled for their previous pastor who is now in chains. They are concerned whether Paul will survive this imprisonment.

Paul wants his friends to know that, if need be, he is ready to die for his faith in Jesus Christ. In fact, he affirms that even if his life is taken, this loss will result in greater gain because his execution will usher him into the immediate presence of Jesus Christ. The Philippians have sought to encourage Paul and now he, in turn, writes to encourage them. He now comforts them with his bold courage in the face of death.

All believers who know for certain that Jesus Christ is Lord and Savior share this same certain future. For those in Christ, death becomes the means of graduating to glory and gaining access into the presence of Christ. Such a sure hope gives us confidence to live day by day to the fullest. This certainty regarding death is liberating as we live our daily lives.

— Lawson, Steven. *Philippians For You: Shine with joy as you live by faith (God's Word For You Book 18)* (pp. 61-62). The Good Book Company. Kindle Edition.

[illegible]

1. According to **verse 18b** how is this Christian life to be lived? How does **2 Corinthians 6:10** help clarify?

2. What does Paul “know” in **verse 19**? What can we learn here concerning how the Christian life is to be lived?

3. According to **verse 20**, what is Paul's "eager expectation and hope"? Why does Paul want to be "[unashamed]...with full courage" according to the last part of **verse 20**? What does it mean for "Christ to be honored in my body"?

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

4. What does Paul mean in **verse 21**? How do **verses 22-25** help clarify? Restate **verse 21** in your own words, paraphrasing what Paul is meaning here.

[illegible]

Death is a great loss to a carnal, worldly man, for he loses all his earthly comforts and all his hopes; but to a true believer it is gain, for it is the end of all his weakness and misery. It delivers him from all the evils of life, and brings him to possess the chief good. The apostle's difficulty was not between living in this world and living in heaven; Christ out of envy and contention, and to add affliction to the bonds that oppressed this best of men! The apostle was easy in the midst of all. Since our troubles may tend to the good of many, we ought to rejoice. Whatever turns to our salvation, is by the Spirit of Christ; and prayer is the appointed means of seeking for it. Our earnest expectation and hope should not be to be honored of men, or to escape the cross, but to be upheld amidst temptation, contempt, and affliction. Let us leave it to Christ, which way he will make us serviceable to his glory, whether by labor or suffering, by diligence or patience, by living to his honor in working for him, or dying to his honor in suffering for him.

— Henry, Matthew. *Whole Bible Commentary* (Nelson's Concise Series) (Kindle Locations 26243-26250). Packard Technologies. Kindle Edition.

Study 7

WORTHY OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST

Philippians 1:27-30

INDIFFERENCE MAY BE WORSE THAN HOSTILITY

BY DENNIS E. JOHNSON

What do the Christians of first-century Philippi have in common with Christians in the twenty-first century? Both belong to marginalized minorities in societies driven by values that contradict our deepest commitments as followers of Jesus. I am not instinctively pessimistic, but sometimes it is hard to pay attention to the drift of things in our world and our society without an uneasy sense of approaching doom, of things falling apart that were more “together” (or seemed so) when I was growing up.

From a global perspective, to be sure, we see hopeful signs that the church is growing numerically in much of the developing world. In nations once thought completely closed to the gospel of Christ, tiny pockets of Christian believers are gathering and drawing others to encounter the Word of God. Yet despite this growth—and sometimes because of it—followers of Jesus in societies dominated by Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Marxism experience social rejection, political oppression, economic hardship, and even violent persecution.

Even in countries and cultures that were once molded by the convictions and commitments of Christ’s followers, we now see signs of societal decay that seem virtually impossible to reverse and repair. I am troubled by questions such as these:

- Do Europe and North America have the self-discipline and courage to resist international terrorism that is driven by religious conviction, while we in the West live for pleasure and entertainment?
- Will we recover the will to say “No” to escalating violence and explicit sensuality in our own entertainment media, while violence invades our schools, shopping malls, city streets, and suburban neighborhoods, and while sexual exploitation invades our homes through the Internet?
- Will the social atmosphere become even more coercively controlled by the idols of moral and ideological relativism and tolerance, so that in time the only intolerable minority will be the one that affirms our divine Creator and his norms for human desires and conduct?

For all these reasons, it is easy to start thinking that people who are serious about following Jesus are now, or will soon find themselves to be, a beleaguered, misunderstood, despised minority surrounded by a society that is indifferent at best and hostile at worst to the Lord whom we trust and serve. Then again, indifference may be worse than hostility.

— Johnson, Dennis E.. *Philippians (Reformed Expository Commentaries)* (pp. 84-85). P&R Publishing. Kindle Edition.

[illegible]

1. According to **verse 27**, *how* will “our manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ”? What does Paul mean by “striving side by side for the faith of the gospel”? How does Jude 3 help clarify in what sense Paul uses the word “faith” here?

2. In **verse 28**, what is another clear way we “let [our] manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ”? What is a “clear sign” to someone of their “destruction”? What is a “clear sign” to someone of their “salvation”? Who is the salvation from?

3. According to **verse 29**, what has been granted to Christians? How should the gift of faith assure you of God's love? How should the gift of suffering for Jesus' sake strengthen you in afflictions?

[illegible]

4. What is this conflict of which Paul writes in **verse 30**? What can we learn from this?

[illegible]

As a high honour not only to believe (though that is a great matter; for he that believeth hath set to his seal that God is true, hath given God a testimonial, such as is that Deuteronomy 32:4), but also (as a further favour) to suffer for his sake: this is the lowest subjection that can be to God, but the highest honour both to him and us. This made Latimer, after the sentence pronounced on him, cry out, "I thank God most heartily for this honour." Saunders said, "I am the unmeetest man for this high office that ever was appointed to it." "Such an honour it is," said Careless, martyr, "as the greatest angel in heaven is not permitted to have. God forgive me mine unthankfulness."

— Trapp, John. John Trapp's Complete Bible Commentary. Note on Philippians 1:29.

COUNT OTHERS MORE SIGNIFICANT

Q. What do you understand by "the communion of saints"?

Second, that each member should consider it a duty to use these gifts readily and joyfully for the service and enrichment of the other members.²

2 Rom. 12:4-8; 1 Cor. 12:20-27; 13:1-7; Phil. 2:4-8

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

1. What does Paul hope to see in the lives of these Philippian Christians according to **verse 1**? What do each of these mean?

2. According to **verse 2**, what will “complete [Paul’s] joy”? What does it mean to “[be] of the same mind”? What does it mean to “[have] the same love”? What does it mean to “[be] in full accord and of one mind”?

3. Humility is truly the theme of **verses 1-4**. What will the humble Christian's life look like according to **verse 3**? What does "selfish ambition" mean? What does "conceit" mean? Do you count others more significant than yourself? If not, how can you start? If so, how can you grow in that grace?

4. What is Paul *not* saying in **verse 4**? What *is* he saying? Look ahead to **verses 5-7**. What is the root of such humility?

The Christian life is full of opposites that seem to contradict themselves. We must die to self if we would live for Christ. We must declare spiritual bankruptcy if we would be rich. We must mourn if we would be happy. We must hunger if we would be satisfied. We must lose our life if we would save it, but if we save our life we will lose it.

But perhaps the greatest apparent contradiction is what we have before us in this chapter: We must humble ourselves if we are to be exalted.

"Humility" is a word that means to think or to judge ourselves with lowliness. The idea is for someone "not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment" (Romans 12:3). It is sometimes said that "Humility is one of those things that if you think you have it, you don't." Humility, in the truest sense of the word, is a central tenet of the Christian faith.

The Greeks, however, did not even have a word for humility, because it was considered of such a low value. The concept was entirely foreign to the Greeks and utterly abhorrent to the Romans. The word for humility was coined when the church was birthed. Some speculate that the word was even invented by Paul himself in writing these verses.

For a believer, humility is the most foundational of all Christian virtues. No one struts through the narrow gate that leads into the kingdom. No one high-steps their way down the narrow path. We are sheep, not peacocks; servants, not sovereigns. If Christ is to fill our lives, we must empty ourselves. If Christ is to increase, we must decrease. Paul wrote to the Colossian church, "As you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him" (Colossians 2:6). We received him in humility. Therefore, we must walk in ever-increasing humility. The more we mature spiritually, the more humble we must become.

This virtue of humility is the central theme that runs through Philippians 2:1-11. The actual word "humility" is found in verse 3, but the concept is seen throughout this entire section. Paul calls upon the believers in Philippi to put on humility (v 3) as they carry out their ministry (v 4) in order to preserve their unity (v 1-2). In order to show us how to do so, the apostle will point to the Lord Jesus Christ as the supreme example in understanding true humility (verses 5-11).

— Lawson, Steven. *Philippians For You: Shine with joy as you live by faith* (God's Word For You Book 18) (pp. 89-90). The Good Book Company. Kindle Edition.

Study 9

CHRIST’S EXAMPLE OF HUMILITY
Philippians 2:4-11

WHEREIN DID CHRIST’S HUMILIATION CONSIST?
THE BAPTIST CATECHISM QUESTION 31

A. Christ’s humiliation consisted in His being born, and that in a low condition, made under the law, undergoing the miseries of this life, the wrath of God, and the cursed death of the cross, in being buried, and continuing under the power of death for a time.

(Luke 2:7; Gal. 4:4; Is. 53:3; Luke 22:44; Matt. 27:46; Phil. 2:8; Matt. 12:40; Mark 15:45,46)

NOTES:

1. Read **verse 5**. In what sense does Paul use the word “mind”? What does Paul mean by “Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus”? How do **Romans 15:3** and **Matthew 11:29** help clarify?

[illegible]

2. Read **verses 6-7**. What do we learn about Jesus in these verses? What does Paul mean by “he was in the form of God”? How does **John 5:18** help clarify? In what sense did Jesus “[empty] himself”? How does the following part of the verse help clarify what he *does* and *does not* mean?

[illegible]

3. According to **verse 8**, what is the pinnacle of Jesus' humility? Why did Jesus "[humble] himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross"? How does this stir your love for Jesus and encourage you to humble yourself?

4. "Therefore" what has God the Father done because of Jesus' humility, according to **verses 9-11**? What will every single person eventually do before Christ? To what end will they "bow" and "confess that Jesus Christ is Lord"? What does Paul mean by "bow" and "confess"? Do you "bow" before Jesus? Do you "confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father"?

This emptying is the same as the abasement, as to which we shall see afterwards. The expression, however, is used, *ευμφοτικωτέρας*, (more emphatically,) to mean, being brought to nothing. Christ, indeed, could not divest himself of Godhead; but he kept it concealed for a time, that it might not be seen, under the weakness of the flesh. Hence he laid aside his glory in the view of men, not by lessening it, but by concealing it.

It is asked, whether he did this as man? Erasmus answers in the affirmative. But where was the form of God before he became man? Hence we must reply, that Paul speaks of Christ wholly, as he was God manifested in the flesh, (1 Timothy 3:16) but, nevertheless, this emptying is applicable exclusive to his humanity, as if I should say of man, “Man being mortal, he is exceedingly senseless if he thinks of nothing but the world,” I refer indeed to man wholly; but at the same time I ascribe mortality only to a part of him, namely, to the body. As, then, Christ has one person, consisting of two natures, it is with propriety that Paul says, that he who was the Son of God, in reality equal to God, did nevertheless lay aside his glory, when he in the flesh manifested himself in the appearance of a servant.

It is also asked, secondly, how he can be said to be emptied, while he, nevertheless, invariably proved himself, by miracles and excellences, to be the Son of God, and in whom, as John testifies, there was always to be seen a glory worthy of the Son of God? (John 1:14). I answer, that the abasement of the flesh was, notwithstanding, like a vail, by which his divine majesty was concealed. On this account he did not wish that his transfiguration should be made public until after his resurrection; and when he perceives that the hour of his death is approaching, he then says, Father, glorify thy Son. (John 17:1) Hence, too, Paul teaches elsewhere, that he was declared to be the Son of God by means of his resurrection. (Romans 1:4). He also declares in another place, (2 Corinthians 13:4) that he suffered through the weakness of the flesh. In fine, the image of God shone forth in Christ in such a manner, that he was, at the same time, abased in his outward appearance, and brought down to nothing in the estimation of men; for he carried about with him the form of a servant, and had assumed our nature, expressly with the view of his being a servant of the Father, nay, even of men. Paul, too, calls him the Minister of the Circumcision, (Romans 15:8) and he himself testifies of himself, that he came to minister, (Matthew 20:28) and that same thing had long before been foretold by Isaiah — *Behold my servant*, etc.

— Calvin, John. Calvin On The Bible: John Calvins Bible Commentary (Kindle Locations 240686-240712). Kindle Edition.

Study 10

WORK, FOR IT IS GOD WHO WORKS IN YOU

Philippians 2:12-13

WE MUST BE DILIGENT BY MATTHEW HENRY

We must be diligent in the use of all the means which lead to our salvation, persevering therein to the end. With great care, lest, with all our advantages, we should come short. Work out your salvation, for it is God who worketh in you. This encourages us to do our utmost, because our labor shall not be in vain: we must still depend on the grace of God. The working of God's grace in us, is to quicken and engage our endeavors. God's goodwill to us, is the cause of his good work in us. Do your duty without murmurings. Do it, and do not find fault with it. Mind your work, and do not quarrel with it. By peaceableness; give no just occasion of offense. The children of God should differ from the sons of men. The more perverse others are, the more careful we should be to keep ourselves blameless and harmless. The doctrine and example of consistent believers will enlighten others, and direct their way to Christ and holiness, even as the light-house warns mariners to avoid rocks, and directs their course into the harbor. Let us try thus to shine. The gospel is the word of life, it makes known to us eternal life through Jesus Christ. Running, denotes earnestness and vigor, continual pressing forward; laboring, denotes constancy, and close application. It is the will of God that believers should be much in rejoicing; and those who are so happy as to have good ministers, have great reason to rejoice with them.

— Henry, Matthew. *Whole Bible Commentary (Nelson's Concise Series)* (Kindle Locations 26280-26290). Packard Technologies. Kindle Edition.

[illegible]

1. In light of Christ's humility by which he saved us, what does Paul command in **verse 12**? How does **Hebrews 5:8-9** help clarify?

2. How do **Romans 8:12-13** and **2 Corinthians 5:5** help us understand how we “work out our own salvation with fear and trembling”?

3. According to **verses 13**, who is it that is working in us as we “work out [our] own salvation with fear and trembling”? To what end is God working in us according to the last part of **verse 13**?

4. What danger do we fall into if we live only according to **verse 12**? What danger do we fall into if we live only according to **verse 13**?

God works in converted men a will to that which is spiritually good; which is to be understood, not of the formation of the natural faculty of the will; or of the preservation of it, and its natural liberty; or of the general motion of it to natural objects; nor of his influence on it in a providential way; but of the making of it good, and causing a willingness in it to that which is spiritually good. Men have no will naturally to come to Christ, or to have him to reign over them; they have no desire, nor hungerings and thirstings after his righteousness and salvation; wherever there are any such inclinations and desires, they are wrought in men by God; who works upon the stubborn and inflexible will, and, without any force to it, makes the soul willing to be saved by Christ, and submit to his righteousness, and do his will; he sweetly and powerfully draws it with the cords of love to himself, and to his Son, and so influences it by his grace and spirit, and which he continues, that it freely wills everything spiritually good, and for the glory of God: and he works in them also to "do"; for there is sometimes in believers a will, when there wants a power of doing. God therefore both implants in them principles of action to work from, as faith and love, and a regard for his glory, and gives them grace and strength to work with, without which they can do nothing, but having these, can do all things: and all this is "of his good pleasure"; the word "his" not being in the original text, some have taken the liberty to ascribe this to the will of man; and so the Syriac version renders it, "אנתון דצבין", "which ye will", or according to your good will; but such a sense is both bad and senseless; for if they have a good will of themselves, what occasion is there for God to work one in them? no; these internal operations of divine power and grace are not owing to the will of men, nor to any merits of theirs, or are what God is obliged to do, but what flow from his sovereign will and pleasure; who works when, where, and as he pleases, and that for his own glory; and who continues to do so in the hearts of his people; otherwise, notwithstanding the work of grace in them, they would find very little inclination to, and few and faint desires after spiritual things; and less strength to do what is spiritually good; but God of his good pleasure goes on working what is well pleasing in his sight.

– Gill, John. Gill's Bible Commentary (Kindle Locations 327664-327681). OSNOVA. Kindle Edition.

Study 11

LIGHTS IN THE WORLD

Philippians 2:14-18

WHY IS IMPORTANT NOT TO GRUMBLE OR DISPUTE?

BY STEVEN J. LAWSON

Why is it important not to grumble or dispute? "So that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world" (v 15). This introduces the purpose or explanation of why grumbling and disputing must be abandoned—it is so that the light of Christ might shine through believers.

The word "blameless" (*ameptos*) means deserving no censure; being free from fault. It does not mean sinless, but being without obvious moral defect or blatant ethical blemish. Sinless perfection in this life is impossible, but to be "blameless" is possible—and part of blameless living requires that we live without complaining and murmuring. Put another way, it should not be possible for the charge of grumbling and arguing to be justly leveled at us.

Paul charges the Philippians to prove by the manner of their lives that they are genuine "children of God." They must give convincing evidence that they have been birthed into the family of God. To live "above reproach" (*amometas*) carries the same idea of being blameless. It means to be without blemish or imperfection. The challenge in regard to this kind of holy living is that believers (then and now) find themselves "in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation." The fact is, every generation is characterized by this crookedness. "Crooked" (*skolios*) is a very strong word for Paul to choose—it means winding, curved, twisted; while "perverse" (*diastrepho*) means to be distorted or to be turned aside:

"People who are crooked are 'morally warped.' They cannot be trusted. They have arrived at this terrible condition by having turned and twisted themselves in different directions, but always away from the straight path pointed out by the law of God." (Hendriksen, Philippians, page 124)

So Paul's words here instruct believers to prove themselves to be different from the crooked and perverse generation in which they live.

– Lawson, Steven. *Philippians For You: Shine with joy as you live by faith* (God's Word For You Book 18) (pp. 112-113). The Good Book Company. Kindle Edition.

[illegible]

1. What things are we commanded to do “without grumbling or disputing” in **verse 14**? What does Paul mean by “grumbling”? What does Paul mean by “disputing”?

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2. To what end are we to “do all things without grumbling or disputing” according to **verse 15**? How does Paul describe the public witness of the Christian? How does Paul describe those not united to Christ by faith?

[illegible]

3. According to **verse 16**, what must we “[hold] fast to” if we are going to live “as lights in the world”? What does Paul mean by “so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain”?

4. According to **verses 17-18**, what else marks the Christian life besides “[shining] as lights in the world”? What does Paul mean by “poured out as a drink offering”? How should this encourage you as you suffer for Jesus’ sake? What does Paul say we “should be” in **verse 18**?

“As lights in the world” (*φωτηρες*), luminaries, great lights, such are the sun and moon, that give light to others. Some wicked have greater common gifts than the godly; as many metals are brighter and more orient than the heavens: yet as those metals are not fit to convey the light of the sun, nay indeed they would stop it; so neither are the wicked fit to shine the true light into us; but Christ and Christians, those lights of the world. Such as Chrysostom was, whom Theodore (*styleth eximium orbis terrarum luminare*), a famous light of the Church; and others said, that the sunlight might better be spared than Chrysostom’s preaching.

– Trapp, John. John Trapp's Complete Bible Commentary. Kindle Edition.

Study 12

SERVANTS WHO RISKED THEIR LIVES

Philippians 2:19-30

THOSE WHOM YOU LEAD DO NOT SERVE YOU BY DENNIS E. JOHNSON

Paul is so keenly aware that he and his “son” Timothy stand together on the ground of God’s grace that he chooses his words deliberately and precisely in describing Timothy’s role. It is not that Timothy serves Paul, as ancient fathers would expect to be served by respectful sons; rather, Timothy serves with Paul in the gospel. The verb serve (*douleuō*), which appears only here in Philippians, refers to the service of slaves. It is an echo of the opening of the epistle in which Paul describes himself and Timothy together as “servants [*douloi*] of Christ Jesus” (Phil. 1:1). Moreover, it is an echo of his portrait of the King who stooped to take “the form of a servant [*doulou*]” (2:7), through whose suffering and humiliation Paul and Timothy have been rescued by grace and placed into this humble King’s service. In Timothy’s coming, the Philippians could see Paul’s concern for them. Better yet, in Timothy they can glimpse a reflection of how Jesus Christ cares for their welfare, at the greatest of costs to himself.

It is common in human culture for the perks of power and the right to be served by others to gravitate into certain hands. In traditional cultures, younger generations serve their elders. In other societies, power brokers leverage wealth, physical attractiveness, intelligence, personal charisma, or sheer self-confidence to gather a circle of devotees to do their bidding. Jesus told his friends frankly that this is the way that power and prominence work in the world at large (Mark 10:42). But in his church, the church that belongs to the Son of Man, who “came not to be served but to serve,” leaders’ power is to be placed into humble service to those who are led (10:43–45). The congregation to which you belong is not “Pastor So-and-So’s church.” It is Christ’s church. Every pastor, every elder, and every leader in any sort of ministry must be on guard, lest they forget Paul’s indispensable preposition with. Those whom you lead do not serve you. They serve with you in advancing the gospel.

– Johnson, Dennis E., *Philippians (Reformed Expository Commentaries)* (pp. 178-179). P&R Publishing. Kindle Edition.

[illegible]

1. Read **verses 19-20**. What do we learn about Timothy and therefore about faithful gospel ministry? What do we learn about unfaithful gospel ministry from **verse 21**?

2. According to **verse 22**, how did Paul view Timothy? Why? What did Paul “therefore” want Timothy to do, according to **verses 23-24**?

3. Read **verses 25-27**. What do we learn about Epaphroditus and therefore about faithful gospel ministry?

4. According to **verse 25**, how did Paul view Epaphroditus? According to **verse 27**, how did Paul feel about Epaphroditus? What do we learn about faithful gospel ministry from **verse 30**?

Epaphroditus, whose work we read about in Philippians 2:25–30, was certainly a man of worthy character and a valuable member of the early church. He is described as Paul's "fellow worker" and "fellow soldier," indicating his willingness to suffer alongside the Apostle, and his love for his home church in Philippi is demonstrated in that he was more concerned about the Philippians' worry over his condition than getting over his illness (vv. 25–26). Today's passage tells us even more about the worth of this fine man of God, for Paul tells us that Epaphroditus "nearly died for the work of Christ" (v. 30).

From this comment and its elaboration that Epaphroditus risked his life to complete what was "lacking" in the Philippians' service to Paul (v. 30), we may surmise that Epaphroditus saw the delivery of the Philippians' gift to Paul as his utmost concern (4:18). Nothing would have stopped him from giving the Apostle the support that he desperately needed to survive while in prison. Epaphroditus, an ambassador of the church at Philippi who wanted to serve Paul on his church's behalf, was willing to forfeit his own life if necessary to help sustain Paul's gospel ministry. Apparently, there came a point on his journey to see Paul in Rome where it was very possible, if not likely, that Epaphroditus' illness would bring about his death unless he was willing to stop or postpone his travel. Given the choice to stop and survive or to keep going and die, Epaphroditus chose gospel ministry over his own physical well-being. In this he was much like the Apostle Paul, who willingly endured "afflictions, hardships, calamities," and so forth to preach the gospel to all nations (2 Cor. 6:3–10).

John Calvin comments that "assuredly there is nothing in which we can better serve God, than when we help his servants who labor for the truth of the gospel." This is exactly the view of Paul, for the Apostle wanted the Philippian church to receive Epaphroditus back "in the Lord with all joy" and to honor men who acted similarly (Phil. 2:29). We should therefore learn from this that we are to give respect to those who work in full-time Christian ministry, particularly when they have labored for the Lord over many decades. Let us honor those who honor Christ.

Coram Deo

Those who minister to the people of God full time should be paid the utmost respect and honor. Such respect and honor involve several things, such as taking their input and opinions sincerely and carefully, providing for their material needs, praying for them daily, speaking well about them to others, and much more. May we do our best to honor those who have honored Christ with a lifetime of service in full-time ministry.

– R.C. Sproul, in a devotional titled *Honoring Christ's Servants*, <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/honoring-christs-servants/>

SUPREME JOY IN CHRIST: Philippians 3:1-7

WE PLACE NO CONFIDENCE IN THE FLESH BY JOHN CALVIN

For we are the circumcision that is, we are the true seed of Abraham, and heirs of the testament which was confirmed by the sign of circumcision. For the true circumcision is of the spirit and not of the letter, inward, and situated in the heart, not visible according to the flesh. (Romans 2:29.)

By *spiritual worship* he means that which is recommended to us in the gospel, and consists of confidence in God, and invocation of him, self-renunciation, and a pure conscience. We must supply an antithesis, for he censures, on the other hand, legal worship, which was exclusively pressed upon them by the false Apostles.

“They command that God should be worshipped with outward observances, and because they observe the ceremonies of the law, they boast on false grounds that they are the people of God; but we are the truly circumcised, who worship God in spirit and in truth.” (John 4:23.)

But here some one will ask, whether *truth excludes* the sacraments, for the same thing might be said as to Baptism and the Lord’s Supper. I answer, that this principle must always be kept in view, that figures were abolished by the advent of Christ, and that circumcision gave way to baptism. It follows, also, from this principle, that the pure and genuine worship of God is free from the legal ceremonies, and that believers have the true circumcision without any figure.

And we glory in Christ. We must always keep in view the antithesis. “We have to do with the reality, while they rest in the symbols: we have to do with the substance, while they look to the shadows.” And this suits sufficiently well with the corresponding clause, which he adds by way of contrast— *We have no confidence in the flesh* For under the term *flesh* he includes everything of an external kind in which an individual is prepared to glory, as will appear from the context, or, to express it in fewer words, he gives the name of *flesh* to everything that is apart from Christ. He thus reproves, and in no slight manner, the perverse zealots the law, because, not satisfied with Christ, they have recourse to grounds of glorying apart from him. He has employed the terms glorying, and having confidence, to denote the same thing. For confidence lifts up a man, so that he ventures even to glory, and thus the two things are connected.

– Calvin, John. Calvin On The Bible: John Calvins Bible Commentary (Kindle Locations 241214-241233). Kindle Edition.

[illegible]

1. After giving the Philippian Christians many commands, as well as setting before them the shining examples of Timothy and Epaphroditus, what does Paul “finally” command in **verse 1**? Why do you think he says, “To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you”? What should we learn from this repetition?

2. Next, Paul turns but briefly to warn the Philippians of the false apostles that they are no doubt already aware of. **note the brevity of his warnings concerning these false teachers. If they were truly a threat to the Philippians Paul would have undoubtedly spent more time writing about them as he did to the Galatians.* What does he call them in **verse 2** and what do these terms indicate? How are true believers (“we”) contrasted with these false teachers in **verse 3**? According to the last part of **verse 3**, what marks all true believers in Jesus Christ? Do you put “confidence in the flesh” or do you “glory in Christ” alone “by the Spirit of God”?

3. What is Paul getting at in **verse 4**? Read **verses 5-6**. In what ways does Paul show that if anyone were to have “confidence in the flesh” it would be him? What do all of these things mean? Is your experience consistent with Paul or do you find yourself in a different place when looking at your life?

4. After Paul details all of the “gain” he had—reasons he has to place “confidence in the flesh”—what conclusion does he come to in **verse 7**? Can you, with Paul, say “I count everything as loss for the sake of Christ”? How is this the path to true joy?

I COUNT IT ALL AS LOSS BY JOHN PIPER

Paul Counted His Prior Values as Loss. The way he prepared himself is described in verse 7. "But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ." Paul looks at his standing in the upper-echelons of religious society, the Pharisees; he looks at the glory of being at the very top of that group with all its strokes and applause; he looks at the rigor of his law-keeping and the sense of moral pride he enjoyed; and he prepares to suffer by taking his whole world and turning it upside down, by reversing his values: "Whatever things were gain to me [that's verses 5–6], those things I have counted as loss."

Before he was a Christian he had a ledger with two columns: one that said, gains, and another that said, losses. On the gain side was the human glory of verses 5–6. On the loss side was the terrible prospect that this Jesus movement might get out of hand and Jesus prove real and win the day. When he met the living Christ on the Damascus road, Paul took a big red pencil and wrote "LOSS" in big red letters across his gains column. And he wrote "GAIN" in big letters over the loss column that only had one name in it: Christ.

And not only that, the more Paul thought about the relative values of life in the world and the greatness of Christ, he moved beyond the few things mentioned in verses 5–6 and put everything but Christ in that first column: Verse 8: "More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord." He started by counting his most precious accomplishments as loss, and he ended by counting everything as loss, except Christ.

– John Piper, in a sermon titled *That We May Gain Christ*, <https://www.desiringgod.org/messages/that-we-might-gain-christ>

Study 14

THE SURPASSING WORTH OF KNOWING CHRIST: Philippians 3:8-11

WHAT IS FAITH IN JESUS CHRIST? THE BAPTIST CATECHISM Q 92

A. Faith in Jesus Christ is a saving grace, whereby we receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation, as He is offered to us in the Gospel.

(Heb. 10:39; John 1:12; Phil. 3-9; Gal. 2:15,16)

OF JUSTIFICATION THE 1689 BAPTIST CONFESSION OF FAITH, PARAGRAPH 1

1. Those whom God Effectually calleth, he also freely (a) justifieth, not by infusing Righteousness into them, but by (b) pardoning their sins, and by accounting, and accepting their Persons as (c) Righteous; not for any thing wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone, not by imputing faith it self, the act of beleiving, or any other (d) evangelical obedience to them, as their Righteousness; but by imputing Christs active obedience unto the whole Law, and passive obedience in his death, for their whole and sole Righteousnss, they (e) receiving, and resting on him, and his Righteousness, by Faith; which faith they have not of themselves, it is the gift of God.

a Rom. 3.24. ch. 8.30, b Rom. 4.5,6,7,8. Eph. 1.7. c 1 Cor. 1.30,31. Rom. 5.17 18,19. d Phil. 3.8,9. Eph. 2.8,9,10. e Joh. 1.12. Rom. 5.17.

[illegible]

1. What does Paul “count as loss” according to **verse 8**? Why does he “count everything as loss”? Does he say this theoretically or from experience, according to the rest of **verse 8**? Why has Paul “suffered the loss of all things”?

[illegible]

2. Read **verse 9**. What does it mean to “be found in him”? What is the wrong source of our righteousness before God? Where must our righteousness before God come from? What does our righteousness before God “depend on”?

[illegible]

3. In **verse 10** Paul returns to the subject of *knowing Christ Jesus*. By what “means” does Paul desire to “know him”? Why do you think Paul wants to “attain the resurrection of the dead”?

[illegible]

HE DEEMED ALL THINGS TO BE BUT LOSS BY MATTHEW HENRY

Sincere Christians rejoice in Christ Jesus. The prophet calls the false prophets dumb dogs, Isaiah 56:10; to which the apostle seems to refer. Dogs, for their malice against faithful professors of the gospel of Christ, barking at them and biting them. They urged human works in opposition to the faith of Christ; but Paul calls them evil-workers. He calls them the concision; as they rent the church of Christ, and cut it to pieces. The work of religion is to no purpose, unless the heart is in it, and we must worship God in the strength and grace of the Divine Spirit. They rejoice in Christ Jesus, not in mere outward enjoyments and performances. Nor can we too earnestly guard against those who oppose or abuse the doctrine of free salvation. If the apostle would have gloried and trusted in the flesh, he had as much cause as any man. But the things which he counted gain while a Pharisee, and had reckoned up, those he counted loss for Christ. The apostle did not persuade them to do any thing but what he himself did; or to venture on any thing but that on which he himself ventured his never-dying soul. He deemed all these things to be but loss, compared with the knowledge of Christ, by faith in his person and salvation. He speaks of all worldly enjoyments and outward privileges which sought a place with Christ in his heart, or more perverse others are, the more careful we should be to keep ourselves blameless and harmless. The doctrine and example of consistent

believers will enlighten others, and direct their way to Christ and holiness, even as the light-house warns mariners to avoid rocks, and directs their course into the harbor. Let us try thus to shine. The gospel is the word of life, it makes known to us eternal life through Jesus Christ. Running, denotes earnestness and vigor, continual pressing forward; laboring, denotes constancy, and close application. It is the will of God that believers should be much in rejoicing; and those who are so happy as to have good ministers, have great reason to rejoice with them.

– Henry, Matthew. *Whole Bible Commentary (Nelson's Concise Series)* (Kindle Locations 26299-26290). Packard Technologies. Kindle Edition.

Study 15

STRAINING FORWARD FOR THE PRIZE

Philippians 3:12-16

A NEW PURSUIT BY STEVEN J. LAWSON

Paul states that this new relationship with Christ means a new pursuit after Christ: "Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 3:12). Faith is always active and dynamic, always moving us out and forward. Paul is acknowledging that he has not come to a point in his spiritual life where he can say he has arrived. There is still much spiritual growth for him to realize in his Christian life.

The verb "press on" (*dioko*) means to run or flee, to catch a person or thing. It is a word used of a sprinter running a race. The idea is that he is running swiftly after something, like a runner pressing on to the finish line. Picture the runner widening his stride, pumping his arms, accelerating his legs and pushing out his chest for the finish line. This is Paul's all-out effort to pursue Christ. He understood that Christ Jesus had laid hold of him on the Damascus road, and that he must press forward and lay hold of Christ every day of his life.

Paul knows he has not yet "laid hold of it," and so he does "one thing": "forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead" (v 13). Here is Paul's singular passion to know Christ. He is forgetting the past, with all its failures and defeats. With an all-absorbing effort, Paul is reaching forward to the finish. He will "press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus" (v 14). This goal is the full knowledge of Christ and full likeness to him.

Paul understands he will never fully reach this goal in this lifetime. But nevertheless, he presses on towards this "prize." Hendriksen has a useful insight here:

"When this perfection is called goal, it is viewed as the object of the human striving. When it is called prize, it is viewed as the gift of God's sovereign grace ... Though it is true that this believing and this striving are from start to finish completely dependent on God's grace, nevertheless it is we who must embrace Christ and salvation in him. It is we who must strive to enter in. God does not do this believing and striving for us!" (Philippians, page 175)

As with any race, the prize is received at the end of the race, not during it. When he crosses the finish line—the line between this life and heaven—is when he will be given the prize. When Paul receives this upward call, he will not be found shuffling down the track. Neither will he be sitting down. Rather, he will be sprinting at full speed to the finish tape. And until then, he wants to be as much like Christ as he possibly can be.

— Lawson, Steven. *Philippians For You: Shine with joy as you live by faith* (God's Word For You Book 18) (pp. 166-168). The Good Book Company. Kindle Edition.

[illegible]

1. What has Paul not “already obtained” in **verse 12**? Does this mean he is not yet *justified* or does he mean something else? How does the rest of **verse 12** help clarify?

[illegible]

2. What do we learn about the motivation for the pursuit of holiness from **verse 12**—why does Paul “press on to make [perfection his] own”?

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

3. According to **verse 13-14**, what does Paul “do”? What is it that “lies ahead” that Paul is “straining forward to”? What exactly is the “goal” and “prize”?

4. What is Paul getting at in **verse 15-16**?

for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus: by which is meant, the incorruptible crown; the crown of life, righteousness, and glory, that fadeth not away, Jas 1:12, styled "the prize of the calling of God"; because it is what God in the effectual calling calls his people to, even to a kingdom and glory, and to eternal glory and happiness; of which they have a sight, though but a glimmering view of it, and are blessed with hope in it; in which they rejoice, and see their right unto it, in the righteousness of Christ, and have a meetness for it: this is named "the high calling of God", because God is on high, who calls them to it, in allusion to the judge in the Olympic games, who was placed in an exalted situation, near the mark, with the crown in his hand, which he gave to him that came first; and because the grace by which the saints are called is from above, as every good and perfect gift is, Jas 1:17; and because the prize they are called unto consists of things above, where Jesus is, and is the hope laid up in heaven, Col 1:5, and the inheritance reserved there, 1Pet 1:4; and expresses the great honour and dignity of called ones, who are called to a crown and kingdom, are raised from the dunghill, to sit among princes, and to inherit the throne of glory, and are made kings and priests unto God: and may also denote, that the calling to such high honour is from above, and not below; and is owing to the special grace and favour of God, and not to any merits of men; nor is the prize to which they are called, of him that willeth and runneth, but of God's grace and mercy, Rom 9:16, and moreover, this calling is said to be "in Christ Jesus"; for both the purpose and grace, according to which men are called, are in him; the grace by which they are called, and which is implanted in them when called, is all in and from Christ; the blessings of grace, which they then in person enjoy, are spiritual blessings in him; and even the glory they are called unto is in his hands; not only the promise of eternal life, but that itself; the gift of it is with him, and it comes through him; yea, they are called by him, and said to be the called of Christ Jesus; now the prize of this calling, which is what God has prepared from all eternity, which Christ has in his hands, and will give to all his, and which is of immense richness and eternal duration, and shall be bestowed on all Christian runners, or true believers, is what the apostle was pressing for, pursuing after, with much difficulty, through great toil and labour, diligent searching of the Scriptures, frequent wrestling with God in prayer, and constant attendance on the means of grace, and ordinances of the Gospel.

– Gill, John. Gill's Bible Commentary (Kindle Locations 328340-328359). OSNOVA. Kindle Edition.

Study 16

OUR CITIZENSHIP IS IN HEAVEN

Philippians 3:17–4:1

THAT DUNGHILL DEITY BY JOHN TRAPP

Whose god is their belly. A scavenger, whose living is to empty, is to be preferred before him that liveth but to fill privies; as they do that make their gut their god, that dunghill deity. Such a one was that Pamphagus, Nabal, Dives, and others, that digested in hell what they ate on earth. They say the locust is all belly, which is joined to his mouth and endeth at his tail. The spider also is little else than belly. The dolphin hath his mouth almost in his very belly; the ass-fish hath his heart in his belly. (Solinus. Aristot.) *In mea patria Deus venter est, et in diem vivitur.* In my country (saith Jerome) their belly is their god, they live from hand to mouth, &c. Epicurus said, that eternal life was nothing else but an eternal eating and drinking.

– Trapp, John. *John Trapp's Complete Bible Commentary*. Kindle Edition.

HOW DOES CHRIST'S RESURRECTION BENEFIT US?

THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM, Q&A 45

A. First, by his resurrection he has overcome death, so that he might make us share in the righteousness he obtained for us by his death. ¹

Second, by his power we too are already raised to a new life. ²

Third, Christ's resurrection is a sure pledge to us of our blessed resurrection. ³

¹ Rom. 4:25; 1 Cor. 15:16-20; 1 Pet. 1:3-5. ² Rom. 6:5-11; Eph. 2:4-6; Col. 3:1-4. ³ Rom. 8:11; 1 Cor. 15:12-23; Phil. 3:20-21

[illegible]

1. According to **verse 17**, what is one of the means of grace in Christian sanctification? Are there mature men or women in your life that you can look to as examples and guides? Why is it important to have godly examples, according to **verse 18**?

2. In **verse 19**, how does Paul define those that “walk as enemies of the cross of Christ”? Work backwards in **verse 19** and write down the progression, starting with “minds set on earthly things.”

3. In **verses 20-21**, how are Christians contrasted with those that walk as enemies? Think about the contrast Paul is drawing. According to **verse 20**, what is a Christian's "end"? What is a Christian's "god" or "Lord"? What do Christians "glory in"? Are you awaiting your Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ?

4. After expounding the tremendous hope of future glory with Jesus, what does Paul "Therefore" command in **chapter 4 verse 1**? In addition, what do we learn about the Apostle Paul's heart for these Philippians? What does he mean "my joy and crown"?

TWO CITIES; TWO DESTINIES BY DENNIS E. JOHNSON

In verse 20 Paul names the astonishing reality that has been his subtext throughout the paragraph: “our citizenship is in heaven.” To be a citizen of Philippi was to be a citizen of distant Rome, where Caesar ruled his far-flung empire, with all the attendant privileges and responsibilities. So also Jesus-followers in Philippi, whether their status in society was slave or citizen or something in between, were citizens of a distant cosmic capital, of heaven itself, where their Savior and Lord, Jesus Christ, infinitely mightier than Roman emperors, was ruling the universe.

Paul draws two contrasts between those whose conduct contradicts Christ’s cross and the citizens of heaven who cling to the cross. First, as we have seen, he sets the earthbound mind-set of “many” over against believers’ heavenly identity and citizenship. Writing to the Colossians, he drew the distinction in similar earth-vs.-heaven terms:

If then you have been raised with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth. For you have died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is your life appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. Put to death therefore what is earthly in you: sexual immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. (Col. 3:1–5)

He went on to show that setting our minds on things above is not escapist daydreaming, but having the beauties of heaven and heaven’s King permeate and transform our values and relationships in the present, on the earth:

Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony. (Col. 3:12–14)

Because God’s sheer grace has conferred on heaven’s citizens unimaginable privileges, we are humbled, not haughty; patient, not proud; eager to serve, not demanding service; outgoing toward others, not turned in on ourselves. Heavenly-mindedness is humility in action on earth, serving, forgiving, loving others in everyday life.

The second contrast concerns the different destinies that await those whose thoughts are earthbound and those whose hopes are heavenbound. About the former, Paul states tersely and bluntly, “Their end is destruction.” Schlitz and Dos Equis know how to exploit the desperate longing of shortsighted self-indulgence. If your citizenship is merely earthly, and the grave marks the boundary of your hopes and dreams, you had better grab the gusto and hope it’s enough. But it will not be. For “citizens of earth,” whose perspective never rises beyond the horizon of the here and now, the future is bleak: “Their end is destruction.”

The world wept for Michael Jackson, a pop-music star who died too young, but it could not keep him alive or even turn the brief life he did live into a fairy tale that others would want to live. Long ago a man died at an even younger age, without sedatives or painkillers, his wrists and ankles pierced by spikes driven into a Roman cross. No one had to speculate about the cause of his death: blood loss and asphyxiation did their gruesome task in crucifixions. Yet that young man had already died voluntarily—had chosen to die—by the time his executioners thought they would finish their job. He had predicted, “No one will take my life from me. I lay it down of my own volition.” And he did. But he also took it up again, as he said he would (John 10:17–18). Jesus is the risen and living Lord who makes people like us into citizens of heaven.

In telling the story of Jesus through this epistle, Paul has been rotating our line of vision from the past, when Jesus became “obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross” and God then “highly exalted him” (Phil. 2:8–9); through the present, as we strain forward to seize the prize for which Christ Jesus seized us (3:12–14); and now to the future, when the Savior and Lord who loved us, died and rose for us, and is now working his good pleasure in us (2:12) will return from heaven, our home, to “transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body” (3:21).

The portrait of believers’ destiny that closes Paul’s “tale of two cities” focuses not on a place, but on a person. Other Scriptures give us tantalizing glimpses of heaven and previews of the new heavens and earth, purged of sin and sorrow, that Christ’s glorious return will inaugurate. Here, however, Paul wants us to see that what makes heaven heavenly, what makes our citizenship a source of boundless joy, is the presence of “a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.”

– Johnson, Dennis E., *Philippians (Reformed Expository Commentaries)* (pp. 236-238). P&R Publishing. Kindle Edition.

EXHORTATION, ENCOURAGEMENT, AND PRAYER: Philippians 4:2-9

REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS BY JOHN SARTELLE

“Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice” (Phil. 4:4).

There is a family I have known for many years. I find myself eagerly anticipating every visit to their home. What is the reason for my avid expectation? There is always hospitality, food, and conversation.

However, hospitality, food, and conversation can be found in many places, but a solid, underpinning joy is rare. The foundation of all those characteristics in that home is a genuine joy. That is the reason I am drawn to their abode like a child to candy. Is joy a hallmark of your life and of your home? I am convinced that one of the most powerful testimonies to Christ in our lives is a sensual, spiritual, unabashed, reveling, and unleashed joy.

A Commanded Joy

“Rejoice in the Lord always.” That is a command from God. Many think that joy is like the flu: it is something you catch. It just happens. Others opine that joy is in the genes. It is an innate character trait in some people that automatically emerges from their DNA. Yet all through Scripture, God commands joy. Joy is the second element listed in the fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22–23). Love is the first. Is love a virus that is caught? Is love automatic? No, God commands us as Christians to love, even in the most difficult situations. Husbands and wives are commanded to love each other because authentic love is not an involuntary action. Just so, we are commanded to rejoice. It is a decision — a choice — we make. Every day we will choose either joy or cynicism; joy or despair; joy or desolation; joy or worry; joy or complaining. Many Christians are like Eeyore, the perennially dreary donkey from the Winnie the Pooh series who spreads gloom over the Hundred Acre Wood. He is not dismal because bad things happen to him. He is grim by choice even in favorable situations.

A Consecrated Joy

“Rejoice in the Lord always.” The world can know love and joy because every person has been made in the image of God. So why is joy listed as a unique element in the fruit of the Spirit? How is the Christian’s joy different from the world’s joy? Our joy is founded on Christ. It is a consecrated joy. It is a supernaturally empowered joy. The follower of Jesus has been changed by the Holy Spirit in the core of his being. He has been given a heart with a greater capacity for joy. More than that, he is indwelt by the Holy Spirit, who brings His omnipotence to bear in every part of his life. This joy is a testimony to the reality of a reborn heart and the presence of the Holy Spirit. An individual can confess orthodox Christian doctrine with his lips and deny that faith with a life

marked by despondency and melancholy. Consecrated joy flows only from the ocean of our Creator and Redeemer. William Gurnall wrote that “Christ takes no more delight to dwell in a sad heart, than we do to live in a dark house.”

A Constant Joy

“Rejoice in the Lord always.” Our joy is founded in the Lord, not in circumstances. Thus, this joy can be a constant in our lives. Joy is easily expressed when you are enjoying a beautiful morning and all winds are favorable. It is not so easy to say, “This is a day the Lord has made; let us rejoice and be glad in it” when leaving the cemetery after burying your ten-year-old daughter. Yet, even though the circumstances have changed, the Lord has not. He is still sovereign, good, merciful, and present. His promises to work even the darkest acts of death for the good of His children are current and valid (Rom. 8:28). Does that mean the Christian parent who has suffered such a loss leaves the graveside laughing? Such a thought is a shallow misinterpretation of this joy. Beneath the heart-wrenching sorrow, beneath the tears there abides the truth that we have a Father who gave His own Son to die for our sins. There is the truth that this daughter is with Him and that we shall see her again. There is the reality that no sorrow is outside of His all-powerful consolation. We cannot know the power of His joy until we walk through our darkest hours.

A Conquering Joy

This joy is a fortress for the Christian in a fallen world. Nehemiah said to his people who were in tears, “Do not be grieved, for the joy of the Lord is your strength” (Neh. 8:10). We may think he should have said, “The strength of the Lord is your joy.” No! Nehemiah understood. The great joy of the Lord is a powerful fortress. Dear reader, what keeps our lives from being consumed by sorrow, despair, and cynicism? The joy of the Lord is our stronghold. In all the great cities of the ancient world, there was an *acropolis* (*acro*=hill + *polis*=city). It was a fortified height in the city to which the people retreated when threatened by an enemy. The acropolis of the kingdom of God is the joy of the Lord. That is what Paul implied when he said we are “more than conquerors” in difficult situations (Rom. 8:37).

Will the world see this constant, consecrated, conquering joy in us today?

– John Sartelle, in a devotional titled *Rejoice in the Lord Always*, <https://www.ligonier.org/learn/devotionals/rejoice-lord-always/>

[illegible]

1. Read **verses 2-3**. What is Paul “[entreating]” these women to do exactly? What is he “[asking]” any who are a “true companion” to do? How do we see the job of the whole church to preserve unity “in the Lord”? How can you better “help” your brothers and sisters in Christ “agree in the Lord”?

2. In **verse 4**, how frequently does Paul command Christians to “rejoice in the Lord”? What can we learn from his repetitive “again I will say, rejoice”? What does Paul mean by “Let your reasonableness be known to everyone. The Lord is at hand” in **verse 5**?

3. According to **verse 6**, how do we best battle anxiety? What does Paul command? What promise are believers given in **verse 7** if we obey the command of **verse 6**? What anxieties do you need to pray about and thus have your heart and mind “guarded” with the peace of Christ Jesus? What does Paul mean by “which surpasses all understanding”?

4. What is the first of the “[final]” exhortations Paul gives in this section, according to **verse 8**? How can you better “think about these things” day to day? What is the last “[final]” exhortation Paul gives in this section, according to **verse 9**? What promise is given to those who “practice these things”?

The Lord is at hand. Here we have an anticipation, by which he obviates an objection that might be brought forward. For carnal sense rises in opposition to the foregoing statement. For as the rage of the wicked is the more inflamed in proportion to our mildness, and the more they see us prepared for enduring, are the more emboldened to inflict injuries, we are with difficulty induced to possess our souls in patience. (Luke 21:19.) Hence those proverbs, “We must howl when among wolves.” “Those who act like sheep will quickly be devoured by wolves.” Hence we conclude, that the ferocity of the wicked must be repressed by corresponding violence, that they may not insult us with impunity. To such considerations Paul here opposes confidence in Divine providence. He replies, I say, that the Lord is at hand, whose power can overcome their audacity, and whose goodness can conquer their malice. He promises that he will aid us, provided we obey his commandment. Now, who would not rather be protected by the hand of God alone, than have all the resources of the world at his command?

Here we have a most beautiful sentiment, from which we learn, in the first place, that ignorance of the providence of God is the cause of all impatience, and that this is the reason why we are so quickly, and on trivial accounts, thrown into confusion, (232) and often, too, become disheartened because we do not recognize the fact that the Lord cares for us. On the other hand, we learn that this is the only remedy for tranquillizing our minds when we repose unreservedly in his providential care, as knowing that we are not exposed either to the rashness of fortune, or to the caprice of the wicked, but are under the regulation of God’s fatherly care. In fine, the man that is in possession of this truth, that God is present with him, has what he may rest upon with security.

There are, however, two ways in which the Lord is said to be at hand either because his judgment is at hand, or because he is prepared to give help to his own people, in which sense it is made use of here; and also in Psalms 145:18, The Lord is near to all that call upon him. The meaning therefore is, “Miserable were the condition of the pious, if the Lord were at a distance from them.” But as he has received them under his protection and guardianship, and defends them by his hand, which is everywhere present, let them rest upon this consideration, that they may not be intimidated by the rage of the wicked.

— Calvin, John. Calvin On The Bible: John Calvins Bible Commentary (Kindle Locations 241671-241704). Kindle Edition.

Study 18

THE SECRET OF FACING ALL THINGS WITH JOY

Philippians 4:10-13

MEETING PAUL'S NEEDS BY R.C. SPROUL

"I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity." - Philippians 4:10-12

During our study of Paul's Prison Epistles this year, we have noted on several occasions that the criminal justice system in ancient Rome was significantly different than our own. One chief difference is that our modern criminal justice system feeds and clothes those who are in prison, while prisoners in the Roman Empire depended on the goodwill of family and friends to sustain them. Unless prisoners' loved ones sent them money or food, these ancient inmates did not eat.

This was true even of the Apostle Paul while he was in prison in Rome. Thankfully, he had friends to help meet his physical needs during his incarceration. The Philippian church was particularly faithful to the Apostle in this regard, as Philippians 4:10–20 illustrates. Paul wrote to the Philippians, in part, to thank them for their financial support, and he begins to express his thanks specifically in today's passage.

Mutual giving and receiving was key to friendship in the ancient Greco-Roman world, and Paul's partnership with the Philippian church illustrates this principle. As we see in Philippians 4:10, the Philippians had been looking for a way to express their appreciation to Paul tangibly but had been unable to do so for quite a long time. The Apostle's imprisonment in Rome, although it could be viewed as a tragedy from a limited earthly perspective, was somewhat of a blessing for them because it gave them the opportunity to show forth their friendship again in sending money to help meet Paul's need. They had actively been looking for a way to love their beloved pastor and Apostle, fulfilling Matthew 7:12 and demonstrating Christian character, and finally they were able to help Paul with their monetary gift.

Yet even if Paul valued the Philippians for supporting his ministry, his friendship with this congregation was not merely utilitarian and based on what he could get from them. We see this in his hesitation to refer to his "need" of anything from the Philippians, at least in the ultimate sense (Phil. 4:11). The Apostle is implying that he still would have loved the Philippians dearly if he had no physical needs; his joy in their friendship was not limited to what he could get out of them in a particular circumstance. He had Christ, and that was enough to satisfy any need he had, no matter his circumstances (vv. 12–13).

Coram Deo

God gives us friends in the church to help build us up and so that we might

1. Read **verse 10**. Why did Paul “[re]joice] in the Lord greatly”? What exactly is he referring to?

2. In **verse 11**, what is Paul quick to clarify? What does it mean “to be content”? Are you content in whatever situation? How can you grow in Christian contentment?

3. Read **verse 12**. What does Paul know how to do? What do each of these mean? What is he getting at?

4. According to **verse 13**, what is “the secret of facing” all the things mentioned in **verse 12**? What exactly does Paul mean? What does he *not* mean?

Don't be fooled by the popular locker room read on Philippians 4:13.

"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" — score a touchdown, hit a homerun, climb a mountain, run a marathon, win the game with a finger to the sky for the Lord. Maybe some well-meaning jock signed his name with "Phil. 4:13" in your high-school yearbook, as a little nod to Jesus, who gifted him with such athletic prowess.

Now, the "all things" of Philippians 4:13 certainly does include our successes and the various positive things in life, but the edge on this often-quoted verse is that "all things" also means life's hardest things: like humiliation, hunger, need, and loss.

Put the "All Things" in Context

Philippians 4:13 means more than giving a hat tip to heaven when life's going as well as it can. It's mainly about where to go — to whom do we go — when we're most devastated, most in pain, most at a loss, in our lowest of lows.

It's in this context that the apostle Paul claims, "I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content" (Philippians 4:11) — and says it again, "In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need." There is a secret for contentment not just in our greatest triumphs, but also in our deepest devastations.

What is "the secret"? Philippians 4:13 calls it "Christ who strengthens me." Or, to put it in terms of Philippians 3:8, "the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord."

— John Piper, in a article titled *The Secret in Every Circumstance*, <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/the-secret-in-every-circumstance>

SACRIFICES ACCEPTABLE AND PLEASING TO GOD

Philippians 4:14-23

The apostle ends with praises to God. We should look upon God, under all our weakness and fears, not as an enemy, but as a Father, disposed to pity us and help us. We must give glory to God as a Father. God's grace and favor, which reconciled souls enjoy, with the whole of the graces in us, which flow from it, are all purchased for us by Christ's merit, and applied by his pleading for us; and therefore are justly called the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

NOTES:

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal blue ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

1. In **verses 14-16**, Paul is clarifying his gratefulness for the Philippians' generosity. What did they do for him? How does **2 Corinthians 8:1-5** shed further light on their generous spirit? How does **Acts 16** help us understand what Paul is referencing in **verse 15**?

This image shows a blank sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and extend across the width of the page. There are no margins or other markings on the paper.

2. What does Paul *not* mean in **verse 17**? What *does* he mean? How does **Matthew 6:20** help clarify?

[illegible]

3. Read **verse 18**. What were the Philippian gifts to Paul? What were the gifts before God? What do we learn here concerning Christian generosity?

4. According to **verse 19**, what is the promise given to the generous Philippians? What is the ultimate goal of all such generosity, according to **verse 20**?

5. What should we learn from the final greetings in **verses 21-22**?

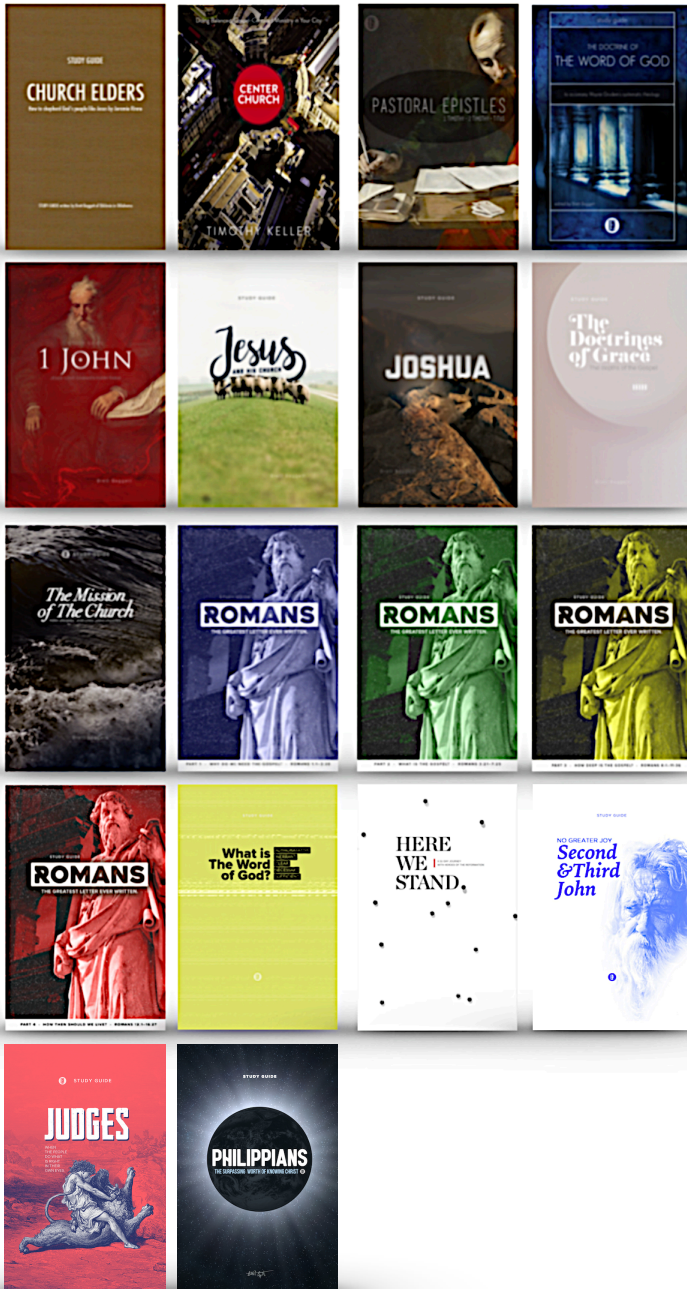
ALL OF GRACE BY STEVEN J. LAWSON

Paul now concludes his letter with this request to God on their behalf: "The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit" (v 23). With this, as MacArthur points out: "Paul has now come full circle. He began this letter by wishing the Philippians grace (1:2), and he concludes it the same way." (The MacArthur New Testament Commentary on Philippians, page 318)

"Grace" (*karis*) is unmerited, undeserved favor in the lives of God's people. It is the wellspring and the heartbeat of the Christian life. The believers in Philippi had already received saving grace at the time of their regeneration. Paul nevertheless desires that they know more of this sanctifying grace in their Christian walk, which will enable them to live in a manner that glorifies God, and to do so with joy. This work of preserving grace will continue into eternity future in their glorification. Paul wants them to experience it more fully in their spirits in this life. This marvelous, joy-filled, Christ-exalting letter now ends as it began, with an emphasis upon the grace of God being even more fully bestowed upon his people (1:2). From the new birth to the new heavens and new earth, the Christian life is entirely one of grace. Start to finish, it is all of grace. Rejoice!

– Lawson, Steven. *Philippians For You: Shine with joy as you live by faith* (God's Word For You Book 18) (pp. 229-230). The Good Book Company. Kindle Edition.

STUDY GUIDES AVAILABLE FROM EKKLESIA MUSKOGEE



PHILIPPIANS

THE SURPASSING WORTH OF KNOWING CHRIST ①

STUDY GUIDE

The Apostle Paul's letter to the church at Philippi is laser-focused on "the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus Christ" (Phil. 3:8). In this letter, he reminds the Philippians who Jesus is, what He has done, and what that means for those of who belong to Him. Paul is pouring his heart out while sitting in a prison cell for the sake of the gospel. To think—one of his most encouraging epistles was written while in chains!

In Philippians Paul presents Jesus as the one who makes us saints, works in us both to will and to work for His good pleasure, and as the one who will bring us to completion when He returns, having secured our citizenship in heaven. In other words, He has justified us, is sanctifying us, and will one day glorify us to the glory of God the Father.

But that is not all Philippians contains. In this heartfelt correspondence, Paul explicitly reveals the surpassing worth of knowing Jesus personally. He proclaims knowing Jesus is better than being free from prison or free from suffering. Being like Christ is superior to being selfish or apathetic. Cherishing the Lord exceeds clinging to self-righteousness or obtaining worldly gain. Being accepted by Christ Jesus the Lord is more desirable than living in the past with regret or living now for the praise of men. The great promise of Philippians is this: If you know Jesus personally you have everything you need for everlasting happiness. You can suffer, hunger, be brought low or in great need—and yet joyfully face it all through Christ who strengthens you.

Jesus accomplished all of this by emptying Himself of his glory, taking the form of a servant, and submitting to death on a cross for our sakes. Great was the cost and great are the promises He bought! May God use this study of Philippians to broaden our understanding of who Jesus is, grow our desire for holiness, strengthen our hands to serve one another, and deepen our love for Jesus—the one of surpassing worth.

