

Sample Study

Philippians

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Read — Philippians 1:1–30; other references as given

The book of Philippians is often regarded as God's spiritual manual on joy and rejoicing — but it's more than that. Philippians is God's revelation to man, especially believers, on how to think and act in a world whose values and priorities are contrary and often hostile to God and His people.

When we possess the mind of Christ, trials become opportunities to glorify God (chapter one); service to God and others becomes a joy rather than a burden (chapter two); personal achievement is exposed as vanity and life priorities are transformed (chapter three); thoughts and actions become personal acts of worship (chapter four).

Before you begin this lesson, humble yourself before God, and ask Him to reveal Himself to you through His inspired Word.

1. The book of Acts describes the apostle Paul's three missionary journeys (Acts 13:3–14:26; 15:40–18:22; 18:23–21:17) and the church's expansion into Western civilization. During Paul's second missionary journey, he received a vision at Troas (western Turkey) of a man from Macedonia asking for help (Acts 16:9–10). Some Bible scholars believe the man was Luke (physician and writer of Acts and the gospel of Luke) because of the abrupt change to the plural pronoun "we" in the verses following the vision. Believing God sent this vision, Paul and his missionary companions sailed across the Aegean Sea to Macedonia, landed at Neapolis, and traveled to Philippi (Acts 16:11–12).
 - a. Paul's visit to Macedonia was the beginning of Christian missionary expansion to Europe. List three individuals or groups of people whose lives were transformed during Paul's original visit to Philippi (Acts 16:11–33).
 - b. What did Paul and Silas tell the jailor who asked them, "**Sirs, what must I do to be saved**" (Acts 16:31)?
2. Phillip of Macedon, father of Alexander the Great, founded the city of Philippi in 356 B.C. to control the gold mines in the region. After the Battle of Philippi in 42 B.C., the city became a Roman colony, and its people were granted Roman citizenship. As Roman citizens, they received many privileges, including autonomous government and immunity from paying taxes. The Philippians were particularly proud of being Roman citizens (Acts 16:20–21). Although the consistent use of the personal pronoun "I" throughout the book indicates that Paul was the singular writer of the letter, he and Timothy, already known by the church (Phil. 2:20), jointly greeted the Philippians. To what three groups of people is Paul's letter addressed (Phil. 1:1)?
3. Paul addresses his letter to all the Philippian believers (saints), and he extends a special greeting to the bishops (overseers, pastors) and deacons (Phil. 1:1). Many Bible scholars believe the church began in Acts 2, but the first mention of men serving in the office of deacon/servant occurs in Acts 6. Therefore, a church isn't required to have deacons, but if it does, they must be biblically qualified. What are the qualifications of men who serve in this important ministry (1 Tim. 3:8–12)?
4. Paul used the word **saint** (Phil. 1:1, Greek *hagios*) to describe believers in Philippi. In general religious language, saint describes 1) a deceased individual who has been officially recognized, especially through canonization, as preeminent for holiness, 2) a normal Christian person, 3) an individual of unusual holiness or piety, or 4) a person of a particular religious group such as the Latter Day Saints (Mormons). Which one of these definitions *do you think* Paul meant in verse one (Phil 1:1; 1 Cor. 1:2)? Why?

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5. Paul began his letter by identifying Timothy and himself as servants (Greek *doulos* — “slaves, servants”) of God (Phil. 1:1), then he offered the standard early church blessing — grace and peace. In all seventeen occurrences of the phrase **grace and peace** in the New Testament, the word **grace** comes before **peace**. When a believer accepts God’s grace (in salvation), he receives peace with God and should be thankful. For what two things was Paul particularly thankful (Phil. 1:5)?

6.
 - a. The book of Philippians was written ten years after Paul evangelized the city. The Philippians remained faithful to God and to the apostle Paul during those ten years (Acts 16:11). What spiritual promise did God give the Philippians (and every believer) to help them remain faithful to the Lord (Phil. 1:6)?

 - b. Many Christians are afraid they’ll fall away from the faith and bring reproach on Jesus’ name. Some, then, refuse to live wholeheartedly for Christ. What must every Christian do to ensure he will never fall away from Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:5–7)?

 - c. If a believer allows the eight spiritual qualities listed in 2 Peter 1:5–7 to be developed in his life, God promises him four things. What are they (2 Peter 1:8–11)?

7. The phrase **the day of Jesus Christ** (Phil 1:7) appears six times in the New Testament, three of those in Philippians (Phil. 1:6, 10; 2:16). The phrase refers to a future time when Christ judges and rewards believers. The more common but distinct phrase **the day of the Lord** refers to a future time of judgment when Christ returns to judge those who are not saved. Some Christians are surprised to learn they will eventually face judgment. What do the following verses teach about the future judgment of the believer?
 - a. The judge and the place of judgment (1 Cor. 4:4–5; 2 Cor. 5:10)

 - b. The measure or basis of judgment (1 Cor. 4:3–5)

 - c. If you faced Jesus Christ in judgment tomorrow, what, if any, things would you change today?

8. Paul mentioned his imprisonment for the first time in Philippians 1:8. He was likely imprisoned in Rome because he sent greetings from those of Caesar’s household (Phil. 4:22). Paul said his ministry included both the defense and confirmation of the gospel (Phil. 1:7). What *do you think* the difference is between Paul’s ministry of defending and of confirming the gospel?

9. Paul told the Philippians how he prayed for them (Phil. 1:4, **with joy**) and why he prayed for them (Phil. 1:7, they were **in his heart**).
 - a. What did Paul pray for the Philippians (Phil. 1:9–11)?

 - b. What was Paul’s ultimate objective for the Philippian believers (Phil. 1:9–11)?

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1. a.
 1. Lydia, a merchant from Thyratira, and her family (Acts 16:14–15).
 2. A slave girl (Acts 16:16–18). Nothing indicates whether she was saved.
 3. A jailor and his family (Acts 16:27–33).
- b. Paul and Silas told the jailor he had to “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 16:31).
2. The entire Philippian church (all the saints). The bishops or overseers. The deacons.
3.
 1. A deacon must be respectable as an individual and respected by others (1 Tim. 3:8, reverent).
 2. A deacon must be a man of verbal integrity (1 Tim. 3:8, not double-tongued). He should not be two-faced. The Greek phrase could refer to not being a gossip or talebearer. A deacon is likely aware of personal information about those in the church so he must be discreet with this information.
 3. A deacon must not be a heavy drinker or a drunkard (1 Tim. 3:8, not given to much wine).
 4. A deacon must not cheat others in financial matters or be materialistic (1 Tim. 3:8).
 5. A deacon must be mature in the faith. He must hold the deep truths of the faith and maintain a pure conscience (1 Tim. 3:9).
 6. A deacon must demonstrate a life of virtue and integrity before being allowed to serve in the office of deacon (1 Tim. 3:10, let these also first be tested and then let them serve as deacons).
 7. A deacon must have a godly wife and family (1 Tim. 3:11–12).
4. A normal Christian person. Paul used the word *saint* in 1 Corinthians 1:2 to describe the Corinthian believers who were *not* living godly lives. In the New Testament, saint refers to a believer’s legal standing before God.
5.
 1. Paul was thankful for their partnership in the work of the Lord.
 2. Paul was thankful for their spiritual faithfulness over the years (from the first day until now).
6. a. God, who began the work of redemption in them at their salvation, will continue to work in them through the process of sanctification. God will continue this work until He is finished and they receive their reward from Jesus Christ.
- b. Christians must diligently pursue spiritual maturity. Once we are saved, we must pursue virtue (right conduct in thought and action); knowledge (an understanding of God that goes beyond salvation to a working knowledge of His nature and His will); self-control (willingness to forsake the appetites of the flesh and come under the Holy Spirit’s control); perseverance (a growing ability to endure the hardships of life for the glory of God and the advancement of the gospel); godliness (daily manifesting the life of Christ); brotherly kindness (gentleness in thought, word, and action that reflects Christ’s character); and love (a consistent rejection of self-centered living and the adoption of the sacrificial heart of Christ that seeks God’s eternal best for all mankind).
- c.
 1. The believer will never be barren (2 Peter 1:8).
 2. The believer will never be unfruitful (2 Peter 1:8).
 3. The believer will experience assurance of his salvation (2 Peter 1:9–10).
 4. The believer will never stumble in his Christian life (2 Peter 1:10).
 5. The believer will receive a rich welcome into God’s eternal kingdom (2 Peter 1:11).
7. a. The judge will be Jesus Christ himself, and the place of judgment is known as the judgment seat of Christ.
- b. The believer’s motives and thoughts, as well as his actions and deeds.
- c. Answers will vary.
8. *Defending* the gospel is the critical ministry of responding to the lies and false accusations of ungodly men and women who attack the claims of Christ and the authenticity and authority of God’s Word. The lies are often presented as doubts about the plain meaning of Scripture and the authority of God’s Word. *Confirming* the gospel is the positive presentation of God’s message so that listeners are convinced of biblical truth by seeing the inter-relatedness of Scripture.
9. a. Paul prayed that their love (for God and man) would increase. The more the Philippians understood God’s love, the more they could love others in a godly way and make the wisest choices in life (approve the things that are excellent).
- b. Paul’s ultimate goal for the Philippians was for them to be sincere (holy and pure), good witnesses (without offense), and filled with Christ’s righteousness in their daily living.