



THE PHILIPPIANS  
**PERSPECTIVE**

SEEING LIFE THROUGH A DIFFERENT LENS

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WEEK 1 BIBLE STUDY

# When Life Locks You Up

Digging Deeper into Philipians 1

Monday April 20th - Saturday April 25th



High  
**Pointe**  
CHURCH

# WELCOME TO WEEK 1

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This week we explored Philippians chapter 1 and discovered that circumstances try to steal our joy, but when our focus is on Christ and not our chains, joy becomes unshakeable.

This six-day Bible study is designed to help you dig deeper into the themes of Sunday's message. Each day includes a Scripture passage to read, a devotional reflection, study questions for personal application, a daily challenge, and a prayer.

Set aside 15 to 20 minutes each day. Find a quiet place. Open your Bible. And ask the Holy Spirit to speak to you through His Word.

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## **Series Big Idea:**

The Christian life is shaped more by perspective than by circumstances.  
Paul didn't have better conditions. He had a better perspective.

## **Week 1 Main Idea:**

Circumstances try to steal your joy, but when your focus is on Christ  
and not your chains, joy becomes unshakeable.

# Joy Is Not What You Think It Is

Read: *Philippians 1:1-6*

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Paul opens this letter by calling himself a servant. The Greek word is *doulos*, which means a bondservant or slave. That is significant. Paul is in chains as a prisoner, but he does not identify himself by his circumstances. He identifies himself by his calling. He belongs to Christ. That is his identity. And from that identity, joy flows.

Then in verses 3 through 5, Paul says something remarkable. He thanks God every time he thinks of the Philippians, and he prays for them with joy. Not with worry. Not with heaviness. With joy. And the source of that joy is not his situation. It is the partnership he shares with these believers in the Gospel. Paul's joy was relational and mission-driven. It was connected to what God was doing in and through people, not to what was happening to him personally.

Then verse 6 gives us one of the most anchoring promises in all of Scripture.

## *Philippians 1:6 (NLT)*

*"And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns."*

Paul's joy was not wishful thinking. It was grounded in a certainty about God's character. God finishes what He starts. That means the hard season you are in right now is not the end of your story. God is still working. He has not abandoned the project. He has not walked away from you. What He began, He will complete.

The world defines joy as a feeling that depends on things going well. Scripture defines joy as a settled confidence in God that remains regardless of what is going well or falling apart. Those are two very different things. And until we understand the difference, we will keep chasing a version of joy that was never meant to satisfy.

## Study and Reflection Questions

1. Paul identified himself as a servant of Christ, not as a prisoner of Rome. When you introduce yourself or think about yourself, what do you tend to identify with most? Your job? Your role in your family? Your struggles? How would it change your daily mindset if your first identity was "I belong to Christ"?
2. Read Philippians 1:3-5 again. Paul's joy came from Gospel partnership, not personal comfort. Who are the people in your life that stir up genuine spiritual joy in you? Are you actively investing in those relationships or have you let them drift?

3. Philippians 1:6 says God will complete the work He started in you. What area of your life are you tempted to believe God has given up on? What would it look like to trust that He is still working even when you cannot see it?

### Today's Challenge

Write down one area of your life where you have been waiting for circumstances to change before you let yourself experience joy. Pray over it and ask God to shift your focus from your situation to His faithfulness.

### Prayer

*Lord, I confess that I have tied my joy to things that were never meant to carry it. I have looked to my circumstances, my comfort, and my plans to give me what only You can give. Today I ask You to begin reshaping my understanding of joy. Anchor it to who You are, not to what is happening around me. I trust that what You started in me, You will finish. In Jesus' name, amen.*

# The Prayer That Changes Your Perspective

Read: *Philippians 1:9-11*

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If you want to know what someone truly values, listen to how they pray. Not their public prayers. Their real ones. The ones that come out when no one is performing. Paul's prayer for the Philippians tells us exactly what mattered most to him, and it was not comfort, safety, or easy circumstances. Look at what he prayed for.

## *Philippians 1:9-11 (NLT)*

*"I pray that your love will overflow more and more, and that you will keep on growing in knowledge and understanding. For I want you to understand what really matters, so that you may live pure and blameless lives until the day of Christ's return. May you always be filled with the fruit of your salvation, the righteous character produced in your life by Jesus Christ, for this will bring much glory and praise to God."*

Paul prayed for three things. First, that their love would overflow with knowledge and understanding. The Greek word for knowledge here is *epignosis*, which means full, experiential, deep knowledge. Paul was not praying for information. He was praying for transformation. He wanted their love to be guided by wisdom, not just emotion.

Second, he prayed that they would understand what really matters. The Greek phrase behind this is *dokimazein ta diapheronta*, which means to test and approve the things that are excellent or superior. Paul wanted them to develop spiritual discernment. The ability to look at life and distinguish between what is good and what is best. Between what feels right and what is right. Between what the world says matters and what actually matters.

Third, he prayed that they would be filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ. Not self-produced goodness. Christ-produced character.

This prayer reveals something critical about perspective. The reason most of us lose joy in hard circumstances is not because we lack faith. It is because we lack discernment. We cannot tell the difference between what is temporary and what is eternal. We give permanent emotional weight to temporary problems. And we neglect eternal realities because they do not feel urgent.

When you pray the way Paul prayed, your perspective begins to shift. You stop asking God to change your circumstances and start asking God to change your vision. And when your vision changes, everything else looks different.

## Study and Reflection Questions

1. Look at Paul's prayer again. He did not pray for the Philippians' comfort, safety, or success. He prayed for their love, discernment, and character. How does this compare to the way you typically pray for yourself and others? What does that reveal about what you value most?
2. Paul prayed that they would "understand what really matters." If you were honest, what are you currently giving the most emotional energy to? Is it something that will matter in five years? In eternity? How would your stress level change if you learned to weigh things by their eternal significance instead of their immediate pressure?
3. Read Romans 12:2. Paul tells the Roman church to be transformed by the renewing of their minds so they can discern God's will. How does this connect to what Paul prayed for the Philippians? What is one practical way you could begin renewing your mind this week?

### **Romans 12:2 (NLT)**

*"Don't copy the behavior and customs of this world, but let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think. Then you will learn to know God's will for you, which is good and pleasing and perfect."*

### **Today's Challenge**

Change the way you pray today. Instead of asking God to fix your circumstances, ask Him to give you love that overflows with knowledge, discernment to know what really matters, and Christ-produced character. Pray Paul's prayer from Philippians 1:9-11 over your own life.

### **Prayer**

*Father, I admit that most of my prayers are about my comfort. I ask You to change things, fix things, remove things. But today I am asking You to change me. Give me love that is guided by wisdom. Give me eyes to see what really matters and the courage to let go of what does not. Produce in me the kind of character that only comes from Jesus. Help me to stop measuring my life by what is easy and start measuring it by what is eternal. In Jesus' name, amen.*

# Chains That Advance the Gospel

Read: *Philippians 1:12-14*

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This is one of the most perspective-shifting passages in all of Paul's letters. He has been arrested. He is chained to a Roman soldier. His freedom is gone. His future is uncertain. And this is what he writes.

## *Philippians 1:12-14 (NLT)*

*"And I want you to know, my dear brothers and sisters, that everything that has happened to me here has helped to spread the Good News. For everyone here, including the whole palace guard, knows that I am in chains because of Christ. And because of my imprisonment, most of the believers here have gained confidence and boldly speak God's message without fear."*

The word Paul uses for "spread" is *prokope* in the Greek. It was a military term that described an army advancing by cutting through brush and obstacles. Paul is saying that the Gospel is not just surviving his imprisonment. It is advancing because of it. His chains did not stop the mission. They became the mission.

Think about what happened practically. Paul was chained to a different soldier every few hours as the guard rotated shifts. That means every shift change brought a new person into direct contact with the Apostle Paul. These were members of the elite Praetorian Guard. They would never have set foot in a synagogue or a church gathering. They would never have sought out the Gospel on their own. But God brought the Gospel to them by chaining it to their wrist.

And it did not stop there. Other believers saw Paul's faithfulness in suffering and it gave them boldness. His chains did not produce fear in the church. They produced courage. When people saw that Paul could have joy and purpose in the worst of circumstances, it made them braver in their own.

This completely reframes how we are supposed to view hard seasons. Most of us see difficulty as an interruption to God's plan. Paul saw difficulty as an instrument of God's plan. The question was never "Why is this happening to me?" The question was "Who is God reaching through this?"

Your difficult workplace is not a punishment. It is a placement. Your hard marriage is not a mistake. It is a mission field. The hospital room, the financial struggle, the grief, the loneliness. None of it is wasted when it is in the hands of a God who advances His purposes through the very things that were meant to stop them.

## Study and Reflection Questions

1. Paul said everything that happened to him helped to spread the Good News. Think about the hardest season you have walked through. Can you identify any way that God used it to impact someone else? If you cannot see it yet, are you willing to trust that He was working even when you

could not see it?

2. The palace guard heard the Gospel because they were chained to Paul. They would never have heard it otherwise. Is there someone in your life right now who would never step inside a church but has access to you? How does that change the way you see your role in their life?

3. Read 2 Corinthians 1:3-4. Paul says God comforts us in our troubles so that we can comfort others with the same comfort we received. How does your pain become a ministry tool when you let God use it?

### **2 Corinthians 1:3-4 (NLT)**

*"All praise to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is our merciful Father and the source of all comfort. He comforts us in all our troubles so that we can comfort others. When they are troubled, we will be able to give them the same comfort God has given us."*

### **Today's Challenge**

Ask God to open your eyes to the mission field that already exists in your current circumstances. Identify one person in your daily life who may never hear the Gospel unless they hear it from you. Pray for them by name and ask God to give you an opportunity this week.

### **Prayer**

*Lord, forgive me for the times I have seen my hard circumstances as punishment instead of purpose. Open my eyes to see what You are doing in the places I would rather escape. Give me the faith of Paul to believe that You are advancing Your Gospel through my chains, not in spite of them. Show me who You have placed in my path and give me the boldness to be Your witness right where I am. In Jesus' name, amen.*

# When People Add to Your Pain

Read: *Philippians 1:15-18*

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Being hurt by the world is one thing. Being hurt by people who claim to follow Jesus is something else entirely. And that is exactly what Paul was dealing with.

## *Philippians 1:15-18 (NLT)*

*"Some are preaching out of jealousy and rivalry. But others preach about Christ with pure motives. They preach because they love me, for they know I have been appointed to defend the Good News. Those others do not have pure motives as they preach about Christ. They preach with selfish ambition, not sincerely, intending to make my suffering worse. But that doesn't matter. Whether their motives are false or genuine, the message about Christ is being preached either way, so I rejoice. And I will continue to rejoice."*

There were people preaching the Gospel specifically to add pain to Paul's imprisonment. They wanted to make his suffering worse. These were not outsiders. These were insiders. People in the faith community using the message of Jesus as a weapon against a brother in chains.

And what did Paul do? He did not retaliate. He did not slander them. He did not launch a campaign to expose them. He said, "Christ is being preached. That is enough for me."

This is one of the most challenging examples in all of Scripture. Because most of us are not wired this way. When someone hurts us, especially someone inside the church or inside our own family, we want justice. We want them to be exposed. We want everyone to know what they did. And we hold on to that offense like it is a life raft, when in reality it is an anchor dragging us to the bottom.

Paul could respond this way because his joy was not tied to how people treated him. It was tied to whether Christ was being proclaimed. His focus was so locked on the mission that the offense could not get a grip on him.

Many of us are carrying wounds right now that were inflicted by people who should have known better. A friend who betrayed your trust. A church leader who let you down. A family member who used your vulnerability against you. And the temptation is to let that wound become your identity. To let the bitterness settle in and call it self-protection.

But Paul shows us a different way. You can acknowledge the pain without letting it own you. You can grieve the hurt without giving it the power to steal your joy. But only if your joy is anchored to something deeper than how people treat you.

## *Hebrews 12:15 (NLT)*

*"Look after each other so that none of you fails to receive the grace of God. Watch out that no poisonous root of bitterness grows up to trouble you, corrupting many."*

Bitterness does not punish the person who hurt you. It punishes you. And it spreads. It corrupts. It steals. If you want to protect your joy, you have to release the offense before it takes root.

## Study and Reflection Questions

1. Paul was hurt by people within the faith community, not by outsiders. Have you ever been deeply hurt by someone inside the church or inside your circle of trust? How did that experience affect your joy, your faith, or your willingness to be vulnerable?
2. Paul chose not to retaliate or hold on to the offense. He kept his focus on Christ being preached. What are you currently holding on to that you need to release? Be specific. Not in general terms but the actual situation or person.
3. Read Ephesians 4:31-32. Paul tells the Ephesian church to get rid of bitterness and to forgive as God forgave them. Forgiveness does not mean what happened was acceptable. It means you are refusing to let it control you any longer. Is there someone you need to forgive today, not for their sake, but for yours?

### *Ephesians 4:31-32 (NLT)*

*"Get rid of all bitterness, rage, anger, harsh words, and slander, as well as all types of evil behavior. Instead, be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you."*

## Today's Challenge

If there is someone who has hurt you and you are still carrying that weight, take a step toward releasing it today. That may mean praying for them by name. It may mean writing out what happened and then physically letting it go as an act of surrender. It may mean simply telling God, "I cannot do this on my own. Help me forgive." Forgiveness is rarely a single moment. It is a direction. Start walking in that direction today.

## Prayer

*Father, this is hard. There are people who have hurt me and the wound still feels fresh. I do not want to carry this anymore, but I do not know how to let it go on my own. Help me. Give me the grace to forgive the way You have forgiven me. Not because they deserve it, but because You did not let my offense against You become the final word in our relationship. Free me from bitterness. Guard my joy. Keep my eyes on You and not on what was done to me. In Jesus' name, amen.*

# Living Is Christ

Read: *Philippians 1:19-26*

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We come now to the verse that sits at the heart of everything Paul has been saying.

## *Philippians 1:21 (NKJV)*

*"For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain."*

*(NKJV is closer to Greek)*

This is not a greeting card. This is not a church bumper sticker. This is a declaration from a man who is staring at the real possibility of execution and saying, "I have done the math, and I cannot lose."

The Greek word for "to live" here is *zen*, and it is in the present active infinitive. That means this is not something Paul believed once in the past. This is his present, ongoing, continuous reality. Right now, in the chains, in the uncertainty, in the suffering, living is Christ. Not living includes Christ. Not living is Christ plus comfort. Christ plus security. Christ plus health. Just Christ. Period.

And then he says to die is gain. The word for "gain" is *kerdos*. It means profit, advantage, surplus. Paul is saying that death is not a loss. It is a promotion. It is more of what he already has. If living is Christ, then dying is simply getting all of Christ without the limitations of this broken world.

## *Philippians 1:22-24 (NLT)*

*"But if I live, I can do more fruitful work for Christ. So I really don't know which is better. I'm torn between two desires: I long to go and be with Christ, which would be far better for me. But for your sakes, it is better that I continue to live."*

Paul is genuinely torn. Not because he is afraid to die. But because both options are good. Living means more ministry. Dying means being with Jesus. The only reason he leans toward living is because the Philippians still need him. His decision is not self-focused. It is others-focused. Even in the face of death, Paul is thinking about who he can serve.

This is what happens when Christ is truly your life. You stop clinging to self-preservation and start living for purpose. You stop asking, "What is best for me?" and start asking, "Where can God use me?" Fear loses its grip because the worst thing that could happen to you, death, has already been redefined as gain.

Most of us are not facing physical death. But we are gripping tightly to things we are afraid to lose. A relationship. A position. A season of life. Financial security. The approval of someone we respect. And that grip is strangling our joy because we are terrified of what happens if it gets taken away.

Paul shows us that the only way to live without fear of loss is to anchor your life to the one thing that can never be lost. And that is Christ.

### **Colossians 3:3-4 (NLT)**

*"For you died to this life, and your real life is hidden with Christ in God. And when Christ, who is your real life, is revealed to the whole world, you will share in all his glory."*

### **Study and Reflection Questions**

1. Paul said to live is Christ. If you were to fill in that blank honestly for your own life right now, what would it say? "For to me, to live is \_\_\_\_\_." Be honest. Is it your career? Your family? Your comfort? Your reputation? What does your answer reveal about where your joy is currently anchored?
2. Paul said to die is gain. Most of us are afraid of loss, not necessarily death, but losing something we value deeply. What are you most afraid of losing right now? How is that fear affecting the way you live and the joy you experience?
3. Read Matthew 16:25. Jesus said whoever tries to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for His sake will find it. How does this connect to what Paul is saying in Philippians 1:21? What would it look like practically for you to hold your life more loosely and trust Christ more fully?

### **Matthew 16:25 (NLT)**

*"If you try to hang on to your life, you will lose it. But if you give up your life for my sake, you will save it."*

### **Today's Challenge**

Identify the one thing in your life that you are gripping the tightest. The thing you are most afraid to lose. Pray over it today and say out loud, "Lord, this is Yours. If You take it, You are still enough. If You leave it, I will steward it for Your glory. But I refuse to let it sit on the throne that belongs to You." This is not easy. But it is the path to the kind of joy Paul had.

### **Prayer**

*Jesus, I want to be able to say that to live is Christ and mean it. But I am honest enough to admit that I have filled that blank with other things. Things that feel safer. Things I can see and touch and control. Today I am asking You to dethrone whatever has taken Your place in my life. I do not want to just add You to my life. I want You to be my life. Teach me what it means to hold everything loosely except You. In Your name, amen.*

# Stand Firm No Matter What

Read: *Philippians 1:27-30*

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Paul closes chapter 1 with a charge. Everything he has taught about joy, perspective, focus, and purpose now comes down to one command. Live it out. Together.

## *Philippians 1:27-28 (NLT)*

*"Above all, you must live as citizens of heaven, conducting yourselves in a manner worthy of the Good News about Christ. Then, whether I come and see you again or only hear about you, I will know that you are standing together with one spirit and one purpose, fighting together for the faith, which is the Good News. Don't be intimidated in any way by your enemies. This will be a sign to them that they are going to be destroyed, but that you will be saved, even by God himself."*

The phrase "live as citizens" comes from the Greek word *politeuesthe*, which means to live as a citizen of a city, to conduct yourself according to the laws and values of the place where you hold citizenship. Philippi was a Roman colony, and the people there were proud of their Roman citizenship. Paul is using language they would have immediately understood. He is saying, "You have a higher citizenship than Rome. Live like it."

This matters because perspective is not meant to be a private experience. It is meant to be lived out publicly and it is meant to be lived out together. Paul does not say, "Stand firm on your own." He says, "Stand together with one spirit and one purpose." Joy in hard circumstances is not a solo project. It is a community effort.

## *Philippians 1:29-30 (NLT)*

*"For you have been given not only the privilege of trusting in Christ but also the privilege of suffering for him. We are in this struggle together. You have seen my struggle in the past, and you know that I am still in the midst of it."*

Paul calls suffering a privilege. The Greek word is *echaristhe*, which comes from the root word *charis*, meaning grace. Paul is saying that suffering for Christ is a grace gift. Not a punishment. Not a random tragedy. A gift. Because suffering, when it is connected to faithfulness, produces endurance, deepens dependence on Christ, and displays the reality of the Gospel to a watching world.

And notice that Paul does not leave them alone in it. He says, "We are in this struggle together." Your hard season was never meant to be walked alone. God designed the church to be the place where we carry one another's burdens, encourage one another in faithfulness, and remind one another of the truth when circumstances try to steal our focus.

This is where the rubber meets the road for everything we have studied this week. Joy is real. Perspective matters. Christ is sufficient. But none of it works in isolation. You need people around you who will stand

with you, fight with you, and point you back to Jesus when your eyes start drifting to your chains.

## Study and Reflection Questions

1. Paul told the Philippians to live as citizens of heaven. What does that look like practically in your everyday life? At your job? In your home? In the way you respond to difficulty? Where is the gap between your heavenly citizenship and your daily conduct?
2. Paul said suffering for Christ is a privilege. That is a hard statement. How does reframing suffering as a grace gift rather than a random punishment change the way you process the hard things in your life? Does it change the way you feel about what you are currently walking through?
3. Paul emphasized standing together. Who are the people in your life that help you stand firm in faith? If you do not have those people, what is one step you could take this week to build that kind of community? And if you do have them, when is the last time you told them what their faithfulness means to you?

### *Galatians 6:2 (NLT)*

*"Share each other's burdens, and in this way obey the law of Christ."*

### *Hebrews 10:24-25 (NLT)*

*"Let us think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love and good works. And let us not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another, especially now that the day of his return is drawing near."*

## Today's Challenge

This is the last day of the study. Before tomorrow comes, do two things. First, reach out to someone who has stood with you in a hard season and thank them. A text, a call, a conversation. Let them know their faithfulness mattered. Second, ask God to show you someone around you who is struggling right now and needs someone to stand with them. Then go be that person. Joy was never meant to be hoarded. It was meant to be shared.

## Prayer

*Father, thank You for this week. Thank You for the truth of Your Word and for the example of Paul. I do not want to just study this. I want to live it. Give me the courage to live as a citizen of heaven in a world that constantly pulls me toward lesser things. Surround me with people who will stand with me and help me stand for You. And make me that kind of person for someone else. I do not want to walk this road alone, and I do not want anyone around me to walk it alone either. Use me, Lord. For Your glory and for the good of others. In Jesus' name, amen.*