



| | A.D. | 30 | 35 | 40 | 45 | 50 | 55 | 60 | 65 | 70 | 75 | 80 |
|---|------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|
| Death, resurrection of Christ (A.D. 33 [or 30]) [†] | | ● | | | | | | | | | | |
| Paul's conversion (33/34*) | | | ● | | | | | | | | | |
| Paul's first Jerusalem visit (36/37*) | | | | ● | | | | | | | | |
| Paul's second Jerusalem visit (famine relief) (44–47*) | | | | | ● | ● | | | | | | |
| Paul's first missionary journey (46–47) | | | | | ● | | | | | | | |
| Paul's third Jerusalem visit (apostolic council) (48–49*) | | | | | | ● | | | | | | |
| Paul's second journey (Philippian church planted) (48/49–51*) | | | | | | ● | ● | | | | | |
| Paul's third missionary journey (52–57*) | | | | | | | ● | ● | ● | | | |
| Paul under house arrest in Rome (62*) | | | | | | | | | ● | | | |
| Paul receives gift from and writes to Philippians (62*) | | | | | | | | | ● | | | |
| Paul martyred in Rome (64–67*) | | | | | | | | | ● | ● | | |

* denotes approximate date; / signifies either/or; † see *The Date of Jesus' Crucifixion*, pp. 1809–1810

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¹ <http://www.esvstudybible.org/search?q=Philippians+1>

Together for the gospel: Philippians 1:1-11

Read Acts 16:11-40

Imagine you are Paul leaving Philippi in Acts 16:40. What do you think his memories of his time in the city would be?

Mixed feelings:

Positive: Lydia (16:14) and the Philippians jailer and his family (16:32ff)

Negative: mistreated (16:37), yet vindicated (16:38).

Read Philippians 1:1-8.

Partnership in the gospel means “self-sacrificing conformity to a shared vision” (Carson, Basics for Believers, p13-14). What could it have meant for the Philippians to be ‘partners in the gospel’ with Paul (1:5 and 1:7)?

Paul holds them in his heart (they are very dear to him); they are partakers of grace together; supporting Paul whilst he was in prison (see also 4:15-16); defending and confirming the gospel together.

Partnership in the gospel means spending together to bring about the same shared vision. The Philippian church and the Apostle Paul were Jesus people. They rejoiced in being Jesus people; they were passionate about more people becoming Jesus people, they delighted in Paul’s ministry; and they delighted in Paul being a Jesus person. Paul thanks God for them because they are gospel partners.

The word “partnership” in v.5 is more commonly translated “fellowship” in the New Testament. What does this tell us about true (biblical) Christian fellowship?

Not just chatting about sport or TV etc. But our conversations should be saturated with the gospel: delighting in God, sharing with one another what we’ve been learning from His Word, joining in prayer for the advance of the gospel (not least in the lives of those to whom we’ve been bearing witness), encouraging one another in obedience and maturing discipleship, bearing one another’s burdens and growing in self-sacrificial love for one another for Christ’s sake.

What is Paul confident about in 1:6? How does this affect us today?

We become Christians through the gospel – in the good news that in Jesus Christ God has reconciled us to Himself. God saved us – brought us to Himself.

And God will hold us in His hands nothing will separate us from the love of God, and He will use us powerfully for the purposes of blessing each other, and the entire world with

the good news of the gospel. That's God's plan – and He will bring this good work to completion.

Read Philippians 1:9-11

In speaking of prayer, D.A. Carson writes: “one of the most important steps we can take is to recognise where we are. We quietly confess that we are dangerously dry. Our knowledge of God is slight, and we long to pray with a greater sense of reality and a greater sense of fruitfulness. We want to learn how to pray.

Few of Paul's prayers have greater potential to help us surmount the hurdles of spiritual dryness and lack of faith than the one in Philippians 1:9-11. It can help us overcome our excuses for prayerlessness.”²

Paul writes a list of prayers he has prayed for the Philippian Christians. What are they?

Prayer point #1 [your love may abound more and more](#) (v9)

Prayer point #2 [with knowledge and all discernment](#) (v9)

Prayer point #3 [so that you may approve what is excellent](#) (v10)

Prayer point #4 [and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ](#) (v10)

Prayer point #5 [filled with the fruit of righteousness](#) (v11)

Prayer point #6 [to the glory and praise of God](#) (v11)

What is the practical connection between each of the prayer points?

[Love is shaped by knowledge and discernment which helps us to approve what is excellent and in turns helps us to be pure and blameless, leading to fruitful living that echoes to the praise and glory of God \(the God who brings about these things in response to prayer\)](#)

Implications for today

² D.A. Carson, *A Call to Spiritual Reformation* (Grand Rapids; Baker Books, 1992) 123-124

What are some ways we at St Matt's and in our Life Groups can deepen our fellowship?

How should 1:9-11 shape how you pray and what you pray for?

Read Philippians 1:9-11 again, thank God that He has placed this prayer in His Word, and pray this prayer for each other.

We Preach Christ: Philippians 1:12-26

“Secularization refers to the processes that squeeze religion to the periphery of life. The result is not that we abandon religion or banish the gospel; rather, religion is marginalized and privatized, and the gospel is rendered unimportant” (Carson, Basics for Believers, p10). Discuss.

Read Philippians 1:12-26

According to 1:12-14, what is Paul’s view on the result of his time in jail?

Paul is in jail (he’s in jail for preaching the gospel) – and Roman jails were horrible places - but instead of seeing it as a problem – he saw it as a blessing. Why? Being in jail was a blessing because he could share the gospel with those in jail. Not only with fellow prisoners – but also the guards. In Roman jails, the guards were chained to the prisoners – it was meant to mean that the prisoner could not get away. But in this instance, the tables are turned – the guard could not get away from Paul – they had no choice but to hear the gospel. And the guards were on shifts – Paul had access to a lot of the guards. It’s quite a funny situation.

Read Genesis 50:20 and Philippians 1:12-14.

What does this tell us about God’s use of hardship in His people’s lives?

God brings good out of the bad (in the midst of the bad we often cannot see what God is doing though)

What does it mean to ‘preach Christ’ (1:15)?

“Christ” is the Greek work for “King”. Therefore, preaching Christ means speaking of the person and work of the King. This includes the following: God indeed came down to earth – Jesus (being fully God, fully man). He came down to this earth and told us all about God, how to be friends with God.

Then He went to the cross – He died on the cross – He cried out “it is finished” because on the cross Jesus took the punishment that we deserve. He took the penalty for our past, our present and our future sins.

But Jesus not only died, but He rose to life. This is the sealer – the proof that He is who He said He is – God. No one else could die and rise again. Death could not hold Him down. God cannot die. Jesus rules – and that what Jesus is doing now – He is ruling this world – He rose back up into heaven where He rules this world – including you.

And Jesus said for those who trust in Him, who trust that His death on the cross has paid the penalty for their sins - He takes all our sin away. So now when God looks at us – He no longer sees our sin – but He now sees people who are perfect. There is nothing to be punished. So we are free to submit to God as rightful ruler of this world – and in doing so, because He is all powerful – He says that we “may have life and have life in abundance (Jn 10:10).

What are the motives for the two groups who 'preach Christ' (1:15-17)?

1. Group #1 = envy & rivalry, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment
2. Group #2 = good will, love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel.

Why does Paul say "but what does it matter?" (v.18) about preaching the gospel?

He just wants Jesus to be made known

What does this tell us about Paul?

He's obsessed with Jesus; He's single-minded; he put the gospel first, not his own aspirations (whilst being under attack by other preachers – see 1:17)

Read 1:20-24.

What was Paul's attitude as a Christian to:

- Life – to live means ministry – Christ-centred ministry, Christ-empowered ministry, Christ's presence in his ministry.
- Death – brings his ministry to an end, and ushers in the glorious delight of being in the unshielded presence of the exalted Jesus Himself.

What were his reasons for choosing one rather than the other?

Instead of choosing what was best for himself, Paul consistently chose the well-being of others as his first priority (under Christ). He'd rather be in heaven, but he made a principled stand that he would seek the good of others. His motto was 'others'. What is best for the church? What is best for others? The answer to those questions were what he would do.

Implications for today

How should we see hardship, and what should we be seeking to do amidst our hardship?

That hardship does suck, but God will use it for good (our good and the good of others). Our mindset in the midst of hardships is to be like Paul's – share the hope that we have in Christ, and seek the good of others. Our joy and reward and peace and comfort will come (if not now, definitely in the "gain" of heaven")

Pluralism has let people to believe that the belief that one Saviour for all peoples is an arrogant statement. Where does our preaching Christ fit into this picture?

“Life hurts. It hurts emotionally, financially, physically, and spiritually. In the midst of suffering there is nothing worse than a pithy bumper sticker solution to a life wrecking hardship and what suffering people need is real truth for real life in real pain” (Anon). How are we going at preaching Christ?

- Individually

- Corporately

Worthy of the Gospel: Philippians 1:27-2:11

How does the world think Christians should act?

Read 1:27-30

Phil 1:28-30 explains how one lives their life worthy of the gospel of Christ. What does Paul say?

Standing firm in one spirit, with one mind, striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, not frightened in anything by your opponents (vv.27-28). Believing in Christ / suffering for His sake.

Why might suffering for the gospel be a privilege (v.29)?

Because it shows that we are truly Christ's disciples (v.29; see also John 15:15).

Because we are engaged in the same struggle Paul had (v.30) – and this shows that Satan is threatened by us – when we aren't a danger to Satan, he leaves us alone.

For the blessings and privileges we have as suffering Christians, see also the Beatitudes (Matt 5:1-12)

Read 2:1-11

How does Paul tell the Philippians to make his joy complete? Are there one or two words that sum up these thoughts? How might this practically work for us at 5:17 church?

Same mind (unity in diversity), in full accord with one mind, nothing from rivalry or conceit, humility (other-person centredness – other people's interests are to be treated as more important than our own.

If we look at 2:6-11 Paul has given us a summary of Jesus' actions and attitudes. What does this tell us about:

- The person of Jesus?

The form of God (God Himself), born as a man, didn't grasp equality with the Father – made Himself nothing (in comparison with His pre-incarnate glory – see 2 Cor 8:9), highly exalted, name above every other name.

- The work of Jesus?

Became a servant (Mark 10:45) – obedient to the point of death, dying on the cross, ascending and ruling.

- What is expected of us?

Humility, be happy to be No.2 instead of chasing first place, servant-hearted, taking up our cross – we will be exalted at the proper time.

Implications for today

In light of this passage, can you think of any behaviours you need to change in order to ‘conduct yourself in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ’?

Write them down, and spend some time now asking God’s help to change these things.

“Self esteem. Self improvement. Self help. Self love. Self actualization. Self pride. It’s all self delusion. Philippians 2:1-11 teaches how Jesus is for us the most happy person who has ever lived because, in part, He was the most humble”

Living with fear & trembling: Philippians 2:12-30

Read Philippians 2:12-30

Read 2:12-13

A classic old Christian statement is “to let go and let God”. What does 2:12-13 say to this statement?

God is sovereign in our salvation and sanctification, yet He calls us to work out what He has worked in us – we are to obey, work out our salvation with fear and trembling.

What does this practically mean for us?

God’s enabling grace means that we don’t “let go and let God” but instead we “trust God and get going”. God helps us to make the right choices – our role is not just to know what is right and good, but to do them.

Read 2:14-18

What are the negative outcomes of complaining and arguing? Why do we do it then?

v.15 = blameworthy and guilty, blemished, crooked and twisted – running in vain!

Why? Complaining and arguing are the easy choice to make – we can’t see the bigger picture so we respond to what’s in front of us; we can be like the older brother in the parable of the Prodigal God and the two lost sons – we think we deserve better, and so we complain. What about my rights?!

You could also refer to the wilderness generation in Deuteronomy 32:5 and 32:15-18

What are the positive outcomes of not complaining and arguing? How can we put this into practice?

Blamelessness, innocent, children of God without blemish, holy and unique amidst this world, light in the darkness, rejoicing with Paul

How? Holding fast to the word of life – believing and following God’s Word (as well as proclaiming it).

Read 2:19-30

Why does Paul mention Timothy and Epaphroditus here?

Timothy and Epaphroditus are examples of service-centred living.

Timothy was concerned for the Philippian church, he sought Christ's interests above his own and had a proven servant-hearted track record

Epaphroditus longs for his Christian family, he was humble and sacrificial. He was genuine in his Christian love.

How does your own life match up with theirs? What can we learn from them?

Is there anyone who you think is a good example of a Christian – a good example that you can learn from? Why?

How can you be a good example to other Christians?

Our Greatest Treasure: Philippians 3:1-11

Ask yourself the question: “Who am I?” Share.

Read Philippians 3:1-11

Paul happily repeats himself in 3:1. What is he repeating and why?

To rejoice in the Lord. Joy is a fruit of the Spirit and one of the key themes of the letter to the Philippians. And the great object of our joy is to be God (see also Philippians 4:4, Psalm 37:4, 43:7, 73:25, Habakkuk 3:18).

What three characteristics of the true people of God are given in verse 3? How far are they true of you?

We are the circumcision (1) we worship by the Spirit of God [see also Romans 2:29] (2) we glory in Christ Jesus (3) we put no confidence in the flesh

Read Philippians 3:4-9 again and then fill in this table.

| Paul's confidence in flesh (4-6) | Paul's confidence in faith (7-11) |
|---|--|
| Circumcised on the 8 th day | The surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus as Lord |
| Of the people of Israel | Gain Christ |
| Of the tribe of Benjamin | Gain God's righteousness by faith |
| A Hebrew of Hebrews | The power of His resurrection |
| As to the Law – a Pharisee | Becoming like Jesus in His death |
| As to Zeal – a persecutor of the church | Attain the resurrection from the dead |
| As to righteousness – under the Law - blameless | |

Why does Paul consider the impressive feats of column 1 rubbish ('loss')?

Along what two lines in particular did he want a deeper knowledge (v.10) and to what end (v11)?

How might you seek what Paul was seeking after?

“Conflict. Most of us shy away from it, dread it, and lament over it. Yet, the holy rebel Paul discovered joy in the midst of constant conflict that had broken his body, taken his freedom, but not touched his joy”. How can Philippians 3:1-11 help you do the same?

Residents of Earth, Citizens of Heaven: Philippians 3:12-4:1

Are you tired? Weary? Worn down? Burned out? Ever felt this way?

Read Philippians 3:12-4:1

What are we never justified in doing?

“Not that I have already obtained this” (v.12)

“Not that I am perfect” (v.12)

“Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own” (v.13)

Philippians 3:12-14 has been called “Olympic Spirituality” (John Piper). Why would he call it this?

What is the result of living the “Olympic Spirituality” life?

In 3:17-21 there are two ways to live. What are the two ways, what do they look like in practice, and where do they take you:

| Way of life #1 | Way of life #2 |
|----------------|----------------|
| | |

There seems to be a bit of a contradiction in this passage. Philippians 3:12 & 14 tells us to *press on*, but Philippians 4:1 tells us to *stand firm*. How does this work?

Implications for today

How can we do the following?

- Press on (3:14)
- Hold true to what we have attained (3:16)
- Imitate Paul (3:17)
- Stand firm (4:1)

Stay on Course: Philippians 4:2-23

Can your friends tell that you are a Christian by the way you live your life and conduct yourself?

Sometimes, we get into disagreements and “fights” with our fellow believers in Christ. What should our attitudes be towards resolving issues we have against one another? (v2-3)

- Paul exhorts us to be **like-minded**. To “think the same thing” (ref 2:2). To have the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.
- So, if there are genuine differences; our common ground should be Scripture; to submit to it’s authority. To have the same gospel orientation and to stand firm in unity.
- To be humble in our dealings with each other (2:3-4) “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility, consider others better than your selves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others”
- To pursue gentleness and practice meekness in our dealings with others (v 5)

Paul is in prison when he encourages the Philippian Christians to “rejoice”. How is this possible? How are we to rejoice? (v4)

- Paul prays with joy (1:4-5); dies with joy (2:17-18) and lives with joy in the Lord (3;1)
- Joy is an inner conviction that God is in control of all circumstances, even those of Paul’s imprisonment; and possibly death.
- Our grounds of rejoicing should not be based primarily on circumstances. Our delight must be in the Lord himself; who will enable us to live with joy above our circumstances. “the joy of the Lord is my strength” (Nehemiah 8;10). Also, that God works for the good of those who love him (Rom 8:28)
- “Consider it pure joy, my brothers when you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything” (James 1:2-4)

- Dwell on thoughts of the grace we have received through Christ (1 Peter 1:8-9); of being declared righteous; of having the Holy Spirit; of a promised inheritance; of our future glory etc
- To look at the example of Christ, “who for the joy set before him, endured the cross” (Heb 12:1)
- We are to rejoice always. Paul repeats it twice (and also beforehand in the previous chapters) so he is making a clear point.
- If we are rejoicing in the Lord then that should bind us together to our Christian brother and sisters, so we are like minded and Christ-focused.

WHY, HOW and WHEN should we pray? (v6-7)

- “He who dwells in the shelter of the Most High will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I will say of the Lord, “He is my refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust” (Psalm 91:1-2)
- When we come regularly to God in prayer, we will find His comfort. “Cast all your anxiety on him, because he cares for you” (1 Peter 5:7) [WHY]
- God’s answer to our prayers may not always take us out of our problems, but our hearts and minds will be “protected” by the peace of God. “And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (v 7) [WHY]
- Prayer is an expression of our trust and dependence on God. The attitude in which we present our requests to God, should be one of “thanksgiving”. We can be thankful when we hold onto to God’s sovereignty in our lives (Rom 8:28) [HOW]
- The Hebrew believers were encouraged to “continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise”; despite their extreme suffering (Heb 13:15) [WHY & WHEN]
- The result of rejoicing in the Lord (v 4); pursuing humility/gentleness (v 5) and prayerful thanksgiving (v 6) is a peace that passes all understanding. [WHY]
- The peace that God gives is supernatural, because only God can give it through Christ. “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give it to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid” (John 14:27)
- In everything we should bring our requests to God, who is near. (v6) [WHEN]

“You are What You Think”. What do we fill our minds with? (v8-9)

- God knows our thoughts (Heb 4:13)

- David recognized that not only did God know his thoughts. For genuine change in his life, his thought life had to change. (Psalm 139:23-24)
- Paul exhorts us to think “holy thoughts” To fill our minds with the Scriptures; to read, memorize, meditate over them. To “take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Corinthians 10:5)
- To avoid conformity to the world, through the various forms of media; we should be transformed by the renewing of our minds (Roman 12:2)
- We should “hide” God’s word in our hearts, “that we might not sin” against Him (Psalm 119:11)
- We ought to think of true things, not false things; noble things, not immoral things; right things, not wrong things; pure things, not sleazy things; lovely things, not disgusting things; admirable things, not despicable things
- Read helpful Christian books; learn from people like Paul who have clearly disciplined their minds
- Paul also points out that we have to put the things we have learnt and heard into practice (v9). We have to change our thoughts and our actions. (cf- James 1:22-25)

What is contentment? What is the secret to contentment? (v11-13)

- Contentment means to be satisfied; to be free from anxiety or worry (which is tied up with the verses before)
- Paul has learnt the secret of contentment, whether in plenty or in need. In any or every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether rich or poor. He has learnt to be content because his contentment is not based on circumstances → no need to be anxious. If you are found in Christ, you should be content as you are saved from death and have new life. Things of this world fail to compare to being found in Christ.
- Paul does not depend on himself in self-sufficiency; but has complete reliance on God, who gives him strength. His sufficiency comes from God. “I can do everything through him who gives me strength” (v 13). ‘Everything’, meaning everything that is pleasing to God.
- It takes strength, God’s perspective and resolve, to live above difficult circumstances, like imprisonment and the prospect of death.
- Paul also shares how it the Philippians’ gifts were a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. Part of our worship to God is through offertory and Paul looks at the attitude of the giver. We should give with a joyful heart, as everything we have is God’s. Paul encourages the people that the gifts they have offered are going towards the ministry of God.
- A favourite quote: “The joy of the Lord is your strength (Nehemiah 8:10). When the joy goes, the strength goes”

Implications for today

How do you think the media bombards our minds with worldly values and godless thoughts? Discuss practical steps to counter this

To be able to recognize sin and filth when we encounter it with our eyes, minds and ears; and to be able to do that by filling our hearts and minds with godly things. Practical steps may be to come up with plans to stop you falling into temptation. Like avoiding the chance to fall into temptation, creating accountability groups, praying for each other.

Filling our minds with God's Word, letting it change us and mould us to be servants of Christ.

Why is it important that we live godly lives? Spend some time praying together for ways we can live out our faith. Before you pray, take a moment to think of WHY you pray and HOW you pray.