

Sermon Series: Philippians

This sermon series is designed to be used by congregations that meet weekly. If you need any further details please don't hesitate to contact the Beacon Resources Hub.

Please remember that all congregations are encouraged to focus on the vision and values three times a year in January, May and September and that additional resources are available to support congregations at Easter and Christmas.

This pack comprises of an overview of the sermon series and available supportive resources and then each individual sermon has a supporting one page document that expands on that individual passage.

Before you embark on teaching Philippians you might want to read about how the church was formed in Acts 16, and the situation a decade later that lead to Paul writing.

Acts 16:11-40 records how this first church in Europe came into existence in AD 48/49. From it's first convert Lydia (16:13-15) to a church established in her home (Acts 16:40). It is a diverse group: a wealthy, influential businesswomen; a forgotten slave girl; and the family of a hardened jailer are the trio of examples we are given.

Philippians 2:25-30, 4:18: Over a decade later, in AD 62ish, Epaphroditus brought a gift from the church to Paul who was in prison. He also brought news about the health of the church and its people, especially a broken and damaging relationship between Euodia and Syntyche (4:2). Paul is devastated to hear of this division and, after recovering from a near fatal illness, Epaphroditus returns with Paul's letter that celebrates friendship and partnership in the gospel and is written to urge these two ladies to be united again.

Two ways we can find the main purpose of the letter?

1. Notice some of the main themes by reading, reading and reading again!

- **Joy.** That following Jesus means joy.

Philippians 1:4, 18, 25. 2:2, 17-18. 3:1. 4:1, 4, 10

- **Pain.** That speaking for Jesus means pain.

Philippians 1:7, 12-14, 17, 28-30. 4:14

- **Partnership.** That friendship and partnership with others is how joy in pain is established.

Philippians 1:5-7. 2:1-5, 19-24, 25-30. 3:17. 4:2-3, 14-16

Summary: Be friends, because when mission is painful there is joy in partnership.

2. Notice a specific focus point or instruction?

An important friendship/partnership that had fallen apart - Euodia & Syntyche - is probably the reason Paul wrote (4:2). Paul wrote Philippians to urge the hard work needed to help these two find that 'gospel-contending' partnership they had lost. The 'true companion' is likely Epaphroditus whom Paul is giving credibility and authority to, to step into this rift.

Summary: Paul wrote to the Philippian church to encourage them to seek out healthy partnerships, and to play their part in those partnership because it is that which brings joy in the midst of the struggles and hardship. This is God's encouragement to them, then (especially Euodia and Syntyche) and therefore us, now - to work together, stand together and generously share our lives with those who love and serve Jesus, and through that find joy in the challenges of speaking and living for Jesus.

Overview of Philippians Sermon Series

Passage	Sermon Overview	Available Resources
Phil 1:1-11	Confidence in God and compassion for people are God's key markers in a healthy follower of Jesus, partnership is how God gives us confidence in his power and prayer is how he raises compassion for people in our hearts. This week is about partnership and prayer.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendation of Discipleship Explored or Philippians study (available as a course in the Hub) • Bible reading plan online • Promote the next available All in course, our way of partnering together (ask the Hub when this might be)
Phil 1:12 - 26	When the going gets tough, either because of external adversity or internal suffering, God's people must prioritise speaking God's gospel and serving people over their own physical comfort or personal reputation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommend biographies from those who have faced adversity such as Corrie Ten Boom, Elizabeth & Jim Elliot, Joni Eareckson Tada, all available in the Bookshop. • Films 'End of the spear' or 'Beyond gates of splendor' are about missionaries facing adversity
Phil 1:27 - 2:13	A life worthy of Christ comes from a life founded on Christ which	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An opportunity to promote small groups and a community striving

	means unity, humility and obedience, just like Christ.	<p>together. Those wanting to join a small group can fill out the online form on the website.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TIWWA about small group story
Phil 2:14-30	Paul urges them to stop grumbling - a surprising main application of what it means to live lives worthy of Christ! He shows the benefits of this as meaning we will shine to the world, hold to the Word, and delight in gospel work before giving us two wonderful role-models of this not-grumbling attitude.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TIWAA of personal testimonies or mentors of faith • Recommend biographies of people who have led a life of faith. Also 'City Lives' and 'A passion for life' all give modern day testimonies • 'A few good men' taking inspiring lives from the Bible
Phil 3:1-11	Paul's highly graphic language is because he cannot stand the idea that the cross of Christ would be made less because we add our contributions and efforts to it. The cross is enough. We do not need to add our list of accomplishments because Christ's accomplishments are fully sufficient. It is not what we do but what Christ has done.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • "Christ is enough" a good song for worship • "Who Is This Man" one to one study • Recommend evangelism studies for small groups (found in Resource Hub) • Testimony video
Phil 3:10 - 4:1	Christ's death is sufficient. But now there is a warning and an encouragement about who we imitate. We are to beware of those who imitate and follow the world and instead find and follow those who imitate Christ.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small Group study "Follow" available in Resource Hub
Phil 4:2-9	The big thrust of Philipians has been partner-relationships. How people encourage each other, how we work together, how we partner for the gospel, how we have the same mind as one another. It was probably all building to this point - the reuniting of two key people who are grumbling, arguing and hating each other. Paul wants 'peace' to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommend opportunity for prayer at the end for restored relationships and/or opportunities to schedule time to meet with someone if there's a relationship that needs reconciliation

	<p>reign. This is not the internal peace of a settled heart but the external peace of two warring parties brought back together.</p>	
<p>Phil 4:10-23</p>	<p>This final section highlights the benefits of this partnering - mutual concern, both practical and spiritual.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Possible volunteer ask connected to idea of partnering together (look what we can accomplish!) ● Possible Be The Light application - Small groups partnering to reach out using a BTL kit (all kits available in Resource Hub)

Foundations for growth in Christ (Philippians 1v1-11)

Philippi was a wealthy, political city from which a diverse church was formed including:

- A successful businesswoman from Asia (Acts 16v11-15 esp v14).
- A delusional slave girl from who knows where (Acts 16v16-21 esp 18).
- A middle-class retiree from Europe (Acts 16v25-34 esp v29-32).

The gospel is for all people – nobody is excluded. Jesus generously welcomes all.

The question that stimulated Paul to write is how do Christians remain strong and flourish spiritually (1v27b, 2v16, 4v1), especially when there are opponents to gospel (1v28; 3v2&18); Christians are experiencing suffering (1v29); and there is internal conflict in the church (4v2)? His precise reason for writing is almost certainly the disruptive falling out that has occurred between Euodia and Syntyche in 4:2. It is why this letter is all about patterning together having the 'same mindset as Christ' (2:5) and therefore 'the same mind in the Lord' together (4:2). In chapter 1 v3-11: Paul starts by reminding them of two essential foundations that growth in the gospel is built on – confidence in God and compassion for people.

1. Confidence in the power of God experienced in partnerships (1v3-7)

I thank my God... We should be confident in the immense power of God as shown through the partnerships the gospel produces between people-people; God-people; people-mission. Paul is full of praise and joy because they are (v3-4):

- Partners with each other in the Gospel (v5); the social diversity of Acts 16 united in Christ.
- Partners toward maturity with God (v6); begun & completed by God (cf 2v12-13).
- Partners in mission by Grace (v7); in imprisonment & in proclamation they remained loyal to Paul and his evangelistic work (cf 4v14-18).

2. Compassion for the people of God expressed in prayer (2v8-11)

God is my witness... Paul has great affection/ compassion for them longing they may (v8):

- Overflow with love and wisdom (v9) – hearts and minds transformed by God.
- *So that you...*live excellently for Christ (v10-11a) – fruitful & spiritually productive lives.
- *To...*the glory and praise of God (v11b).

Conclusion: If we want to grow in God we need to ask ourselves two questions:

1. Are we confident in the power of God, and cultivating that confidence as we engage in the partnerships only the Gospel can produce?
2. Are we compassionate towards the people of God, and expressing that compassion in what we pray for them?



Prioritize God's Gospel and God's People (Philippians 1v 12-26)

In 1v1-11 we learnt about two foundations for growth in the Gospel (confidence in God and compassion for people). Now Paul gives us his two prioritizes for life.

1. In adversity prioritize the Gospel of God by speaking it (1v12-20)

Paul is in prison in Rome awaiting trial before Caesar (v13), but what might have hurt even more was the character assassination going on by fellow Christian preachers to ridicule, rebuke and distance themselves from Paul. However Paul's priority is neither to seek his freedom nor defend his character, but to advance the Gospel.

- V12-14; Paul's priority is speaking the Gospel over his physical comfort. The *whole imperial guard* has heard the Gospel, and other Christians have become *confident* and *bold* because of Paul's commitment. (cf Acts 16v25ff – Paul's prison preaching in Philippi.) Paul cares not for his comfort but for the Gospel.
- V15-18; Paul's priority is speaking the Gospel over his personal reputation. The preachers motivated by envy, rivalry, and pretence to harm him are Paul's joy because the Gospel advances. (Note – motives were wrong but the message was right else Paul would have corrected them.) Paul cares not for defending his character but for the spreading Gospel.

Paul's priority is to see the Gospel advance. To not be *ashamed* but *courageous* so that *always Christ will be honoured in my body* (v19-20). Speaking the Gospel comes first.

Paul's situation and response teach us two further things:

- The sovereignty of God to save using the least likely situations (prison, rivalry).
- The responsibility of Christians to speak of Christ is unaltered by our circumstances.

2. In suffering prioritize the People of God by serving them (1v21-26)

Paul's *desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better* (v23) but *more necessary on your account* (v24) is to remain alive and benefit the church with *fruitful labor* (v22) for their *progress and joy in the faith* (v25). Paul sets aside his desire for heavenly relief from hardship for the hard graft and labor of serving the church on earth.

Summary: Paul's priorities are not comfort in prison, defense in persecution, relief/ heaven in suffering. Paul's priorities are the Gospel of God (to speak it) and the People of God (to serve them). These are true Christian priorities, as Jesus taught them; *to love God...to love your neighbour* (Mark 12). Not what is best for me, but what is best for the advance of the Gospel and the benefit of the church. Speak the Gospel; Serve the church.



Mature Christian Life (Philippians 1v27-2v13)

Paul is ready to accept the strife of life over the glory of heaven to see Christians' *progress and joy in the faith* (1v25). What is this progress and joy he hopes for?

A life worthy of Christ – a citizen of Christ's kingdom (1v27-30)

'Worthy' could translate 'citizens' (v27a). Paul is drawing a parallel between Roman citizenship that many in Philippi had and the reality of our citizenship of the ultimate heavenly city of Christ, where we really belong. This means:

- Standing firm in Christ by **striving together in opposition** (v27b-28).
'Striving' means laboring, working determinedly, yoked in joint exertion. The way we survive and even flourish in opposition is by joining together as we face it. It means bearing the burden of others' difficulties, even when by sharing them we expose ourselves to the same abuse.
- Believing in Christ by **suffering together in conflict** (v29-30).
We should react to suffering by seeking to stand together and share that conflict with one another.

A life founded on Christ – copying Christ's character (2v1-13)

Paul emphasizes three characteristics that Christians should cultivate:

- **Unity** that reflects the extent of our existing bonds in the Gospel (2v1-2)
The bonds that unite us include Christ, love (of God), Spirit, and affection & sympathy (v1). We are united; the question is will we live this unity of love and mind out in *full accord and agreement* (v2).
- **Humility** that is based on the example of Christ (2v3-8).
We should view all people as more significant than ourselves and be motivated by a desire to serve others not succeed ourselves (v3-4). The model of Jesus shows the cost of this type of humility is great – *even death on a cross* (v5-8).
- **Obedience** that sees God's eternal plan completed (2v8-13)
Jesus' obedience to God achieves God's plan for salvation (v8). Our obedience (v12-13) to Jesus (v9-11 cf Is 45v23) completes God's plan for maturity.

Summary: Authentic Christian maturity is living as citizens of Christ's kingdom (as we stand together in opposition and conflict) and copying Christ's character (in unity, humility)

God's good pleasure (Philippians 2v12-30)

2v12-13 drew together a paradox – our obedience to God and God's work in us. God's sovereign work and pleasure is seen in our obedience. V14-18 spells out what this obedience is, followed by two examples of people who exhibit it (v19-30).

Do not grumble (v14-18)

The obedience referenced in v12 is simply and surprisingly 'not grumbling nor complaining' about our life and experience. Notice it is not to grumble in all things. Specifically in Philippians Paul addresses the relationships between Christians (cf1v15, 4v2). The *good pleasure* of God (v13) that comes from this is three fold: two they experience [*That you may...in v15-16a*] and one Paul experiences [*That...I [Paul] may... in v16b-17*]

- Shining forth in a corrupt world (v15). Distinct, pure and straight in a crooked and bent society.
- Holding fast to God's Word (v16a). The grip they have on the word/ promise of life is firm and unshaken.
- Rejoicing fully in sacrificial work (v16b-18). Paul longs that their faith may be proved genuine by their obedience so his work may not have been in vain, and he and they can rejoice even in suffering.

Two great examples; Timothy (v19-24) and Epaphroditus (v25-30)

These are the role-models to follow of 3:17. Paul emphasizes their concern for people (v20 & v25-28), and concern for God and his gospel (v21-22 & v29-30), even to the point of death.

No self-concern means no grumbling (after all we only grumble about things that affect our lives) so these two men shine, hold fast and rejoice.

This dual focus (on God and on people) is the recurring pattern of Christian maturity as laid out by Paul in Philippians: Confidence in God (1v6) and compassion for people (1v8); speak the Gospel (1v18) and serve the church (1v24-25); lights to the world (2v15) and hold fast to the Word (2v14). Maturity ignores self, and focuses on God and on people, and on bringing the two into trusting proximity via the Gospel. This dual-focus away from us means in all things we will not grumble or complain.

Who do you trust? (Philippians 3v1-11)

Having advised the Philippian Christians about how to grow and develop in their faith (1v1-2v18) and given them two great examples to emulate (2v19-30) Paul now turns his attention to what is distracting them away from Christ. He brutally describes some as 'dogs', 'evil-doers' and 'mutilators of the flesh'. Why? Because they were falsely and dangerously suggesting that a right standing before God is achieved through our own contributions and excellence.

Avoid false self-confidence in our own contributions (v2-6) – they have no value.

V2 - Paul says watch out for people who suggest that your contribution can make a difference to your standing with God.

V4 - If our achievements could put us right with God then Paul would lead the way. Paul uses himself as an example - none of Paul's great accomplishments can make him, and therefore us, right with God.

- Not meaningful sacraments (v3a) like communion or baptism.
- Not dynamic worship (v3b) in musical excellence or emotional engagement.
- Not impressive heritage (v5a) in family, church or personal service for Christ.
- Not diligent practices (v5b) in leadership, prayer, church going or giving.
- Not zealous commitment (v6a) in family, work, life or church.
- Not moral excellence (v6b).

Develop true confidence in Christ alone (v7-9) – he is of infinite worth.

The value and worth of Christ makes everything else appear worthless by comparison and to be disregarded as trash (v7-8) because true right standing before God is found by trusting Christ alone – a righteousness of our own by law or a righteousness through Christ by faith (v9). We must literally die to self-confidence in our contributions and live to trust and reliance on Christ alone. How can we do this? Only by depending on the power Christ himself provides.

Seek the power of the resurrection to enable dependence on Christ alone (v10-11)

Paul longs for resurrection power (v10a) to enable him to die to self (v10b) so that he ultimately will live forever (v11). The ability to develop a true confidence in Christ alone and not to rely on our own contribution is not something we can do (which would make it

Strive towards Christ alone. (Philippians 3v10-4v1)

Paul has drawn our attention to the wondrous power of Christ, and the Christian desire to become like Christ in his death (dying to ourselves and our self-confidence) so we may live forever (our confidence in Christ alone) (3v10-11). In this way Paul wants to '*know Christ*'. Paul now gives three instructions for how we can know Christ more:

Imitate those who are striving to know Christ more (3v12-17)

Paul is striving to know Christ more (v12-14) and eager others follow his, and the example of others like him (v15-17). The key idea is the hard work and diligent focus of remaining ambitious for Christ - *Press on* (v12); *straining forward* (v13); *I press on* (v14); *hold true* (v16). It is the language of competing in a hard, long, exhausting race, but a race with a wonderful crown for those who complete it – '*I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus*' (v14). So '*...join in imitating [Paul], and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.*' (v17). People like Paul (1v12-26), Jesus (2v1-11), Timothy (2v19-24) and Epaphroditus (2v25-30). The question is 'who do we imitate?', and 'are we, ourselves worth imitating?'

Beware those who are striving to know the world more (3v18-19)

We can either be ambitious for Christ, or ambitious for the world and ourselves. Paul now warns of the risk of emulating those who, on a human level may be very successful, but who are striving not to know Christ more, but the world. The very fact the Philippian Christians might imitate these people shows they are not unbelievers or clear false teachers. They must have appeared as genuine members of the church and professing Christians. But their ambition is not Christ but a good life. It makes them, in their subtly, dangerous enemies of the cross (v18) whose destiny is destruction (v19a). They are focused on their appetites (v19b) and glory in the very things that should be to their shame (v19c). Instead of being ambitious for Christ and heaven, their ambition is for the best the world has to offer (v19d).

Stand firm in your true citizenship under Christ (3v20-4v1)

What motivates us to emulate those who desire to know Christ? Our true citizenship is in heaven (v20a) where our all-encompassing Ruler and Rescuer Jesus resides (v20b) ready to transform us from earthly lowliness to heavenly glory (v21). That future reality

Gospel living (Philippians 4v2-9)

In chapter 4v2-23 Paul applies his letter explicitly to the Philippian Christians. In v2-9 he outlines three conditional promises of joy, peace and integrity: Though it all he has in mind the dispute between Euodia and Syntyche.

Gospel partnering produces lasting joy and significant witness (v2-5a)

V2-3: Paul addresses two well known 'leaders' in the church who are arguing over a secondary issue (Paul does not seek to correct it but addresses their manner of disagreeing). He urges them (v2) and urges others to help them (v3) unite *in the Lord* for they have labored side by side for the Gospel with many others, and they are already united as members of the 'book of life'. It is not so much that Paul says not to debate disagreements (i.e. not some false, sentimental, external agreement), nor that they must hash the argument out until agreement is reached (in some intellectual dual to the death). It is to agree in the Lord even as you disagree; to disagree in a distinctly Christian manner, as sisters who love one another and have fought for the Gospel side by side. He is reminding them that they serve the same King; they are not enemies but fellow-soldiers with more to unite them than divide. This type of partnership leads to:

- V4: Joy in the Lord (v2 - agree in the Lord = v4 - rejoice in the Lord).
- v5a: Witness to the world of Christ-like *gentleness/ reasonableness* (cf2v3).

Grateful praying produces peace (v5b-7)

As God is no longer far but near (5b), we can speak to him and be heard (v6). The peace in mind here is not the internal peace of soul this verse is often thought to mean, but the ceasing of warfare type peace; two disputing parties finding friendship again. He has in mind the power of prayer to bring Eudora and Syntyche 'to the same mind' again.

Good thinking produces integral living (v8-9)

What we fill our minds with directly effects how our lives are lived. We are what we consume! Fill our minds with rubbish and we will have rubbish characters. Fill our mind with good and we'll have good characters. *Whatever* is the repeated word – look for the good throughout the world, it doesn't need to be explicitly 'Christian', and fill your mind with that. It is actually not what Euodia and Syntyche were good! They were not 'of the same mind'. It is an appeal to think about things that bring us together not what tears us

Mutual Concern (Philippians 4v10-23)

Paul focuses on how our desire to show our concern can be expressed. We see these Christians had the desire (v10a) but for a while not the opportunity (v10b) to show their concern for Paul in the same manner he was deeply concerned for them (cf 1v7-8). This section is an unpacking of what mutual concern between Christians looks like.

Mutual concern adds substantial joy to genuine contentment (v10-13). Paul has no need for their help to remain content in God, but greatly appreciates their partnership. (cf 1Timothy 6v6-8).

- V10: Paul has great joy because of their concern, and their opportunity to express their concern, for him.
- V11-12: But his contentment is not dependent on their concern for him, nor any manner of other sources of 'joy' (status, hunger, wealth).

The joy brought by human concern is wonderful and refreshing as you are cared, loved, valued and appreciated by others. But is only the 'icing on the cake' of the contentment that comes with dependence on God. That divinely generated contentment is the deep seated knowledge that your value is utterly independent of your earthly position and fully built on God's delight in you. The only way to access this contentment in all situations is *through [God] who strengthens you* (v13).

Mutual concern generates financial partnership that benefits giver and receiver (v15-20). Paul has a significant need for their help to spread the Gospel, knowing it greatly benefits them. Their significant gift to Paul (v14-16; cf 1v5) is also a sacrificial and pleasing gift before God (v17-18). So much so that Paul seeks their gift not primarily for his benefit but because of the benefit it brings them (v17). The benefit it brings to them is a full provision from God's riches to equip them to bring God all the glory (v19-20)

Mutual concern is expressed in surprising friendships that are based on the grace of God (v21-23). The jailers and the prisoner in friendship and unity because of the Gospel (v22 cf 1v12-13), and sending their greetings to these unknown brothers and sisters in Philippi! Prisoner, jailer, and strangers all 'brothers' and 'saints' because of God's grace. So mutual concern adds substantial joy, generates financial partnership,