

# Philippians Notes

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## *A unique window into Paul's heart and mind*

- *He saw his life as a reenactment of Jesus' story*
- *His awareness of Jesus' love and presence gave him hope and humility*
- *Knowing Jesus is always a deeply personal and transformative*

The church in Philippi was the first Jesus community that he started in Eastern Europe (see Acts 16)

- A roman colony in ancient Macedonia
- Full of retired soldiers
- Known for its patriotic nationalism
- There Paul faced resistance when he was announcing Jesus as the true King of the World

After Paul moved on from there, those who became followers of Jesus continued to suffer resistance and even persecution, but remained a vibrant community faithful to the way of Jesus.

Paul sent this letter from imprisonment for a very practical reason. The Philippians had sent one of its members Epaphroditus to take a financial gift to Paul to support him in prison.

Paul sent back this letter with Epaphroditus to say **Thank you** and more.

The design of this letter does not develop one single idea from beginning to the end like many of his other letters, but Paul has arranged short reflective essays or vignettes and they all revolve

around Ch 2:6-11 which is a poem that is the center of gravity in this letter which artistically tells of the Messiah's incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and exultation. Then in each vignette Paul takes key words or ideas from that poem to show how living as a Christian means seeing your own story as a lived expression of Jesus' story.

## Chapter 1:1-11 Opening Prayer

Thanks God for the Philippians generosity and faithfulness

- I thank God when I remember you.(see 1:3)
- I'm confident that the one who began a good work in you will complete it. (see 1:6)
  - The life transformative work will continue even more in faithfulness and love

## Chapter 1:12-26 Paul's Imprisonment

Paul then focuses on their obvious concern for him being in prison. Being in a Roman prison was not easy, but it paradoxically turned out for his good to advance the good news about Jesus.

His imprisonment has inspired Roman guards and administrators know that he's in prison for announcing Jesus as the risen Lord, and his imprisonment has inspired other Christians to confidently talk about Jesus openly.

Paul is optimistic that he will be released from prison, but it is possible that he might be executed. As he reflects that isn't so bad:

**Execution:** see [1:21](#) - Death is gain - Presence with Jesus would be great for Paul

Or

**Release:** could keep working and start more Jesus communities which would be better for other people.

*Dying is not the true sacrifice, but staying alive for others would be - this is participation in the story of Jesus to suffer in order to love others more than himself.*

## Chapter 1: 27- 2:18 Following Jesus' Example

"Your life as citizens should be consistent with the good news about the messiah" (see 1:27) Christians way of life was to be shaped by another King other than roman patriotism (Caesar is savior and Lord) which would bring about persecution, but they are not to be afraid because this is suffering with Jesus is a way of living out the story of Jesus himself.

## Chapter 2:6-11 The Messiah Poem

Echoes of Old Testament: Genesis 1-3 Adam's rebellion; Isaiah 40-55 The Suffering Servant

This poem - Beautifully condensed version of the Gospel Story

Before becoming human, the messiah pre-existed in a state of Glory and equality with God. Unlike Adam, who tried to seize equality with God, the messiah chose not to exploit His equal status for His self advantage, rather He emptied himself of status and became human. He became a servant to all and more than that He allowed himself to be humiliated. He was obedient to the Father by going to his death on a roman execution rack. But through God's power and grace the messiah's shameful death has been reversed through the resurrection. Now Jesus is the King of all by God giving him the name above all names.

Jesus the Messiah is Lord! To the Glory of God the Father! - this statement is astounding

- Paul quotes from Isaiah 45:23 and is a passage where all creation comes to recognize the God of Israel as Lord;
- Paul's point is clear in the crucified and risen Jesus that the one true God of Israel consists of God the Father and Jesus
- Paul's conviction of who Jesus is
- Offers the example of Jesus that His followers should imitate

## Chapter 2:19-30 Two Examples

Both are examples of people living out Jesus' story.

### Chapter 2:19-24 Timothy

Like Jesus because he is constantly concerned about other's well-being more than his own.

### Chapter 2:25-30 Epaphroditus

He ended up risking his life to serve Paul in prison and almost got so sick that he almost died trying to help Paul. But God had mercy on him and Paul by sparing him the loss of a friend.

These are people who are living and breathing examples of the story of Jesus and worthy of imitation.

## Chapter 3:1 - 4:1 Paul's Example

His own story as an example; Those Christians who were demanding circumcision were still stirring up trouble (see Galatians)

Paul's Past brought up when he used to persecute, but he now gives up his status like Jesus "I regard it all as **"filth"** in comparison to knowing the messiah" (see 3:8-10). Becoming a servant will carry him out on the other side with Jesus through His resurrection.

"Our true Citizenship is in Heaven and we're awaiting our royal savior to come from there" (see 3:20)

- For Paul this does not mean hope to get away from Earth and go to Heaven one day
- Rather Heaven is the transcendent place where Jesus reigns as King
  - We're eagerly awaiting him to come from there to here to bring his kingdom of healing justice and transforming love to bring about a new creation.

## Chapter 4:2-9 Challenge to Live the Example

Challenges the Philippians to keep living out the Jesus story.

He first addresses to prominent women leaders in the church who worked alongside Paul and their in some kind of conflict.

- Paul pleads with them to follow Jesus' example of humility to reconcile and become unified (see 4:2)

Then urges Philippians not to give into fear, but in spite of their persecution, to vent their emotions and their needs to God who will give them peace.

- Peace - comes by focusing your thoughts on what is good, true, and lovely (see 4:6-7)
  - There is always something that we can complain about, but a follower of Jesus knows that all of life is a gift and can **choose** to see beauty and grace in any circumstance.

## Chapter 4:10-23 Closing Thanks

Imprisonments, poverty, and suffering have become his teachers

Secret of contentment - simple dependence on the One who strengthens him! (see 4:12-13)