

A Small Group Study and Discussion in the Book of Philippians

01 - GRACE AND PEACE

Philippians is a letter of joy and encouragement in the midst of adverse conditions. Paul is writing from prison but his thoughts go out in freedom. His natural circumstances are secondary to his concern for his friends at Philippi.

I. GRACE AND PEACE... A GIFT FROM GOD

PHILIPPIANS, CHAPTER 1

(Philippians 1:1-2 NKJV) "Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: {2} Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

A. Definitions

The Greek word "*charis*," means grace. It is the divine influence of God, upon your heart, which reflects in your life. It is God's unmerited favor, a gift you could never earn. Grace is God's gift for the moment, stored up in heaven, awaiting your need. It is intended to provide for you, and others through you, in any circumstance. It is always sufficient in every circumstance. It is a demonstration of God's loving care and concern.

 **What grace has God given you recently just as you needed it?**

The Greek word "*eirene*," pronounced "i-ray'-nay;" means peace. It can be further defined to mean quietness, rest, wholeness and prosperity.

 **When have you felt God's peace when it should not have been there?**

B. Joy: the Silent Partner of Grace and Peace

Paul is in prison, but the same grace and peace he prays for the Philippians, is what sustains him. He writes:

{3} I thank my God upon every remembrance of you...

{4} always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy,

When grace and peace are yours, true joy is about to come upon you. It happened continually to Paul. He lived above his circumstances. He knew the joy of the Lord in every trial he faced. The Greek word for joy is "*char*." Look carefully at the Greek word for grace. The connection is unmistakable. Joy as Paul knew it (and as the Holy Ghost gives it) is part of God's grace. The only giver of joy is God and it is a free gift, because it is a part of His grace. You cannot make yourself joyful for very long. You must live under the umbrella of heaven and receive your joy from God.

 **When have you experienced God's joy in the midst of trouble?**

C. Christian Fellowship -- Never Restrained by Physical Boundaries

Paul feels one with these people who are so far away. They can deliver grace and peace to each other because of their fellowship, their relationship, their “*koinonia*.” The joy of fellowship among believers in Christ is never stopped by distance.

✂ **Who makes you smile when you think of them, though they are far away? Why do they make you smile?**

Grace, peace and joy are the believer's gift from God, given to make you smile, but how much more... to make each other smile!

✂ **How can you give freely what God has given you?**

(Suggested end of your First Session)

II. THE BELIEVER'S ATTITUDE – CONFIDENT OF VICTORY IN CHRIST

(Philippians 1:3-6 NKJV) “I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, {4} always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy, {5} for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, {6} being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;”

We have seen in our first session that grace, peace and joy were part of Paul's life, regardless of his circumstances. These three things are to be shared among Christians regardless of circumstances or distance from each other.

A. All the Way with Christ

In Verse 6 Paul says he is confident. The Greek word for “*confidence*” means, *to be assured and content in one's belief -- to trust, and yield to that belief*. Paul is assured and content with his belief that the Lord Jesus will finish what He started in Paul's Philippian friends. Paul sees the Philippians as people who will go all the way with Christ and have the ultimate victory.

✂ **What has the potential to stop you from going the distance?**

(1 Corinthians 10:13 NKJV) No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.

(James 1:2-3 NKJV) My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, {3} knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience.

God has given us the ability to endure the trials, so we can go all the way with Christ. He will complete that good work in you if you let Him. Paul affirms this truth in Philippians 1:7.

(Philippians 1:7 NKJV) “just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace.”

The Greek word Paul used for “*partakers*” means to be a companion with others in a particular experience. Once again, Paul expresses the idea of sharing God's gifts with others who are physically distant. We all partake of the same gifts of grace, peace and joy that sustained Paul. They will sustain you!

🗑️ **How can you partake of these gifts in ways you have not yet tried?**

Paul made God's grace a continuing part of His life. It was characteristic of the lifestyle he displayed. He actively and gratefully received it daily... and willingly dispensed it to others.

🗑️ **What could you change to help you can receive God's grace daily?**

🗑️ **What presently has a hindering effect on you delivering it to others?**

B. All the Way with Christ – All the Way to What?

In the next three verses (9-11) Paul presents his prayer wish (what he wished in his prayer for his Philippian friends). We find three goals for all believers in Paul's prayer.

1. Verse 9: That love would “*abound still more in knowledge and all discernment.*”

2. Verse 10: That his readers would “*approve the things that are excellent.*”

3. Verse 10: That his readers would be “*sincere and without offense till the day of Christ.*”

🗑️ **What would you wish for your friends if you had three choices?**

We will study Paul's three wishes in the next session.

(Suggested end of your Second Session)

III. CHRIST'S WAY: ABOUNDING LOVE - TO THE GLORY AND PRAISE OF GOD

This is the prayer wish of a concerned friend.

(Philippians 1:9-11 NKJV) “And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, {10} that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ, {11} being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.”

Prayer Wish #1: from Verse 9

Paul's readers' love would “*abound still more in knowledge and all discernment.*”

1. The Greek word Paul uses for “**Abound**” means, “to be in excess, abundance, enough and to spare, to excel, to increase, and to remain (over and above).”
2. The Greek word translated “**knowledge**” means, “correct understanding of what is really going on.” “**Judgment**” is the ability to make proper decisions.
3. Notice all of this comes from “**your love**,” not your brains or education or experience. The prayer in these verses is actually saying,

“And this I pray, that the love in you may increase (even to excess) beyond what you need, with enough to spare for others so all of you will know the truth about your circumstances and make good decisions every time.”

🔗 Can you recall a situation when your discernment was incorrect?

Prayer Wish #2: from Verse 10

That Paul’s readers would “**approve the things that are excellent.**”

To “**approve**” means to “try” or “test out.” This verse prays we would try out only “**excellent things**” for our lives... only things that God approves of, things that cause us to grow in Christ.

🔗 What have you tried out lately that you could call “excellent”?

Prayer Wish #3: also from Verse 10

Paul’s readers would be “**sincere and without offense till the day of Christ.**”

1. The Greek word for “**sincere**” means, “to be judged in the light and found to be pure.” In Biblical days gold was judged in sunlight to determine its degree of purity. Today, we must judge ourselves in the light of the Son.
2. To be “**without offense**” means, “to act in a way that does not lead to sin.” This verse actually says, “that you may be judged in the light and found to be pure, without sinful actions, until the day Jesus returns.”

🔗 What are the frequent or common (every day) sinful things we do or say to each other that will not stand up to the light of the Son?

Let’s combine these paraphrased verses (9-11) together.

Philippians 1:9-11 (paraphrased) I pray four things for you:

1. {Verse 9a} ***That the love in you may increase beyond what you need, spilling out on others, so all of you know the truth about your circumstances, making good decisions every time.***
2. {Verse 9b} ***That you test only what God wants you to experience.***
3. {Verse 10} ***That at the end of the age you may be judged in the light of the Son of God and found to be pure and without sin.***
4. {Verse 11} ***That your abounding love will fill you with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.***

(Suggested end of your Third Session)

IV. IN CHRIST: CONFIDENCE IN ANY SITUATION

(Philippians 1:12-14 NKJV) “But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, [13.] so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ; [14.] and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.”

A. Unpleasant Things happen in Life

We all go through trouble, though many of us do not have as much trouble as the Apostle Paul had. God uses our times of testing for various reasons. For example:

1. To purify us in the sense of holiness, or to help us to grow into spiritual maturity
2. To show others our character (To show them the Christ in us)

🗒️ **When have you been impressed by someone's reaction to trouble?**

🗒️ **How about someone who reacted so poorly that you took notice? (no names please)**

B. Paul's lifestyle within his imprisonment gives us the example of victory “In Christ.”

The apostle was a confident, assured and positive kind of person, regardless of his situation. When you are “in Christ,” there are three truths you need to understand.

1. You can be in a difficult situation and still be in the will of God. Give thanks to Him, not for the trouble, but for His presence with you in your trouble.

(1 Thessalonians 5:18 NKJV) “in everything give thanks; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you.”

2. Your trouble never has the power to separate you from God.

(Romans 8:38, 39 NKJV) “For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

↓
One translation:
“from the place of omnipotent power.”

3. You will still walk in the good works that God has created for you.

There are no surprises in heaven. God has a plan for you, especially in your difficulties.

(Ephesians 2:10 NKJV) “For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”

🗒️ **How has God reassured you recently, when you were in some difficulty?**

C. You are “in Christ.” Good news is coming your way.

(Philippians 1:15-18 NKJV) “Some indeed preach Christ even from envy and strife, and some also from good will: {16} The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my chains; {17} but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel. {18} What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice.”

In Verses 15-18, Paul says that the issue is not “why people preach the Gospel.” It always brings good news. Paul rejoices (even while imprisoned) because being “in Christ” is available to everyone who hears the Gospel. Paul has this attitude of joy because he knows his life, with all its trouble, can still accomplish the purposes of God. He will have the joy of sharing the gift of being “in Christ” with many others.

(Romans 8:28, 29 NKJV) “And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. {29} For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.”

(Amplified Bible) “For from the very beginning God decided that those who came to him--and all along he knew who would--should become winners like his Son, so that his Son would be the First, with many brothers and sisters.”

Paul knew he was a winner in an eternal family of winners!

 **What is there in you that could become more “like Christ” right now?**

(Suggested end of your Fourth Session)

V. OUR LIFE *IS* CHRIST

(Philippians 1:19-21 NKJV) “For I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayer and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. [21.] For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”

 **What does it mean to be living in Christ (“to live is Christ”)?**

A. Living is Christ

1. We can live with unshakable faith regardless of circumstances. Everything we do can be Christ-centered. Our perspectives do not depend on circumstances or influence from

others. How we see things should be measured by what we have seen in the Lord. He is life and life more abundantly. When we live in Him, living is Him!

2. As believers, we are in spiritual union with Christ. Our actions must agree with and be in step with Christ. When we are out of step with Him, confusion, doubt and loss of peace results. Get in step! Imitate His walk. You can be whatever He is in you!

(1 Corinthians 11:1 NKJV) "Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ."

Imitation is the greatest compliment and honor we can give someone.

What are the most common ways Christians get out of step with Christ?

3. A winning army holds ranks, stays in step and walks together. Have you ever watched a three-legged race where two people run with a leg tied to each other?

The winners are the ones who are best able to stay in step. The opportunity to imitate Christ leads to victory with Christ. Get in step with His Word! Get in step with His will! Start walking!

What does it mean to be "like Christ"? Give a practical every-day example.

B. Living for Christ

(Philippians 1:22-26 NKJV) "But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor; yet what I shall choose I cannot tell. {23} For I am hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. {24} Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you. {25} And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith, {26} that your rejoicing for me may be more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again."

Living for Christ is most often accompanied by challenges and choices. Even the apostle struggled with his flesh. It was not always easy to make sacrificial choices and put aside his preferences. He found his strength to make the good choices (eternally significant choices) by living for Christ. This means Paul was a "No Choice Christian." He would not consider any choices that would neglect the people God had given him to love and care about. He would not ever do anything that he thought would oppose the will of God. He would do all things God asked as part of his living for Christ.

What are the some ways Christians get in step and overcome the obstacles to living for Christ?

C. The Corporate Life of the Church

(Philippians 1:27) "Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel,"

We are to stand fast in one spirit and be of one mind... in other words, in unity of spirit and mind, with the same goal - living the Gospel successfully in the context of God's family.

✂ What results from living a close personal, yielded relationship to Christ?

(Philippians 1:28-2:2) “and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God. [29.] For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, [30.] having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me. [2:1] Therefore if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and mercy, [2.] fulfill my joy by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.”

✂ Discuss these buzz-words the apostle includes in the verses above.

- Consolation in Christ**
- Comfort of love**
- Fellowship of the Spirit**
- Like-minded**
- The same love**
- One accord**
- One mind**

Even in the midst of trouble, we have a guarantee, because our lives are in Christ.

(Ephesians 4:1-3 King James Version) “I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called, [2.] With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; [3.] Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.”

Unity is more important than most other things in God’s kingdom. Unity will characterize our lives in the eternal City of God, the New Jerusalem. Let us practice heaven on earth now!

(This is the end of 01 GRACE AND PEACE, Chapter 1. Please go on to Chapter 2.)