

Phil 01 - Circumstances - Phil 1:1-6

[Primary Commentators used – H.C.G. Moule “*Phillipian Studies*” – James Montgomery Boice “*Philippians*” – William Barclay “*Philippians*”]

Philippians is about circumstances

& more specifically how God has provided for you to Walk Victoriously IN your circumstances

Philippians is about JOY – & REJOICING
IN the midst of your circumstances

& so - If there are any Christians here today facing “Circumstances” then Philippians is the book for you to study - & apply

It was about 61 AD – nearing the end of Paul’s life

Paul had been arrested in Jerusalem -
& held in prison in Ceasarea for 2 yrs

he survived a storm – shipwreck – snakebite . . .
& finally brought to Rome – still as a prisoner

while in Rome (+- 2 more yrs) – he was under house arrest -
24 hrs/day – he was chained to a Roman Guard
(*which he saw as a great witnessing opportunity*)

he had been deserted by most of his friends –
& some of the church leaders in Rome had turned against him,
& were trying to “capitalize” on his imprisonment

& under these Terrible Circumstances – The book of Philippians was written
& no book in the NT is as filled with Joy as the book of Philippians

All thru the book Paul is speaking of inner-joy - & rejoicing - - -
he makes reference to it 16 times in just 4 Ch’s

In Philippians we learn not only ;

How to be **Content** in *whatever state we are in* . . .
but how we can actually **Rejoice** - in *whatever state we are in*

Why did Paul have such joy in *Circumstances like these* . . .

& **why do we** have such a hard time finding joy in our
Generally Affluent Circumstances

Maybe it's because our *Affluent Christian Culture* teaches us
to look **to** our **Circumstances** to bring us **Joy**

Somehow we've acquired this misunderstanding
that our **Circumstances** & our **Joy** should be connected

& **we've been fooled** into thinking –
if we can just make our **circumstances** joyful – then **we** will be joyful . . .

& guys **THAT** is Not True . . . & it's not Biblical – In fact . . .
It is the opposite of everything the Bible teaches

Paul's Joy came solely out of
his *ever increasing relationship w/ Jesus Christ*

& **so his circumstances** could never stop his Joy – In fact . . .
they only *motivated him* to a deeper level of *dependence on Christ*

One of the greatest things about our ever-increasing *relationship w/ Christ*
is that our circumstances slowly begin to take a "*back-seat*"

As Christ consumes more of our focus –
Our circumstances slowly begin to fade into the distance . . .

& **our True Inner Joy** from knowing Christ –
begins to take the "*Driver's seat*" – Christ becomes our focus

Our circumstances are still there –
they just don't have the *Top Billing* any more . . .

They don't take up our **focus**, our **thought**, our **efforts** –
but instead our **ever-increasing relationship** with Christ does

& **that is truly** – the **#1 secret** - to the “**Joy-Filled**” Christian Life

The **Apostle Paul's Focus** on Jesus Christ in his life
far outweighed **ANY** thoughts about his circumstances

In the **1st Ch** of Philippians alone –
The **name of Christ** is referenced **17 times** in **30 Vs's**
(over once for every 2 verses)

While Paul was living thru what we would consider **terrible circumstances**
His mind was on Christ, it was **filled with Christ** . . .

So much so - that he couldn't write more than 2 Vs's
without referring to the name of Jesus in some way

Christians !! – We were meant to be “**Filled with Christ**” –
Not filled with **good circumstances**

We were meant to be filled with the **fruit of the Spirit**
In the **MIDST** of our Circumstances
Not demanding that the Spirit **FIX** our Circumstances

THAT is “**Joy-Filled**” Christian Living

(again) **During the time** Paul was writing this “**Epistle of Joy**”
he was chained to a Roman guard –
awaiting **trial** & possible **execution** – for **no wrong** he had done

& **that's when God** used Paul to write to US
about how we can have Joy - in the midst of our circumstances

God taught Paul – so that he could teach us –

that we might say with him - (**Phil 4:11**)

“I have learned in whatever state I am in – to be content”

Paul’s contentment did **NOT** rely on his circumstances . . .

his contentment relied on Jesus Christ –

& on his ever-increasing relationship w/ Christ - & Christ **Does Not** change

Our circumstances **WILL** change – they’ll go from *abounding to abasing* –
from *having plenty* to *suffering need* (as Paul’s did)

But our **Joy** cannot Rely on our *fleeting circumstances* –

Our joy must come from our **steadfast, guaranteed**, relationship with Jesus

Who **never changes**, and Who *has already made a way* for us
thru these temporary circumstances - for our ultimate good

If our contentment is truly in Jesus Christ –

then we can *experience joy* in the **midst** of every circumstance . . .

AND THAT - is the primary message of *Philippians*

Let’s Pray

Phil 1:1

*1 Paul and Timothy, **bondservants** of Jesus Christ, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:*

Almost all of Paul’s letters start with his position of “*Apostleship*” –

but not here – here Paul is a **co-laborer** – a *fellow bond-servant* of Christ
(*& Timothy is with him*)

bond-servant – **Doulos** - not just a servant –

most LIT = “One bound to another”

It refers to one who serves another to the disregard of his own interests –
A servant for life – One who has **no other option**

& then Paul addresses his letter to
“all the saints **in Christ Jesus** who are in Philippi”

Saint = “separated (set apart) one” - “holy one” –
But the Key Words here - are “**In Christ**”

All believers are “In Christ” - & we have been made holy
by the Righteousness of Christ . . .

& so – the Bible refers to **ALL** believers – AS Saints

So – Paul the **Bond-Servant** – writing to all the **Saints** –
WITH the Bishops & the Deacons

Bishops = **Spiritual** Ministry Overseers
Deacons = **Practical** Ministry Overseers

& so the *church at Philippi* had some clear **leadership structure** –
& by **all indications** they were a “Healthy Church” . . .

except for some **Cliquish opinions & disagreements** (we’ll see later)

One way we know Philippi was a Healthy Church is –
they had **sent an offering** to Paul – to support him financially

& In fact – Philippians **was written** partly **to thank the church**
for the money that they had sent to help Paul

Phil 1:2

2 Grace to you and **peace** from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace & Peace – Are the twins of most of Paul’s openings
& they are especially appropriate for this book . . .

because our **True Joy** comes only from God's Grace –
not from our Circumstances

& certainly we know that the **True** "Peace of God"
never comes through our circumstances
but only **by God's grace** in the midst of our circumstances

Phil 1:3

3 I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,

Every time Paul thought of the work in Philippi –
including the "less than pleasant" circumstances -
he thanked God for the believers there

One of the most incredible Joys in the ministry –
is to see God bring **lasting fruit** from your service to Him

Chuck Smith relates a story in his opening msg on Philippians
that really, really encouraged me

he tells a story of the lasting fruit of the ministry–
By describing a couple that walked up to him one Sunday morning
with tears in their eyes,

& when they met Chuck they said to him –
"we're from New York, and we've been listening to your messages on tape
& we've started **a Bible Study** using your teaching on tape

& **our neighborhood** in New York is being blessed by God thru your teaching

& as I listened to that I was blown away –
because of **ALL** the fruit that Pastor Chuck could've referred to
as bringing him joy in his service to the Lord

he referred to a couple he'd never met - on the other side of the country
who were using his teaching in a place he'd never visit –
to further the gospel message . . .

& **Guys** – that is exactly what we do here –

Out of the 400+ people receiving our Bible teaching thru Word-By-Mail –
we have numerous people using our CD's for small group Bible studies

& **that** - is an *immeasurable extension* of the ministry
that God has birthed here in Nuevo –
& it's one that should bring us *tremendous Joy*

& **so Paul** is giving thanks to God for *the lasting fruit* of the ministry in Philippi
& *praying* for them always . . .

Read again **V.3** - & thru **V.5**

Phil 1:3-5

*3 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,*

Philippi was **the 1st place** Paul stopped when he came to *Macedonia* (Europe)

Paul & Silas had just taken on **Timothy** – as their new “*Young Disciple*”
(after the “John-Mark incident” – where Paul & Barnabas disagreed)

& **when** they were in **Troas** (closer to Ephesus) –
Paul **had a vision** of a man in Macedonian saying “*come help us*”

& **Paul got a ship** & came to the edge of the *European continent* -
& they ended up in **Philippi** (because it was the 1st city they came to)

& **they 1st met** with a group of women down by the river –
& **Lydia** – the seller of purple got **saved** - & opened her house to them . . .

& **so goes** the beginning of the church in Philippi –
As goes the beginning of every new church in the CC movement

But - **the Jewish leaders** soon found out & *started trouble* for Paul –
& **Paul & Silas** were *arrested & beaten* – & thrown in the *dungeon*

& **this** is where in **Acts 16** – Paul & Silas were *singing & praising* the Lord
at the *midnight hour* when the doors were opened by an **earthquake**

& **the jailer**, thinking they had escaped, was about to fall on his sword –
when **Paul** stopped him - & he said “*what must I do to be saved*”

& **he took them** - & *washed* their wounds
& **Paul** shared with the guards family - & they **all received Christ**

Eternal fruit birthed out of *seemingly terrible circumstances* . . .

& **so then** - the city rulers finally **ask Paul to leave** . . .
& with that - the *church at Philippi* began to grow on it's own

PLEASE READ ACTS 16

& now Paul says (**in V.4**) that he prays for them all – **WITH JOY !**

Paul was **thankful** - & **Joy-filled** - at what God **had** done,
& was **continuing** to do – in the saints in Philippi

& **ALL this**, coming thru some
less than happy or *easy* circumstances for Paul

But Paul was so focused on the **Eternal** –
that he could barely see the **Temporal**

his circumstances were so “*on the back-burner*”
he **barely knew** they were there

cont. in **V.5** Paul says he is “*Thankful*” - & “*Joy-Filled*”
for their “*fellowship in the gospel*” . . .

(again) **Phil 1:5**

5 for your **fellowship in the gospel** from the first day until now,

Fellowship – actually means much more than eating **together**

It means **a oneness of sharing - in a communion created by God**

Paul's speaking of their **Mutual Participation** in the Gospel –

It is **the bond** of a **greater calling** – of a **greater purpose**

It's **being united** by the **common goal** of the **Gospel of Jesus Christ** –

& man does the **church in America** need **some more** of that !

& **So - in spite of** all his **troubled circumstances** in Philippi – Paul says he thanks God upon **every remembrance** of them . . .

& he always prays for them **with joy** . . . **Because of** **their Fellowship** (**Oneness, Communion, Bond**) **of the Gospel**

& certainly Paul is also **referring** here to their '**Financial Support**' they had sent him **just prior** to this letter

& now – **in V.6** - Paul writes **the 1st** of the **famous Vs's** in Philippians

Phil 1:6

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;

Oh . . . If we **really believed** this –

We would view our circumstances **SOOOO Different**

This is a **RIFLE FOCUS** Mentality – Paul says;

"I am confident of THIS VERY THING . . .

& Then the Focus turns to **ALL GOD** –

that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;

The work that Paul is confident of - **is God's work** in the Philippians -
He **started** it – He will **continue** it - & He will **finish** it

God's **not like me**, He doesn't **start** a project - & then **not finish** it–
What God starts – He finishes

Has God started a work *in your life* ??

Do your circumstances scream out in *Direct Contradiction* to God's Work ??

Which one is **Eternal** – **Unchanging** - & **Omnipotent** ? - (*your circumstances?*)

How is it that we can **put more faith** in our *circumstances* than in our *God* ?

How is it that we **believe our circumstances** more than we *believe God* ?

God saw all those circumstances – **BEFORE** He began a Good Work in You
& God **NEVER** Starts – What He **CANNOT** finish

So the question is **NEVER** – **Are the circumstances bigger than God ?**

The question is **ONLY** – **IS THIS GOD'S WORK ?**

Because **if it is** God's Work – then **it is HIS WORK** –

& He **ALWAYS** finishes what He starts – **ALWAYS**

Let's take Salvation for example –

Salvation is *always a work of God*

You had nothing to offer God – **No Way to Earn** your Salvation –

Yet God *began the work* of your Salvation

& what He starts – He always finishes

In fact **Rom 8:28-30** – shows the *guaranteed finish* of your salvation

If you are Saved today – then **God** is At Work in **ALL** your circumstances

to complete the Good Work **OF SALVATION** – that He began in you

Rom 8:28 → →

Rom 8:28 (NIV)

*28 And we know that **in all things God works** for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose.*

The context is this Vs – is God Completing in us His Plan of Salvation & **all we have to do** is read the **next 2 Vs's** to see that

Rom 8:29-30

*29 For whom He **foreknew**, [meaning those He knew would receive Christ] He also **predestined** to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.*

*30 Moreover whom He predestined, these He also **called**; whom He called, these He also **justified**; and whom He justified, these He also **glorified**.*

ALL Past tense – From God's **Foreknowledge** of you – to you being **Glorified** with Christ in heaven – It is a Finished Work

& only God is big enough – to be at work in **ALL** of your circumstances – **to complete** the good work that **He started in you**

God Always Finishes What He starts ;

& so - what about that other **WORK** that God is doing in you ?
Is that really **God's work** - & not **your work** ??

If it is – Then God **WILL** finish what He has started
He *always finishes* what He starts !

Your Role – is to **Lean on Christ** – to **Trust** Him – in **Faith** & **Confidence**
to complete the Good work that He has begun in you

& our true Joy comes from *learning to lean on Christ* –
To **trust Him** instead of our circumstances

My Best Friend From High School – who Pam & I love to death (& *his family*)
Is a **Lineman** for *Nevada Power*

& he used to **climb those Power-Poles** every day (*when a younger man*)
& those **power poles** are a *good picture* of our circumstances

There's only one way to climb a power pole –
you got to lean back & fully trust your safety harness

& what happens to the young *newbee* is –
they *have a tendency* to not trust their safety harness –
& **instead** they begin to *focus on the pole*

& if they **focus too much** on the pole –
they actually try to *Hold Onto the Pole*
instead of leaning back into their harness

& as soon as they do that – *the spikes* in their boots slip out of the pole
& **they slide** all the way down that *power pole* . . .

with their arms wrapped around it –
collecting *a thousand splinters* all the way down

How crazy are we to cling to our circumstances – like that Power Pole –
instead of leaning back & trusting our Safety Harness of Jesus Christ

If we continue to focus on our circumstances –
instead of our *safety harness*
it's just like leaning in & hugging that Power Pole

& as soon as we do that – we go *sliding down* that thing –
all the way *to the ground*

& Many of us have a thousand *splinter scars* –
to remind us that clinging to our circumstances is fast, painful trip down

But - when we *begin to trust God* – *in the midst* of our circumstances –
then we start to *“Lean Back”* on our confidence in God

& we **finally realize** – *The secret* - is to *“Lean Back”* on Him –
no matter what the Circumstance – we just lean completely on Him

& then - the *circumstance* actually becomes *a ladder*

For us to **reach a higher place** in our *relationship with Christ*

Phil 1:6

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;

Let's Pray