

# Philippians 1: God's Work, Our Confidence

## Overview

A Bible study and teaching focused on Philippians 1, exploring Paul's relationship with the Philippian church, the nature of God's work in believers, and how to interpret suffering, ministry, and spiritual growth through a gospel lens.

### Core Scripture:

Philippians 1:1–26 (with references to Jude 24–25, Matthew 6:9–13, 1 Peter 2:9, Galatians, Ephesians, Romans 8:9–11, Matthew 5, 1 Corinthians 9)

## Context and Background

- Paul writes to the church in Philippi—a church that began unexpectedly when Paul was imprisoned there.
- Philippi was a Greek city with little background in Jewish concepts of redemption or a good God; the gospel was a radical message.
- Paul's brief ministry and subsequent imprisonment catalyzed the church's birth, showing how God can use hardship for His purposes.

## Key Themes and Teachings

### The Unexpected Work of God

- The Philippian church is a testament to God's ability to start and sustain His work, even when human involvement is brief or interrupted.
- Paul emphasizes that it is God, not us, who begins and completes the work of salvation and spiritual growth (Phil 1:6; see also Jude 24–25).

### Responding to Life's Events: Seeking God's Will

- Every circumstance involves many wills—ours, others', God's, and even the enemy's—but our calling is to discern and desire what God wants.
- Prayer, as taught by Jesus ("Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven..."), centers our hearts on God's purposes above our own.

### The Prayer for the Philippians (Phil 1:9–11)

Paul models a prayer we can use for others:

- **That love would abound more and more in knowledge and discernment.**
- **That we would approve what is excellent.**
- **That we would be sincere and without offense until Christ's return.**
- **That we would be filled with the fruit of righteousness by Jesus Christ.**

This prayer recognizes the need for both love and discernment, so our affections are wisely placed and our hope is not deferred.

### Sincerity and Integrity

- "Sincere" (without wax) refers to authenticity—being real about our flaws, not covering them up.
- In Christ, we need not hide our scars; our acceptance is secure because of His finished work.

### The Fruit and Gifts of the Spirit

- The fruit of righteousness (love, joy, peace, etc.) comes by Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit.
- Spiritual gifts are given for others' benefit, but the fruit of the Spirit is for our own transformation and witness.

### Suffering and the Advancement of the Gospel

- Paul's imprisonment, far from hindering the gospel, has made it known to many, including the palace guard.
- Hardships often serve God's greater purposes, emboldening others and spreading the message further.

## **Trusting God with Others**

- Paul demonstrates trust that God will continue His work in the Philippians, even when Paul cannot be present.
- This is especially challenging with those close to us, but ultimate responsibility rests with God.

## **Mixed Motives in Ministry**

- Some preach Christ from good motives, others from selfish ambition. Paul rejoices regardless, because Christ is proclaimed.
- We can trust God to sort out motives and outcomes; our focus is on faithfulness.

## **Living for Christ, Dying Is Gain (Phil 1:21)**

- Paul's famous statement: "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain."
- Living means fruitful labor for Christ; dying means being with Him, which is "far better."
- Paul models contentment in either outcome, seeking to honor Christ whether by life or by death.

## **Encouragement to Persevere**

- Paul's example encourages us to run the race of faith wholeheartedly, knowing there is reward and purpose in serving Christ (1 Cor 9).
- We are called to lay down our lives, not for salvation, but for the joy and reward of pleasing Christ.

## **Practical Applications**

- **Pray for others using Paul's model in Philippians 1:9–11.**
- **Trust God's work in people, even when you can't see the outcome or control the process.**
- **Respond to hardship by seeking God's will and looking for how He may use it for His purposes.**
- **Pursue authenticity and integrity; don't hide flaws, but let God's grace be visible in your life.**
- **Embrace opportunities to serve, knowing both fruit and reward come from Christ.**

## **Closing Prayer**

The teaching closes with gratitude for Paul's example and a prayer for help to follow Christ with the same trust, perspective, and faithfulness—leaning on God to finish the work He has begun in each of us.