



EXPLORE THE BIBLE.®

Personal Study Guide

Fall 2021 | CSB



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...e likemide
...g of one accor
...e through strife
...ness of mind let ca
... than themselves.
...y man on his own thing
...so on the things of other
...nd be in you, which was al
...us:
...eing in the form of God, "thoug
...bery to be equal with God:
...made himself of no reputation, an
...pon him the form ²of a servant, an
...as made in the likeness of men:
...⁶And being found in fashion as a man,
...nabled himself, and ⁷became obedie
...nto death, even the death of the cross.
...⁹Wherefore God also ¹⁰hath highly exa
...ed him, and ¹¹given him a name which
...above every name:
...¹²That at the name of Jesus every kn
...should bow, of things in heaven, and *thin*
...in earth, and *things* under the earth;

...2047,1
...²18 Matt. 26:39, 42; John 10:18; Heb. 5:8; 7:22 ⁶29 John 1:1-28; Acts 2:33; Heb.
...¹⁰Eph. 1:20-21; Heb. 1:4 ¹¹210 Isa. 45:23; Matt. 28:18; Rom. 10:11; Rev.

...each) over
...his priority
...nd glorified.
...a church of its
...kingdom of God),
...n, that they stand
...ected military pride,
...ad ready for combat re
...nemy's level of strength
...ss or the distracting entice
...re. The church must manifest
...adness. "One spirit" expresses
...er's unified attitude. **One mind**
...e soul") means that believers share
...together they prevent divisiveness
...Paul witnessed at Rome (vv. 14-17).

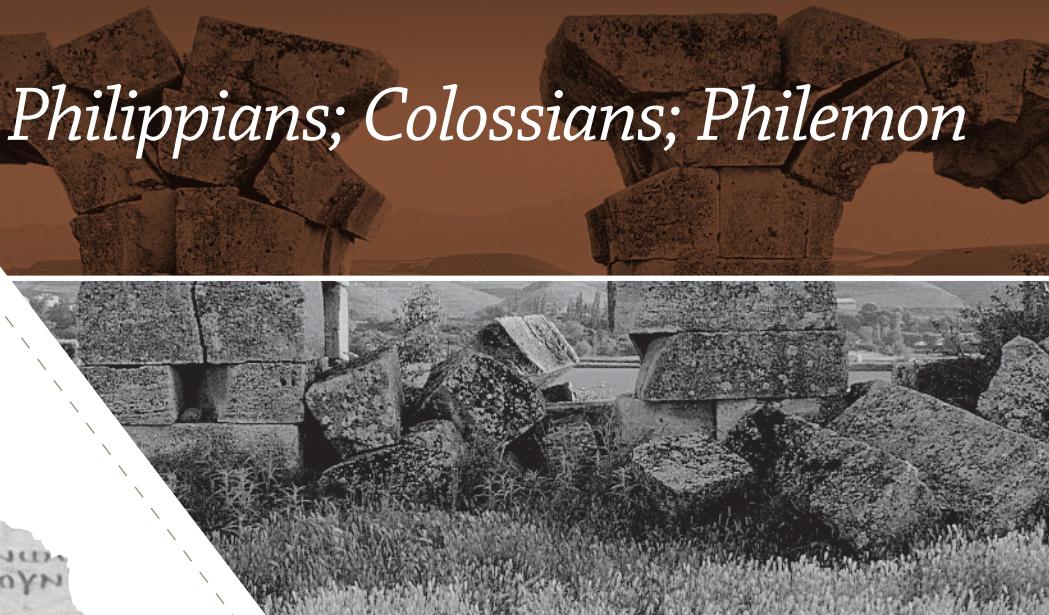
...love, same accord (lit. "the same soul"), and
...the same goal (one mind).
...2:3-4 Strife or vainglory recalls the prob
...blem Paul condemned (1:15, 17). Lowliness,
...the antidote for wrong attitudes, results
...in considering others as more important.
...Additionally, humility considers the inter
...ests (things) of others. Proper relationships
...include the contrast "not only, but also."
...Personal responsibilities demand consid
...eration, but the concerns of others arc
...equally important.

...2:5-11 This is one of the most difficult
...passages in the Bible, prompting various
... (Gk) *kenosis* (lit. "emptying") theories at
...tempting to describe what Jesus gave up in

...on to at all costs). J
...cling to equality with
...privileges to become
...2:7-8 The phrase ma
...tation is much deba
...der what Jesus gave
...did not divest him
...butes. Two statem
...verb. First, God the S
...Form (cp. v. 6) indica
...Second, the *likeness*
...emptying and servan
...*homoioomoi*) differs f
...Two statements ex
...humbled (cp. v. 3).
...fashion as a man p

U N D E R S T A N D | E X P L O R E | A P P L Y

Philippians; Colossians; Philemon



WHO IS JESUS?

In Paul's Letter to the Philippians, Christ was and is the eternal Son of God who gave up the glory of heaven to become man. He died on a cross for our sins, was raised from the grave, and exalted to the right hand of God, where He reigns today. When He returns, every creature will recognize Him for who He is and confess Him as Lord. He alone is our hope, peace, joy, and strength.

In Colossians, Christ is the One through whom God created all things and is Lord over all creation. He is Creator and Savior. He paid the price for our sin through His death on the cross. He provided forgiveness, canceling our sin debt and rescuing us from its eternal consequences. His death and resurrection make it possible for all who believe in Him to be reconciled to God and to live free from the power of sin. Jesus is supreme; He is Savior; He is sufficient.

In Philemon, Jesus is the One who transforms and restores relationships. He changes how we view people and treat others. He makes all those who share a common faith in Him members of one family—God's family. He is the One who breaks down the barriers that exist between people and unites us as one.

All of this points to our need of Jesus and the life He offers. Right now, He is waiting for you.

- **Admit** to God that you are a sinner. Repent, turning away from your sin.
- **By faith receive** Jesus Christ as God's Son and accept His gift of forgiveness from sin. He took the penalty for your sin by dying on the cross.
- **Confess** your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. You may pray a prayer similar to this as you call on God to save you: "Dear God, I know that You love me. I confess my sin and need of salvation. I turn away from my sin and place my faith in Jesus as my Savior and Lord. In Jesus' name I pray, amen."

After you have received Jesus Christ into your life, tell a pastor or another Christian about your decision. Show others your faith in Christ by asking for baptism by immersion in your local church as a public expression of your faith.

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*Evangelistic Emphasis

MEET THE WRITER

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FROM THE TEAM LEADER

Early in his letter, we find Paul calling the Philippians his partners in the gospel (1:5). Paul also challenged Philemon to consider him a partner when making his appeal on behalf of Onesimus (Philem. 17). By extension, this partnership included the church that met in Philemon's home in Colossae. (Archippus is listed by Paul in Col. 4:17 and Philem. 2).

Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon were all written as Paul sat in Rome waiting to appear before Caesar. We can assume this idea of partners was an important thing to Paul as he sat in house arrest. Paul knew he was not alone in taking his stand with Christ. There were partners standing with him, seeking to live Christ-honoring lives in their locations. Paul represented those believers while inside the walls of that Roman house while they represented him outside those walls. They expected each other to represent Christ well in word and in deed, with Paul expressing the joy he found in their partnership. They were counting on each other to do the right thing.

Our shared partnership in the gospel should impact how we live our lives. How we treat each other as believers and a high moral standard should be evident. Our prayer is that as we study Paul's letters to the Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon we will gain a deeper appreciation of the partnership we share in Christ.

In His service,

G. Dwayne McCrary

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WORD WISE

Terms listed here are identified in the Bible commentary with a dot (•).

Clement [KLEM uhnt]—a coworker with Paul and member of the church in Philippi (Phil. 4:3)

Colossae [koh LAHS sih]—city in the region of Phrygia, located near Laodicea. The name means “purple wool,” derived from the wool produced and dyed there.

Epaphroditus [ih PAF roh DIGH tuhs]—a coworker with Paul and member of the Philippian church; he delivered to the apostle a gift from the Philippian church (Phil. 2:25,29)

Euodia [yoo OH dih uh]—a female member of the church at Philippi who had a disagreement with Syntyche; she worked with Paul in the spread of the gospel (Phil. 4:2-3)

Imperial guard—the Roman emperor’s elite troops stationed in Rome. The guard was first established by Caesar Augustus, the emperor at the time of Jesus’ birth.

Laodicea [lay AHD ih SEE uh]—a city in southwest Asia Minor, ten miles from Colossae; Paul wrote a letter to the church there that has not survived; perhaps best known for its mention in Revelation 3:14-22.

Macedonia [MASS uh DOH nih uh]—a Roman province in what is today northern Greece. Paul responded to a vision to preach the gospel there (Acts 16:9-10).

Philippi [FIH lih pigh]—a city in the Roman province of Macedonia, what is today northern Greece. Paul first visited Philippi on his second missionary journey in response to his Macedonian vision (Acts 16:9). The church planted there by Paul was the first church in Europe.

Syntyche [SIN tih kee]—a female member of the church at Philippi who had a disagreement with Euodia; she worked with Paul in the spread of the gospel (Phil. 4:2-3)

Thessalonica [THESS uh loh NIGH kuh]—a city in Macedonia, what is today northern Greece. Paul started a church there on his second missionary journey (Acts 17:1-4) and later wrote two letters to the church.

Timothy—missionary partner of the apostle Paul. Paul first met Timothy on his first missionary journey in the area of Lystra (Acts 16:1); he was mentioned by Paul in the salutations of six letters (2 Cor.; Col.; Phil.; 1, 2 Thess.; Philem.) and was the recipient of two letters from Paul (1, 2 Tim.).

BIBLE READING PLAN

SEPTEMBER

- 1. Philippians 1:1-2
- 2. Philippians 1:3-5
- 3. Philippians 1:6
- 4. Philippians 1:7-8
- 5. Philippians 1:9-11
- 6. Philippians 1:12-17
- 7. Philippians 1:18-20
- 8. Philippians 1:21
- 9. Philippians 1:22-24
- 10. Philippians 1:25-26
- 11. Philippians 1:27-30
- 12. Philippians 2:1-2
- 13. Philippians 2:3-4
- 14. Philippians 2:5-8
- 15. Philippians 2:9-11
- 16. Philippians 2:12-13
- 17. Philippians 2:14-16
- 18. Philippians 2:17-18
- 19. Philippians 2:19-21
- 20. Philippians 2:22-24
- 21. Philippians 2:25-30
- 22. Philippians 3:1
- 23. Philippians 3:2-3
- 24. Philippians 3:4-6
- 25. Philippians 3:7-9
- 26. Philippians 3:10-11
- 27. Philippians 3:12-14
- 28. Philippians 3:15-17
- 29. Philippians 3:18-21
- 30. Philippians 4:1

OCTOBER

- 1. Philippians 4:2-3
- 2. Philippians 4:4-7
- 3. Philippians 4:8-9
- 4. Philippians 4:10-12
- 5. Philippians 4:13-14
- 6. Philippians 4:15-18
- 7. Philippians 4:19-20
- 8. Philippians 4:21-23
- 9. Colossians 1:1-2
- 10. Colossians 1:3-6
- 11. Colossians 1:7-8
- 12. Colossians 1:9-12
- 13. Colossians 1:13-14
- 14. Colossians 1:15-17
- 15. Colossians 1:18-20
- 16. Colossians 1:21-23
- 17. Colossians 1:24-26
- 18. Colossians 1:27-29
- 19. Colossians 2:1-3
- 20. Colossians 2:4-5
- 21. Colossians 2:6-7
- 22. Colossians 2:8
- 23. Colossians 2:9-10
- 24. Colossians 2:11-12
- 25. Colossians 2:13
- 26. Colossians 2:14-15
- 27. Colossians 2:16-17
- 28. Colossians 2:18-19
- 29. Colossians 2:20-23
- 30. Colossians 3:1-2
- 31. Colossians 3:3-4

NOVEMBER

- 1. Colossians 3:5-7
- 2. Colossians 3:8
- 3. Colossians 3:9-10
- 4. Colossians 3:11
- 5. Colossians 3:12-13
- 6. Colossians 3:14-15
- 7. Colossians 3:16-17
- 8. Colossians 3:18-19
- 9. Colossians 3:20-21
- 10. Colossians 3:22
- 11. Colossians 3:23-24
- 12. Colossians 3:25-4:1
- 13. Colossians 4:2
- 14. Colossians 4:3-4
- 15. Colossians 4:5-6
- 16. Colossians 4:7-9
- 17. Colossians 4:10-11
- 18. Colossians 4:12-13
- 19. Colossians 4:14-15
- 20. Colossians 4:16-18
- 21. Philemon 1-3
- 22. Philemon 4-5
- 23. Philemon 6
- 24. Philemon 7
- 25. Philemon 8-10
- 26. Philemon 11-13
- 27. Philemon 14-16
- 28. Philemon 17-18
- 29. Philemon 19-22
- 30. Philemon 23-25

INTRODUCTION

Paul wrote four letters during his imprisonment in Rome, a period when the apostle was kept under house arrest while awaiting an appearance before Caesar. (See Acts 28:16,30.) This quarter's study looks at three of these letters: Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon. Ephesians was the other one.

The contexts and experiences of the letters' original readers were different, so the themes of the letters varied as well. For example, Paul had founded the Philippian congregation (see Acts 16) and still felt a strong personal tie to that church. They shared that emotional bond with him and were concerned about the effects of his imprisonment. To encourage them, he emphasized themes like partnership and joy.

In contrast, Paul had never visited the city of Colossae and likely knew few of the Colossian Christians. However, he understood the pressures they were facing and wanted to minister to them from afar. The attacks of false teachers in Colossae had raised serious questions about the keys to faith and spiritual maturity. So, he reminded them that Jesus was superior to every other spiritual "option," and that His work on the cross was sufficient for salvation. The pervasive theme of Colossians is the sufficiency and supremacy of Christ as head of the church.

Finally, Paul's letter to Philemon represents a short, yet personal note to a friend faced with a difficult choice. Philemon's slave, named Onesimus, had stolen from him and escaped to Rome. There, he had met Paul and come to faith in Jesus. Paul's letter reflects an urgent plea for Philemon to embrace the return of his slave warmly instead of taking advantage of his rights to punish Onesimus. Paul's request was based not on first-century rules governing slavery but on Christian grace toward brothers and sisters in Christ. This brief letter could be read as an example of the truth declared in Galatians 3:28, "There is no Jew or Greek, slave or free, male and female; since you are all one in Christ Jesus."

Paul's letters to Philippi, Colossae, and Philemon call individuals to a higher standard. They encourage readers toward a deeper relationship with Christ that nurtures deeper relationships with others. More importantly, they provide God's perspective on what it means to live out the gospel in a meaningful way each and every day.

OUTLINES

OUTLINE OF PHILIPPIANS

- I.** Salutation (1:1-2)
- II.** Paul's Concerns (1:3–2:30)
- III.** Living the Christian Life (3:1–4:9)
- IV.** Thankfulness (4:10-20)
- V.** Benediction (4:21-23)

OUTLINE OF COLOSSIANS

- I.** Greeting and Thanksgiving (1:1-12)
- II.** God's Work in Christ (1:13-23)
- III.** Paul's Ministry (1:24–2:3)
- IV.** False Teaching Denounced (2:4-23)
- V.** The Christian Life (3:1–4:6)
- VI.** Conclusion (4:7-18)

OUTLINE OF PHILEMON

- I.** Paul's Greeting (vv. 1-3)
- II.** Paul's Thanksgiving (vv. 4-7)
- III.** Paul's Appeal (vv. 8-20)
- IV.** Paul's Plans (vv. 21-22)
- V.** Paul's Conclusion (vv. 23-25)



ON THE COVER

Ruins of store buildings in Laodicea. Laodicea was located in the Lycus Valley near Colossae and Hierapolis. The city was known for an eye ointment that local merchants produced. (See session 8.)

ILLUSTRATOR PHOTO/ BOB SCHATZ (11-31-2)



Joy in Prayer

Believers find joy in praying for the spiritual growth of others.

PHILIPPIANS 1:1-11

Friends who will pray for us are treasured. Their prayers encourage, direct, and challenge us in our spiritual lives. Their prayers create an unbreakable bond with prayer being one way of communicating love for another person. Paul had forged a special relationship with the believers in Philippi, and that relationship grew through genuine prayer that focused on continued spiritual growth.

How does praying with a person build or strengthen a relationship? Should prayer be a part of every healthy relationship? Explain.

UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT

PHILIPPIANS 1:1-11

Paul's connection to the city of Philippi is recorded in Acts 16. During his second missionary journey, the Holy Spirit closed some ministry doors to certain regions he had intended to visit. As he waited for clarity on God's plan, the apostle saw a vision of a Macedonian man pleading for help (Acts 16:6-10). That led to an open door into Greece and the first ministry in what we know as Europe.

Philippi became Paul's first Macedonian stop. Philippi was a Greek city, named for Philip of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great. Despite being Greeks, the residents were considered Roman citizens. Since Paul and his friends began their work among women near a river, it can be supposed that the Jewish population of the city was not strong enough to support a synagogue. However, pagan worship was a powerful force in the community.

Paul's ministry in Philippi included the evangelization of a businesswoman named Lydia, the exorcism of a demon from a young slave girl, persecution, an earthquake, and the salvation of a local jailer and his family (Acts 16:11-34). Eventually, the city's leaders made an official apology for their mistreatment of the apostles (Acts 16:35-40). While the missionaries were encouraged to move on quickly, they refused to leave the city before encouraging the new church that had sprung to life. Several years later, Paul arrived in Rome as a prisoner awaiting trial (Acts 28:11-31). It was during this time of house arrest that he wrote this letter to the Philippians.

Paul's letter to the Philippians essentially served as a "thank you" note for their support during his imprisonment. Based on information contained in the epistle, the Philippian church had sent Paul a gift by the hand of a man named Epaphroditus. Paul also used the letter to teach the believers about topics like suffering, unity, and contentment.

Read Philippians 1:1-11 in your Bible, noting words and phrases that define the relationship between Paul and the Philippians. How was the relationship impacted by prayer?

EXPLORE THE TEXT

SHARED FAITH (PHIL. 1:1-2)

¹ Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus: To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons. ² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

VERSES 1-2

Paul began with a typical greeting, identifying himself and **•Timothy**. Timothy was a young man from the city of Lystra. He came to Christ under Paul's ministry and later served as one of his travel companions. Paul considered Timothy his own child in the faith (Phil. 2:22; 1 Tim. 1:2), and the young man was probably a loyal visitor during Paul's incarceration in Rome.

Paul described Timothy and himself as **servants of Christ Jesus**. The Greek word for *servant* (*doulos*) can also be used to describe slave, a term that no one in the ancient world would have embraced. Paul was completely surrendered to the authority of Christ.

The apostle directed his greeting to **all the saints** in **•Philippi**. All believers are saints, set apart for God's purposes through Christ. The **overseers and deacons** received special mention. *Overseers* were the pastors who provided spiritual direction, while *deacons* were servant leaders who often met physical needs in the community.

DID YOU KNOW?

Philippi was an ancient city in what today is northern Greece. The church planted there by Paul was the first church in Europe (Acts 16).

Grace and **peace** are common elements in Paul's epistles. *Grace* is God's undeserved favor poured out on His people. *Peace* emphasizes a wholeness in every part of life that is produced by Jesus' finished work. Prior to Calvary and the empty tomb, we were living at war with God and were subject to His wrath. Jesus' sacrifice brought

peace and salvation to all who believe. It is possible that Paul placed *grace* before *peace* for a theological purpose. If so, he was reminding his readers that God's grace precedes our peace. Or, said another way, without His grace, we would never know peace.

What does Paul's greeting say about the connection believers have with one another? What role does a shared faith play in the connection?

THANKFUL FAITH (PHIL. 1:3-8)

³ I give thanks to my God for every remembrance of you, ⁴ always praying with joy for all of you in my every prayer, ⁵ because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. ⁶ I am sure of this, that he who started a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. ⁷ Indeed, it is right for me to think this way about all of you, because I have you in my heart, and you are all partners with me in grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. ⁸ For God is my witness, how deeply I miss all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.

VERSES 3-5

Paul had a longstanding relationship with the believers in Philippi. He had been there to help establish the church, and they had stood by him ever since. It makes sense that he would give thanks for this group of Christians.

Paul expressed thankfulness for his friends in every **remembrance** of them. Regardless of the situation, the Philippians were close to Paul's heart. Some other churches had developed deep issues that caused Paul pain. While the Philippians were not perfect, they were a source of pure joy for the apostle.

Paul's gratitude extended to his ongoing prayers on behalf of the Philippians. The tense of the verb used by Paul reveals that he was constantly praying for these believers. He had experienced persecution in Philippi, and he knew that the gospel had enemies there. One way he could offer encouragement and support was through his prayers for them.

Paul was thankful that joy summarized the primary emotion he felt when he thought about the Philippians. Joy stands out as one of the prime themes in this epistle. In verse 4, Paul added to this emphasis by placing **with joy** after **always praying** in the sentence structure.

When considering Paul's joy, it also helps to remember that he was living under house arrest in Rome as he wrote this letter. His current situation paled in comparison to the connection he shared with his friends and with God. This is the first instance in the letter where he indicates the superiority of heavenly joy over earthly circumstances.

BIBLE SKILL: *Compare verses with the same word.*

The Greek term for *joy* occurs five times in Philippians: 1:4; 1:25; 2:2; 2:29; and 4:1. Read and reflect on the five passages. How does each passage give you a different glimpse into joy as understood by Paul? Based on these verses, how would you summarize Christian joy in three sentences or less?

One source of Paul's joy was the **partnership in the gospel** that he shared with the Philippians. In a very real way, their cooperation in ministry helped spur his remembrances even more than the gift the church had provided. Later in the letter, Paul would clearly state that his trust for provision rested on Christ alone (Phil. 4:10-12). While he certainly appreciated the gift, he appreciated the shared mission it represented even more.

The Philippians' partnership assured Paul that they were doing good work for the kingdom in their own backyard. They were continuing the work God had started on the **first day** of the church's existence until the present time. Paul's life was tethered to the gospel. Whenever someone accepted Christ through his witness, his heart

was filled with gratitude and joy. When they continued to walk in Christ, those feelings were only enhanced. The Philippians were excellent examples of both—which brought Paul indescribable joy and gave him a reason to be thankful.

How might viewing other believers as partners in the gospel impact how a person treats those other believers? How does viewing others as partners add to the joy found in the relationship?

VERSES 6-8

As Paul reflected on the good work that was taking place in Philippi, he was **sure of** at least two important things. First, he knew that God inspired **a good work** among the Philippian believers. Some see this work only in the context of salvation. However, the addition of **day of Christ Jesus** indicates something more. Paul saw God’s work across the spectrum that began at the moment of salvation and would find its completion in eternity.

Second, Paul knew that God started it and would see it through **to completion**. The ministry taking place in Philippi would continue to make an eternal difference for the kingdom. The gift that Philippi had provided was a piece of this process. It was evidence of the good work God had begun and a reminder that He would finish the job.

Paul felt like it was only **right** for him to be thankful for the Philippians and to view them with such affection. He found two sources of these feelings. First, he said he held them in his **heart**. In Jewish thought, the heart was the seat of emotions, but Paul wasn’t just expressing a nice sentiment. Their shared experiences had forged a solid emotional and spiritual relationship grounded in Christ.

The other factor that kept the Philippians close to Paul’s heart was the partnership that he had mentioned in verse 5. The Philippian Christians had supported Paul during his imprisonment, even when that would have caused others to step back from him. Instead of pulling away, they joined with him in the **defense and confirmation of the gospel**. As Paul was standing up for Christ in Rome, the Philippians were doing the same in their context—and supporting Paul in the process.

Paul missed his friends in Philippi. He longed for their fellowship. The strong bond they shared was yet another reason for the apostle's gratitude. While he had some measure of freedom under house arrest, he was longing for the fellowship of this tremendous support system.

The phrase **God is my witness** takes the form of an oath where Paul called the Lord as a witness to his statement. It underscores both the strength of his connection to Philippi and the sincerity of his feelings toward the believers there. Relationships genuinely formed in Christ produce both unity and gratitude for other members of the body. Such an intense bond never just happens. Paul loved the Philippians with the **affection of Christ**. Paul's emotional connection to Philippi ran deep.

KEY DOCTRINE: *Cooperation*

Christian unity in the New Testament sense is spiritual harmony and voluntary cooperation for common ends by various groups of Christ's people. (See Eph. 4:1-6.)

GROWING FAITH (PHIL. 1:9-11)

⁹ And I pray this: that your love will keep on growing in knowledge and every kind of discernment, ¹⁰ so that you may approve the things that are superior and may be pure and blameless in the day of Christ, ¹¹ filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God.

VERSES 9-11

Paul took a loving parental tone in his letter. He prayed that their **love will keep on growing**. A growing love will produce a growing faith and witness. Paul used the Greek word *agape* for love here. In the New Testament, this usually refers to God's self-sacrificing love demonstrated through Jesus. Paul challenged the Philippians to adopt this love for one another. He held up Christ as their model and urged them to let their love grow without boundaries.

Love never grows in a vacuum. Paul said it is nurtured in an environment of **knowledge** and **discernment**. The Greeks emphasized

intellectual knowledge as a virtue. Paul focused on experiential knowledge that comes from doing life with others through the bond of Christ. Discernment relates to morality—the sphere of right and wrong. Personal ethics influence how we choose to demonstrate love toward others. Together, knowledge and discernment highlight the spiritual and practical sides of faith.

How are knowledge and discernment connected? How do they complement each other? Why are both needed?

For Paul, the Christian faith wasn't just a theoretical concept. To the contrary, it thrives as believers live it out each day. A faith that isn't tangible—that can't be seen or experienced—has little power and even less consequence.

One tangible action relates to what we **approve**. Paul used a word here that means to discern or to test. The idea is to avoid what causes harm and embrace what provides benefit. What we approve determines how we live out our faith in practical ways each day. While the world will chase after the next big thing, Christians are called to focus on the things that really matter—the **superior** things.

He also urged his readers toward lives of integrity. They needed to be **pure and blameless**. Paul knew that a growing faith requires a holy life—a life that will stand above reproach **in the day of Christ**.

Paul turned his attention to the **fruit of righteousness**. In Scripture, fruit often refers to a believer's reflection of Christ to the world. In other words, our character should make it easier for others to see Jesus. The fruit of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22-23 would be an example of this, but such fruit is impossible without a personal relationship with Christ.

This was Paul's prayer for the Philippians. He longed for them to continue moving toward maturity so Christ could continue working in them. Through this process, believers' ultimate goal—**the glory and praise of God**—is accomplished. As Christians, our primary purpose in life is to glorify God in our words, actions, and attitudes. This is our calling and the main reason we should strive to grow in our faith.

APPLY THE TEXT

- Believers share a common bond with other believers through faith in Christ.
- Believers can thank God for others who partner with them in kingdom work.
- Our prayers for other believers should include praying for their spiritual growth.

Take an inventory of your relationships. What role does a shared faith have in each? Which relationships need greater investment because of a shared faith? How?

Think about Paul's gratitude for the Philippians. Who do you feel that way about? How can you share that with them?

Discuss actions that can be taken as a group to foster growth in each other's faith. How can you support one another through these actions?

PRAYER NEEDS
