

# PHILIPPIANS

## 1:1-11

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### Introduction

*The Joy of Living... Bound for Joy... Be Joyful...*

These are the titles of commentaries on the Book of Philippians. They take their name from the joyous tone of Paul's writing and from his many exhortations in the letter to "rejoice," culminating in chapter four, verse four, where he practically shouts at you, saying

Philippians 4:4 Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!

What is remarkable about the emphasis on joy throughout the letter are Paul's circumstances when writing the letter: *He was in prison!* He was bound in prison; but he considered himself bound for joy - the prisoner of Jesus Christ.

Throughout the letter there is a sense that his chains are chiming, not clanging! His chains are the bonds of Jesus Christ. Thus the letter is a favorite portion to read and meditate upon when you find **yourself** in prison - "chained," as it were, to a hospital bed, or to a kitchen sink, or to a desk. **Your** chains can be chimes!

Paul was writing to the Philippians to thank them for a financial gift that they had sent to him. It had been ten years since his first visit to Philippi, and he had found recollections. The story of that visit is found in Acts chapter 16. While in Troas, Paul was given a vision of a man from Macedonia saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."<sup>1</sup> Accompanied by Silas, Timothy, and Dr. Luke, Paul travelled to Philippi. It was Paul's custom when entering a city to go into the Jewish synagogue there and preach the gospel. But in Philippi there were not enough Jewish men to form a synagogue, so Paul and his companions went down to the river side on the sabbath day - knowing that any devout Jews would be gathered there for prayer. He encountered a group of women, including Lydia, a wealthy merchant woman who sold expensive purple cloth. She became the first convert to Jesus in Europe.

A while later Paul encountered a slave girl with demon-inspired psychic powers. He set her free from her bondage to Satan. Her masters were infuriated; they made considerable money from her psychic abilities. Inciting the local authorities against Paul, he and Silas were beaten then bound in the Philippian jail.

It was there that, at midnight while they sang hymns to God, an earthquake opened the doors of all the jail cells! The jailer, about to commit suicide, was stopped by

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<sup>1</sup>Acts 16:9

Paul. He uttered those famous words, "What must I do to be saved?" to which Paul replied, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved."<sup>2</sup>

The next morning the city officials ordered Paul and Silas released. *They refused to leave their cell!* They let the officials know that they were Roman citizens - which meant that their arrest and imprisonment had been illegal. After gaining the apologies of the officials, they left - with Luke staying behind to tend to the needs of the new converts.

As we open the letter, we find Paul first remembering the good work God had begun in the lives of the believers at Philippi. Then he reminds them that God is continuing to work, and will continue to work, until they see Jesus. He summarizes his thoughts about God's good work in verse six, saying,

Philippians 1:6 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;

God had begun a good work in Philippi. And, do you know what? *He has begun that same good work right here, in your lives!*

God was continuing a good work in Philippi. *And, do you know what? He is continuing that same good work right here, in your lives!*

We'll do two things this morning:

#1 Take An Inventory Of  
The Good Work God Has  
Commenced In You

(v1-8)

#2 Take An Interest In  
The Good Work God Will  
Continue In You

(v9-11)

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#1 Take An Inventory Of  
The Good Work God Has  
Commenced In You  
(v1-8)

If you are a believer, God has begun a good work in you. It began the moment you trusted Jesus Christ as your personal Lord and Savior. Technically, God's good work began much sooner. It began in eternity past, before the foundations of the world, in God's plan to save lost mankind. But from your point of view His good work began with what He had foreseen from eternity: That you would accept Jesus as you responded to the gospel.

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<sup>2</sup>Acts 16:31

Paul's opening comments to the Philippians contain a review of the good work God had begun in them... *And in you!*

=First of all, you are a saint:

Philippians 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:

"Saint." We use the word to label certain people who seem to be a cut above the average; but the Bible never uses it that way. **All** believers are called "saints" in the New Testament! **All** believers *are* saints! *You* are a saint, if you have trusted Jesus for salvation.

Saint simply means *separated*. God has separated you out from lost humanity, given your life meaning and purpose and direction.

You meet together with other saints. When Paul mentions "all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons," it's a reference to the church, organized under the headship of Jesus. God has given you the church to be encouraged... to be exhorted... to be equipped. Jesus promised to be in your midst when you gather; He declared that the gates of hell would not prevail against you. You are saved and are spiritually bound for joy with others who share the same Lord - especially in the fellowship of your local church.

You're God's saint; secondly,

=You have God's Spirit:

Philippians 1:2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Philippians 1:3 I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,

Philippians 1:4 always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy,

Paul's *thankfulness* and his *joy* are not the natural bent of his personality. They are by-products of his relationship with God through the Holy Spirit. I know that because of what Paul wrote in Ephesians 5:18-20.

Ephesians 5:18 tells you to "be filled with the Spirit." Literally it is *go on being filled with the Spirit*. It is a reminder that God has given you His Spirit. Then, in verses 19 and 20 you see first joy, then thankfulness, as the by-products of being filled with the Spirit:

Ephesians 5:18 ...be filled with the Spirit,

Ephesians 5:19 speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord,

Ephesians 5:20 giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ,

God's Spirit indwells you! That sounds like a good work to me!!!

You're God's saint, indwelt by God's Spirit; thirdly,

=You are God's servant:

Philippians 1:5 for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now,

Philippians 1:6 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;

Philippians 1:7 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.

Philippians 1:8 For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ.

"Fellowship in the gospel" is a term that indicates their serving together to further the gospel. We have fellowship in the gospel when we cooperate in an area or areas of ministry for the cause of Christ. We always have fellowship as believers; but we have fellowship *in the gospel* when we work together.

When Paul spoke, in verse seven, of his chains and of the defense and confirmation of the gospel, it's a compliment to them of their willingness to identify with him and serve him even though he was a prisoner. It was no small crime to be charged with proclaiming the advent of a kingdom other than Rome, and a king greater than the caesar. Yet they were willing to serve Paul and risk the danger.

+You are a *saint*, you have God's *Spirit*, and you can *serve* the Lord. Compare these to your life prior to receiving the Lord and you will see the good work that God has begun in you.

## #2 Take An Interest In The Good Work God Will Continue In You (v9-11)

When Paul says, "...He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ," he is reminding you that there is an ongoing work. God is continuing what He started, and He will go on working in you until the day you see Jesus.

What is it God wants to go on in you?

=First, He wants your love to abound:

Philippians 1:9 And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment,

Philippians 1:10 that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ,

Love is the key characteristic of a Christian. You love God and, because you do, you love others with God's love - with God's unconditional, agape love. God wants this love to abound - to overflow from you towards others so that they may know His heart toward them.

Since love is a word that can mean so many things to so many people, God's agape love is qualified for you. It is a love that involves both *head* and *heart*.

From your head, you are to love within limits:

Philippians 1:10 ... that you may approve the things that are excellent...

"Approve" means to test. Don't love indiscriminately; put things to the test of Scripture. The Corinthians, for example, were wrong to tolerate sin in the church in the name of love. Love the sinner; hate the sin - and do something about it! Real agape is biblically proactive.

From your heart, you are to love without limits:

Philippians 1:10 ...that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ,

"Sincere" means *without wax*. In Roman times you would commission a sculptor for a project, let's say, a bust of your father. If, towards the end of the chiseling, his hand slipped, and he cut the nose off, an unscrupulous sculptor would use wax, mixed with dust, to repair the nose. All was well - unless you put the bust out on the patio on a hot day! Thus many contracts called for the work to be guaranteed to be sincere - without wax, the genuine article with no filler.

Your love is to be the real thing, the genuine article, without fluff and filler. Since it is God loving through you, it has no limits and should be without offense.

God wants your love to abound;

=Secondly, He wants your life to attest:

Philippians 1:11 being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

The kids today are wearing bracelets and necklaces that have the letters "WWJD" on them - "What Would Jesus Do?" That is essentially what Paul is saying here: You ought to do what is right, what Jesus would do, to attest or give testimony to others of the glory and praise of God.

+Abounding love, and an attesting life. You can grow in them; or you can resist them. Everyday God gives you the choice of showing His love, or not showing His love; of showing His life, or not showing His life.

Cooperate with God! See each circumstance as an opportunity for your love to abound, and for your life to attest.

### Conclusion

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

The Day of Jesus Christ is the day you will see Him face-to-face at His reward seat. It is a reference to the Rapture of the church to heaven, followed immediately by Jesus' review of your walk with Him. Having separated you as His saint, given you His Spirit, and called you to serve, He will review your love and your life. Did you love abound? Did your life attest?

There is no reason why your love cannot abound! There is no reason why your life cannot attest!