



# PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE PHILIPPIANS

# REJOICE!

8 SMALL GROUP BIBLE STUDIES

PREPARED BY DR. ANDREW CORBETT  
PASTOR OF LEGANA CHRISTIAN CHURCH, TASMANIA



PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE  
PHILIPPIANS

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- Study 1. *Thankful Prayer*, Philippians 1:1-11
- Study 2. *Faithful Preaching*, Philippians 1:12-18
- Study 3. *Joy in the Faith*, Philippians 1:19-30
- Study 4. *The Mind of Christ*, Philippians 2:1-11
- Study 5. *Rejoice With Me*, Philippians 2:12-30
- Study 6. *The Surpassing Worth*, Philippians 3:1-16
- Study 7. *Our Citizenship*, Philippians 3:17 - 4:1
- Study 8. *Rejoice in the Lord*, Philippians 4:2-23

**REJOICE! Paul's Epistles to the Philippians**

**8 Small Group Bible Studies**

Prepared by Dr. Andrew Corbett, [www.findingtruthmatters.org](http://www.findingtruthmatters.org)

Pastor of Legana Christian Church.

[www.legana.org](http://www.legana.org)

## Study 1

# THANKFUL PRAYER



## Background

Paul's relationship with the Philippians was preceded by the Lord giving him a vision of a Macedonian man pleading with him to come over to them (Acts 16:9). At that time Paul and his companions were in Mysia (Acts 16:8). Almost immediately, the Lord began to work miraculously in the hearts of people (Acts 16:14-15) and then in demonstrations of His power with signs and wonders (Acts 16:18). Paul and Silas were arrested by Philippian authorities soon after arriving, but even that setback was used by the Lord to bring people to Christ (Acts 16:30-34). The result was that a church was planted consisting of thoroughly converted people who had great affection for the Apostle Paul. Even after Paul left Philippi to go south to Athens and then Corinth, it was the Philippian believers who continued to financially support him.

This epistle is unique among Paul's canonical (Biblical) epistles because it does not address a heresy or a problem. Written from his Roman imprisonment around about AD 61, this is an extremely warm letter from the aged apostle to a church of believers he had great affection for.

# The Greeting

1. In the opening verse of Paul's epistle to the Philippians he identifies himself quite differently than he does to the Corinthians (1Cor. 1:1; 2Cor. 1:1), the Galatians (Gal. 1:1), the Ephesians (Eph. 1:1), the Colossians (Col. 1:1), and even to his companion Timothy (1Tim. 1:1). How does he designate himself and why do you think he did this?

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To be a follower of Christ involves being spiritually transformed which Christ described as being *born again* (John 3:3). Once a person is transformed by the Holy Spirit, they are translated out of the domain of darkness into the Kingdom of God's light (Col. 1:13). They are adopted by God and become a son or daughter of the Lord (Rom. 8:15). The redeemed child of God becomes a citizen of Heaven (Phil. 3:20).

2. How does Paul identify the Philippian believers in the opening verse?

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Paul also greets the o \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ s - the Greek word for this English word is *episkopoi* which also the meaning of a *guardian*.

3. Paul greets one more group in the Philippian church. Select which group he also greets:
  - (a) decorators - who played an important role in setting up the Sunday floral-art
  - (b) decoders - language specialists who can decode hidden messages in Hebrew
  - (c) demeanors - those who had the give of insulting to help the proud to become humble.
  - (d) deacons - which means *servant* who willingly gave of their time and efforts to practically help the church minister to people.

## Reasons for Thanks

Paul's great affection for the Philippians is summed up in Philippians 1:3. What a delightful thing when a pastor truly loves the people that God has put under their care!

4. Not only was Paul thankful for the Philippians' love but he was particularly thankful that they demonstrated their love for him. Based on Philippians 1:5, how did they *demonstrate* their love for Paul?

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The Philippians (also referred to as *the Macedonians*) were not a wealthy people. Paul alludes to this in his epistles to the Corinthians (who were wealthy) in Second Corinthians 8:1.

5. After the Philippians had committed to financially support Paul despite their poverty, what does it seem that Paul was confident that God would do for them based on Philippians 1:6?

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Even though Paul was imprisoned in Rome, the Philippians continued to financially support Paul. Paul's affection for them was merely because of the value of the money they had sent him, it was what the money *represented*. Perhaps based on Philippians 1:7, Paul felt that the financial support of the Philippians entitled them to take some credit for those whom Paul had been able to lead to Christ even while he was in prison. This is a wonderful encouragement for believers and churches today to view their missions giving of those church-planting missionaries as their *partners* in the gospel as well.

6. While Paul was thanking God for these believers, what concerns does he express for them in Philippians 1:9?

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Paul was a beneficiary of the Macedonians' generosity despite their "extreme poverty" (2Cor. 8:2). But it seems that he was concerned that they might be taken advantage of financially.

7. Therefore what did he want for them, and how did he want them to conduct themselves based on Philippians 1:10-11?

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As Paul dictated this letter from his imprisonment, he seems to have had a growing sense that the Lord was about to do something dramatic. In two places in this opening paragraph he has referred to *the day of Jesus Christ*. It is supposed by many biblical scholars that this refers to the *second coming of Christ* also referred to by scholars as *the return of Christ*. This gave Paul's concern for the Philippians a sense of urgency. And history tells us that this concern was warranted as the Neronic<sup>1</sup> persecution broke out within a few years of this epistle being sent.

## Application Discussion

- What should we be more thankful for in our praying?
- How do we determine who or what we should be 'partnering' with?
- When was the last time you wrote a "thank you" note/card/letter to someone you are thankful for?

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<sup>1</sup> Neronic means by *Caesar Nero*.