

Study 3

# JOY IN THE FAITH



Charles Henry Niehaus, Astor memorial doors, Trinity Church, New York, 1893, depicting Paul and Silas with the Philippian jailer.

## Background

Paul probably had good reasons for having mixed feelings about Philippi. It has been my experience that my impression of a place is almost entirely based on the people that I engage with in that place. When I think of Stuttgart (Germany), or Kyiv (Ukraine), or Montreal (Canada), Budapest (Hungary), I have very fond memories — because I have spent time with friends in those places who showed me tremendous hospitality. When I reflect on my time in Tangier (Morocco) or Ho Chi Min City (Vietnam) where I was conducting biblical teaching with the underground church, I have mixed emotions because of the constant danger I experienced. But when Paul arrived in Philippi he experienced flogging, mistreatment, and imprisonment at the order of the city's officials. Yet, despite this, he had great affection for the Philippians and held fond memories of them.

Paul's positive demeanour is all the more remarkable when we are reminded that he was writing this epistle while in chains under the supervision of the Praetorium guard (Phil. 1:13). While imprisoned, it seems that Paul may have endured taunts from those who called themselves *preachers of the gospel* who looked down on Paul because of his imprisonment.

1. Despite the questionable motives from these possible taunting preachers, how did Paul respond? (Phil. 1:18)
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Despite Paul's imprisonment taking a discouraging turn (he moved from his house-arrest described in Acts 28, to being taken to the Praetorium Prison by the time he wrote to the Philippians), it seems that he expected to soon be released.

2. According to Philippians 1:19, why did he expect this happen?
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Gordon Fee suggests that Paul's sentiments in Philippians 1:19 are echoes of Job 13:16 and Psalm 34:3-6. "Thus, even though this is now Paul's own sentence, and must be understood within its present context, it is best understood as intentionally echoing the analogous circumstances of Job (p.131).

3. But based on Philippians 1:20, what was Paul also prepared to endure and what does this tell us about prayer and God's will? Discuss.
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Commenting on Philippians 1:20, Dr. Kent states that when Paul says, "...that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honoured..." may refer to Paul's impending appearance before Caesar to whom he had appealed some years earlier (p.22). If this was the case, it is worth noting that Paul's focus wasn't on Caesar, or even his trial, but on h \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ g Christ.

4. Read Philippians 1:21-24. Why was Paul so willing to die in the cause of Christ?

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5. According to Philippians 1:25, what good reason did Paul see that his continued life could achieve? What principle might this also give to someone nearing the end of their life?

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Paul saw that his ministry to the Philippians would further enable them to glorify Christ (Phil. 1:26).

## A Life Worthy of the Gospel

6. Paul seems to have been optimistic that his trial before Caesar would result in his release (Phil. 1:26) which would enable him to travel to Macedonia and minister to the Philippians. What did he further expect this would lead to among the Philippians?

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But Paul's optimism was by no means a guarantee that he would be released. His attitude toward his negative circumstances is worth our consideration.

7. Carefully read Philippians 1:27. Knowing that Paul was imprisoned and about to stand before the Emperor, what was his primary concern based on this verse?

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Was Paul's desire for the Philippians dependent upon his release?

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What was Paul's desire for the Philippians church?

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Paul encouraged the Philippians to strive *together* to spread the gospel and, according to Philippians 1:28, not to be f \_ \_ \_ \_ \_ d by their opponents.

## Eternal Destinies Differ

In the face of opposition from possibly *violent* opponents, Paul reminds the Philippians that those who reject the gospel, and forcefully oppose them, face eternal destruction (Phil. 1:28, and note 2Thess. 1:9).

8. Even though Paul assured the Philippian believers that their eternal destinies were secure in Christ, what did this *not* mean for them in their present circumstances? (Philippians 1:29-30)
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## Application Discussion

- Why do you think some believers find it difficult to rejoice with others who seem to be being blessed by God?
- How would you counsel a struggling believer who was facing heartaches and disappointments with God?
- How can we work or strive *together* to reach people who have never received the gospel?