

Philippians, Chapter One, Lesson One

THANKFUL FOR THE BRETHREN Philippians 1:1-7

STIMULATE

** How has your prayer life been this past week? Have you been aware of the changes brought about by the study of God's Word and your desire to live "The Spirit Filled Life"?

There has been a sense of closeness in my heart, because of our study in Paul's letter to the Ephesians. My time with Him has become more vibrant as I am willing to tune my heart to His will on every issue that I bring before the throne of grace.

MOTIVATE

** Over the next four months in our study of Paul's letter to the Philippians, we will see once again the importance of prayer - but what do you think is the main theme of Philippians? It has been called "the epistle" of what?

The epistle of Joy.

** What is the one thing in our Christian lives, that if we are lacking it, will take all the wind out of our sails?

Joy - defined as "the supernatural ability to rejoice in every circumstance".

** In our first five studies together in this marvelous epistle we will learn from Paul how our joy is manifested as we are:

THANKFUL FOR THE BRETHREN - Philippians 1:1-7

LONGING FOR THE BRETHREN - Philippians 1:8-11

ENCOURAGING THE BRETHREN - Philippians 1:12-18

DEPENDENT ON THE BRETHREN - Philippians 1:19-26

CHALLENGING THE BRETHREN - Philippians 1:27-30

Why would our joy be so closely linked to our relationship with other brothers and sisters in Christ?

It is what completes us as Christians - being with others of like precious faith, in a true Biblical unity that glorifies God. cf. Philippians 2:2, 1John 4:20

** For today, let's begin our time together in this wonderful epistle by observing the life of the apostle Paul as he expresses the joy in his heart because he is "Thankful for the Brethren".

Read passage (V.1-2) (V.3-5) (V.6-7)

Opening Prayer

Thankful for the Brethren

** When you consider the subject of accountability among brothers and sisters in the Lord, why is it so challenging to study and then apply the subject matter of true Biblical joy?

We are to be doers of the word (James 1:22) and others can easily observe how faithfully we apply what we will be learning about joy!

INVESTIGATE

Introduction

** Before we jump into verse one, let's gain some back ground understanding to this letter. Where did Paul's relationship with the Philippians begin?

On his second missionary journey, in the northeast corner of Macedonia, near Thessalonica, around 50-51 A.D. cf. Acts 16:9-12

** How do you suppose the Philippians felt about Paul?

They loved him greatly! cf. Philippians 4:15-16 and 2Corinthians 11:9

** What was significant about the city of Philippi?

It was on a major trade route, a "leading city of the district of Macedonia - a Roman colony". Remember - Acts 16:12

** When and from where does Paul write this epistle?

Around 62 A.D. - from his first Roman imprisonment and after his third missionary journey. cf. Acts 28:16, 30-31 and Philippians 1:7, 13, 14

You will recall from our study in Ephesians, that Paul also wrote the letter to the Ephesians, the Colossians and to Philemon during this same period of imprisonment.

** What was the purpose of Paul writing to his beloved Philippians?

There were actually several purposes:

1. In response to their loving gifts. (4:17)
2. To return their brother - Epaphroditus (2:28)
3. To encourage them to rejoice! (1:4, 1:18, 2:18, 3:1, 4:4)
4. To instruct them to live out a Christ honoring lifestyle - joyfully!

V. 1 ** Alright then, let's look at our text. We notice of course that Paul, being the author, mentions himself at the opening of this letter, but who else does he mention and why?

Timothy - a child in the faith that Paul held in the highest regard. cf. Philippians 2:19-22

** How does Paul describe himself and Timothy?

They were "bond-servants" doulos lit. a voluntary, willing slave of Jesus Christ!

** To which two groups is Paul now writing.

1. All the saints "in Christ" at Philippi

2. The overseers (episkopos) and deacons (diakonos)

Note: The terms bishop, overseer, elder (presbuteros), and pastor/shepherd (poimen) are all used interchangeably in the New Testament to describe the same men.

cf. Acts 20:17,28, Titus 1:5-9, 1Peter 5:1-2

** Why do you suppose he included the spiritual leaders?

They need his God-breathed instruction and heartfelt encouragement also! cf. 2Peter 1:21

V. 2 ** What greeting does Paul use for the Philippians?

"Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ". Sound familiar?

Romans, 1 and 2Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philemon and 2Thessalonians all begin this way.

** Why is it so important to Paul to greet those he cares about in this fashion?

He could wish for them nothing better on earth! He knows that herein lies the one true source for victory!

V. 3 ** Paul's next statement is a profound witness, but for whose lifestyle?

The lifestyle of the Philippian believers. Paul was truly "**Thankful for the Brethren**". Everything he could remember about them, caused him to thank God.

** How do you suppose that made the Philippians feel?

Greatly uplifted, loved, appreciated, truly thankful themselves for the love and leadership of the apostle Paul.

V. 4 ** According to verse four if we are truly "**Thankful for the Brethren**", what will that thankfulness lead into?

"...always offering prayer with joy..."

** What do you suppose is the key element in Paul's prayer for his beloved Philippians?

It is prayer with JOY! Joy is mentioned in one form or another some sixteen times in this epistle!

** How often does "joy" show its face in Paul's prayer life?

"...in my every prayer..." Does that challenge you when you consider your own attitude of prayer?

** Still in verse four, for whom is Paul praying?

"...for you all". Paul did not have a southern accent, he meant that he prayed for all of them!

V. 5 ** What is it specifically that Paul has in view that causes such a joyful prayer life?

Their "participation in the gospel" **koinonia**, lit. - fellowship, All see - 2Corinthians 8:1-5

** Now, back in verse five of Philippians, chapter one; Was this just a flash in the pan, jump on the Jesus band wagon and then loose interest kind of involvement?

No - it had staying power. "...from the first day until now". Over approximately 12 years! From the first Christian, Lydia (Acts 16:14), down to this very day of Paul's writing, these beloved saints were committed to the cause of Christ and His word.

V. 6 ** It is little wonder that Paul would be so "**Thankful for the Brethren**", given their amazing track record. But what principle do we find in verse six to explain the source of power for their faithfulness and ours as well?

"...He who began a good work in you..."

** Having begun His work in us, what will He do next?

He will "perfect" it! *epiteleo* lit. - to complete or accomplish

** Do you think that Paul was sure about that?

Yes! He was "confident of this very thing"!

** Why was he so sure?

Because whatever Jesus begins, He finishes! Our salvation is eternally secure in Him.

** How long will Jesus continue His work to complete or perfect us according to Paul?

"...until the day of Christ Jesus". That day when our final salvation, reward and glorification takes place in the presence of Jesus Christ. (2Corinthians 5:9-10)

V. 7 ** Paul has a great love for the Philippians that produces an overflowing, joyful prayer life on their behalf. How does he defend those feelings?

He says, "For it is only right for me to feel this way about you all..."

** Why were these Philippians knit so deeply into the heart of the apostle, what had they done?

"...both in [his] imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, [they] all are partakers of grace with [Paul]". They had stood by his side defending Christ, the word of God, the gospel and the apostle Paul himself. cf. 1:29-30

EXTRICATE

** We have seen today that Paul was very "**Thankful for the Brethren**". For what kinds of things was Paul thankful each time he prayerfully consider his Philippian brothers and sisters?

1. Their *koinonia* (fellowship) in the gospel.
2. Their enduring faithfulness from the first day!
3. The work of Christ in their hearts.
4. Their partaking in Paul's suffering with him.

DELINEATE

** How many of those items could be applied to our own walk with the Lord today?

All of them! We need to truly fellowship with one another in the proclamation of the gospel, we also should be faithful each day, we too have a work of Christ within us, and we should be willing to suffer if need be - just like the apostle Paul.

EVALUATE

** May I ask you, how thankful are you for the brethren? Do you treasure the time you can spend with them? Do joyfully pray for them and thank God for their faithfulness? Or do we merely greet one another on Sunday with "how are you" and "have a nice day"?

ACTIVATE

** How does accountability fit today's study?

If I am to be Biblically joyful, it will manifest itself when I am "**Thankful for the Brethren**". If you see me not rejoicing, please feel free to ask me why!

** Lord, I know that in my own flesh this is impossible.

But I also know that I am a new creature and that You have begun a work in me which You will perfect. Please help me to remember to rejoice always, for Christ's sake! - Amen

Closing Prayer