

## Philippians

### Lesson #5, Chapter 1:21-30

As you prepare to study God's Word, come expectantly with your sins confessed, relying on the Lord to sow great truths in your heart.

1. In this lesson, the portion of Scripture we're studying gains its moorings and depth from Paul's comments in the previous verses. We also see verse 21 begins with *for* to let us know that Paul's opening comment in this section must be viewed in light of what he had said previously. Please explain Paul's ribbon *of thought* from verses 12-20 and how verse 21 ties in.
2. Paul's heart is laid bare for us in verse 21, reflecting his purpose and aim in life. John MacArthur writes, "The Greek phrase rendered *to live is Christ and to die is gain* contains no verb. It literally reads 'to live Christ, to die gain.'"<sup>1</sup> Let's try to plumb its depths by considering what verse 21 looks like *when lived out each day*. It might be helpful to ponder what choices and actions accompany a motivation like verse 21?
3. Because of his fervent love for Christ, what choice is difficult for Paul to make according to verses 22-24?
4. Which of his two desires does Paul ultimately "choose" according to verse 25? Why? See verses 22-25.
5. What is at the root of this single-minded and fervent desire toward the Lord? See 2 Corinthians 5:14-15; Philippians 3:7-11, 14.

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<sup>1</sup> John F. MacArthur Jr., *Philippians*, MacArthur New Testament Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 2001), 76.

6. Paul often says he does things for the sake of others. Here in verse 24 his desire to remain is motivated out of love for “their sake.” What do you learn from the following verses about Paul’s motivation about doing things for the sake of others? See also 1 Corinthians 4:6; 2 Corinthians 2:10-11; 4:11-15; Colossians 1:24; 1 Thessalonians 1:5-7.
  
7. Since Paul is convinced his earthly life and ministry will be prolonged, what does Paul hope to do for the Philippians? See verses 25-26.
  
8. Define *progress* [Strong’s #4297]. See also the other two places this word is used: Philippians 1:12 and 1 Timothy 4:15.
  
9. Paul’s goal is to build a strong foundation in the Philippians, so they will make progress in their walk with the Lord. How might this be accomplished? See Ephesians 4:11-13; Colossians 1:28; 1 Thessalonians 4:1.
  
10. Paul also desired the Philippians have “joy in the faith” even while they endured many trials, conflicts, and difficulties. What are some reasons for having “joy in our faith?” Look up the following verses as you form your answer: Matthew 5:10-12; Romans 5:3-5; 8:17-18; 1 Peter 4:12-16. What does it say about us if we *don’t rejoice* in our faith?
  
11. The NASB and NKJV translate verse 26 a bit awkwardly. The ESV and NIV help us understand Paul’s thoughts better. The ESV says, “so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again.” How do the labors of Paul among them (verse 25) contribute to the Philippians’ rejoicing in Christ?

12. Paul's labors on behalf of the Philippians are funneled into one great purpose. What is it from Philippians 1:26 ESV?
  
13. Paul hopes to come minister to the Philippian believers once again. Yet, whether he comes to them again or remains absent, what does he desire them to do? See the first part of Philippians 1:27 for your answer.
  
14. Paul gives a description of what *conducting oneself in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ* would look like in verses 27-28. What do you learn?
  
15. Paul frequently urged believers to live "in a worthy manner." What does that kind of living look like according to Ephesians 4:1-3; Colossians 1:9-12; 1 Thessalonians 2:10-12; 4:1?
  
16. There were those among the Philippians who were *not* living in a manner worthy of the gospel. What do you learn about their conduct from Philippians 1:15-17 and 3:18-19?
  
17. What is the sure end of those who oppose true gospel preaching and instruction? See verse 28. See also 2 Thessalonians 1:5-8.
  
18. Define *granted* [Strong's #5483] from verse 29. Also see Acts 3:14; 27:24; Galatians 3:18 where the same Greek word is used.

19. What two things have been granted to the Philippians? And for what purpose? See verse 29.
  
20. What does verse 29 teach us about salvation? See Philippians 1:29 and John 6:29; 2 Corinthians 4:6; Ephesians 2:8.
  
21. What does Philippians 1:29 teach us about suffering for Christ? See also Matthew 5:10-12; John 15:18-20; Acts 5:41; 14:22; Philippians 3:8, 10.

“It is one thing to accept suffering and resign oneself to it.  
It is another to realize the privileges that come through it.”<sup>2</sup> ~Richard Melick

22. In what ways would the Philippians suffer according to verse 30? What are *some* of the things Paul suffered on behalf of Christ? See 2 Corinthians 6:3-10.
  
23. Two key themes shine in this section of Paul’s letter to the Philippians. One theme is Paul’s all-consuming desire to exalt Christ, as seen in Philippians 1:21. The first theme of putting the Lord on display in every way leads into the second theme of counting *all* things a privilege because they come from God’s hand—even if it means enduring difficulties, afflictions, and sorrows. Paul counted it an honor to suffer, serve, labor and love God with all his heart. When we begrudge the Lord our joyful service, what are we losing sight of? Look up Luke 17:10; 1 Corinthians 15:9-10; Philippians 3:8-9 as you consider your response.

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<sup>2</sup> Richard R. Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, vol. 32, *The New American Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991), 91.

“What does Paul expect from them? He expects them *to stand fast*. The world is full of Christians on the retreat, who, when things become difficult, play down their Christianity. True Christians stand fast, unashamed in any company. He expects *unity*; they are to be bound together in one spirit. Let the world quarrel; Christians must be united. He expects a certain *unconquerability*. Often, evil seems invincible; but Christians must never abandon hope or give up the struggle. He expects a *cool, calm courage*. In times of *crisis*, others may be nervous and afraid; Christians will still be serene, in control of themselves and of the situation.

Paul does not suggest that this will be easy. When Christianity first came to Philippi, they saw him fight his own battle. They saw him beaten and imprisoned for the faith (Acts 16:19). They know what he is now going through. But let them remember that a general chooses the best soldiers for the hardest tasks, and that it is an honour to suffer for Christ. There is a story about a veteran French soldier who, in a desperate situation, found a young recruit trembling with fear. ‘Come, son,’ said the veteran, ‘and you and I will do something fine for France.’ So Paul says to the Philippians: ‘For you and for me the battle is on; let us do something fine for Christ.’”<sup>3</sup> ~William Barclay

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<sup>3</sup>William Barclay, *The Letters to Philippians, Colossians, and Thessalonians*, 3rd ed. fully rev. and updated, The New Daily Study Bible (Louisville, KY; London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2003), 36–37.