

Philippians 1 – Study Notes

Contextual Summary

Philippians 1 opens Paul's letter from prison with gratitude and joy, revealing that fellowship in the gospel transcends circumstances. Unlike corrective epistles, Philippians emphasizes partnership, progress, and perspective in the Christian life. The believer's assurance in Christ produces confidence amid suffering. Paul's imprisonment advances the gospel rather than hindering it. The chapter contrasts temporal hardship with eternal reward and affirms that to live is Christ, and to die is gain. Grace sustains both life and death for the believer.

1–2. "Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ... Grace be unto you, and peace."

Paul identifies himself as a *doulos* (Gk.) — a bondservant, voluntarily bound to Christ. "Grace and peace" reflect the order of divine blessing: grace first, peace follows. The greeting unites saints, bishops, and deacons under one Lord, reminding them that all ministry flows from grace, not hierarchy.

3–5. "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you... for your fellowship in the gospel."

Paul rejoices in their partnership (*koinōnia*, Gk.) — a shared mission rooted in faith, not finances. Fellowship here means participation in gospel work. Gratitude arises from their steadfastness in grace, not from their performance.

6. "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ."

This verse affirms eternal security. "Perform" (*epitelesei*, Gk.) means to complete perfectly. The "good work" began at salvation and continues through sanctification until glorification. God Himself sustains what He initiated — the believer's destiny cannot be lost or reversed.

7–8. “Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all...”

Paul’s affection (splanchna, Gk., “bowels”) expresses deep spiritual love. The Philippians shared in his imprisonment and defense of the gospel. Grace unites believers through shared suffering and shared security.

9–11. “And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment...”

Paul prays for growth in discerning love (epignōsei kai aisthēsei). The goal is sincere, Spirit-led fruitfulness “unto the glory and praise of God.” This fruit concerns fellowship and reward, not proof of salvation.

12–14. “But I would ye should understand... that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel.”

Paul interprets suffering through grace: imprisonment becomes opportunity. “Furtherance” (prokopē, Gk.) means advancement against opposition. Confidence spreads among believers who witness Paul’s courage.

15–18. “Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife... what then? Christ is preached.”

Paul rejoices even when motives are mixed. The gospel’s power does not depend on human purity. “Preach Christ” remains the priority; God uses imperfect messengers. This underscores the sufficiency of the message, not the merit of the preacher.

19–20. “For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer...”

“Salvation” (sōtērian, Gk.) here refers to deliverance from trial, not eternal life. Paul expects vindication and boldness whether by life or death — both serve Christ’s glory.

21. “For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.”

This climactic statement defines grace-centered existence. Life means service; death means presence with Christ. Either way, the believer cannot lose. Death is not defeat but reward.

22–24. “If I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour...”

Paul recognizes productive ministry but prefers to depart and be with Christ — “which is far better.” Yet he stays for the sake of others’ progress. Grace balances longing for heaven with responsibility on earth.

25–26. “And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all...”

Paul’s continued life benefits others’ “joy of faith.” Assurance fuels ministry, not anxiety. Confidence in God’s plan brings stability.

27–28. “Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ...”

“Conversation” (politeuesthe, Gk.) means conduct as citizens. Believers live out heavenly citizenship now. Standing fast “in one spirit” demonstrates unity born of grace. Opposition brings no terror, for believers already share in Christ’s victory.

29–30. “For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake.”

Suffering is a privilege of fellowship, not a threat to faith. “Given” (echaristhē, Gk.) comes from charis — grace. Even trials are graciously appointed for eternal reward. Paul and the Philippians share the same struggle, proving the endurance of grace.

Koine Greek Linguistic Notes

Doulos (Gk., v.1): “servant,” bonds slave by voluntary devotion.

Koinōnia (Gk., v.5): “fellowship,” partnership in a shared mission.

Epitelesei (Gk., v.6): “will complete,” finish perfectly and permanently.

Prokopē (Gk., v.12): “furtherance,” advancement despite opposition.

Sōtērian (Gk., v.19): “salvation,” deliverance from temporal trial.

Politeuesthe (Gk., v.27): “conduct as citizens,” live according to heavenly status.

Echaristhē (Gk., v.29): “it is given,” graciously granted privilege.

Doctrinal Insight

Philippians 1 emphasizes that God Himself secures the believer’s salvation and sustains spiritual progress. Joy in suffering stems from confidence in divine sovereignty and grace. Fellowship in the gospel transcends circumstance, and assurance fuels service. The believer’s role is participation, not preservation; the work belongs to God, who guarantees completion.

Free Grace Summary

Salvation’s completion depends on God’s faithfulness, not human perseverance (v.6).

Joy and suffering coexist within grace — both serve Christ’s glory.

Partnership in the gospel is grounded in gratitude, not obligation.

Death is gain because eternal security is already guaranteed.

Trials serve as instruments for growth and reward, not punishment.

Philippians 1 teaches that the believer's confidence rests in the unchanging grace of God — the One who began the good work will surely finish it.

Philippians 2 – Study Notes

Contextual Summary

Philippians 2 emphasizes humility, unity, and the mind of Christ as the model for Christian living. Paul calls believers to live in harmony through grace, not competition, illustrating this attitude through Christ's incarnation and exaltation. The chapter also highlights obedience as an expression of gratitude, not merit. Paul, Timothy, and Epaphroditus are examples of selfless service flowing from joy and assurance. The believer's motivation is not to earn salvation but to display it in a dark world through humble, grace-filled conduct.

1–2. “If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love... fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded.”

Paul appeals to grace-based unity. “Consolation” (*paraklēsis*, Gk.) and “comfort” (*paramythion*) flow from the believer's position in Christ. True fellowship arises from shared faith and affection, not uniformity of personality. Joy is fulfilled when believers think with the same grace-centered perspective.

3–4. “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.”

Humility (*tapeinophrosynē*, Gk.) is not self-deprecation but self-forgetfulness. Grace removes the need for comparison. Considering others' interests expresses maturity in fellowship, not loss of identity.

5–8. “Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus...”

Paul presents the supreme example of humility — the incarnation. Christ, “being in the form of God” (morphē theou), did not cling to His divine privileges but “emptied Himself” (ekenōsen, Gk.) by taking human form. He humbled Himself unto death, “even the death of the cross.” This self-giving love is not a call to self-merit but to grace-motivated service.

9–11. “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him... that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord.”

Christ’s exaltation follows His voluntary humiliation. “Highly exalted” (hyperypsōsen, Gk.) means superlatively raised. The universal confession of His Lordship demonstrates divine vindication, not universal salvation. His lordship is acknowledged by all, though enjoyed only by believers.

12–13. “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which worketh in you...”

“Work out” (katargazesthe, Gk.) means to bring to full expression what God has already worked in. It concerns sanctification, not justification. “Fear and trembling” denote reverent responsibility, not insecurity. God energizes both the willing and the doing (energein, Gk.), assuring success in fellowship and spiritual growth.

14–16. “Do all things without murmurings and disputings... among whom ye shine as lights in the world.”

Believers display grace through contentment and integrity. “Lights” (phōstēres, Gk.) refers to luminaries reflecting divine truth. “Holding forth the word of life” signifies proclaiming and exemplifying Christ’s message amid a corrupt world.

17–18. “Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith...”

Paul views his suffering as a drink offering (spendomai, Gk.) poured out in service. He rejoices because sacrifice for others magnifies grace. True joy is found in serving, not self-preservation.

19–24. “But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timotheus shortly unto you...”

Timothy exemplifies sincere care (gnēsios, Gk.) for others’ welfare. His “like-mindedness” with Paul shows mature humility. Spiritual kinship arises from shared focus on Christ’s interests.

25–30. “Yet I supposed it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus...”

Epaphroditus risked his life for ministry. “Not regarding his life” (paraboleusamenos, Gk.) means gambling with his safety for others’ benefit. His near-death experience became a testimony of sacrificial service. Grace values faithfulness over comfort.

Koine Greek Linguistic Notes

Paraklēsis (Gk., v.1): “consolation,” encouragement from Christ’s presence.

Tapeinophrosynē (Gk., v.3): “lowliness of mind,” humble thinking born of grace.

Ekenōsen (Gk., v.7): “emptied Himself,” voluntary self-limitation, not loss of deity.

Katergazesthe (Gk., v.12): “work out,” to manifest or bring to completion.

Energein (Gk., v.13): “to energize,” divine empowerment within believers.

Phōstēres (Gk., v.15): “lights,” celestial beacons reflecting God’s truth.

Spendomai (Gk., v.17): “poured out,” used of a drink offering.

Paraboleusamenos (Gk., v.30): “risked,” to hazard one’s life in ministry.

Doctrinal Insight

Philippians 2 portrays grace as the source of true humility and obedience. Salvation is worked out through dependence on God's indwelling power, not human effort. Christ's kenosis (self-emptying) reveals that greatness in the kingdom is measured by service. The believer's light shines brightest through unity, humility, and joy in suffering — not through self-exaltation.

Free Grace Summary

"Work out your salvation" refers to sanctification, not earning eternal life.

God alone produces willing and doing within believers.

The mind of Christ models humility born of security, not fear.

Grace transforms rivalry into unity and service.

Joy flows from surrender, not striving.

Philippians 2 shows that the Christian life is not a quest to attain salvation, but a grateful expression of what grace has already secured.

Philippians 3 – Study Notes

Contextual Summary

Philippians 3 shifts from joy in service to warning against false confidence in the flesh. Paul exposes legalistic religion as spiritual loss compared to the surpassing value of knowing Christ. He contrasts righteousness by law with righteousness by faith and reminds believers that maturity means pressing forward, not trusting in past works. The chapter reinforces eternal security — salvation is a settled reality, while sanctification is a lifelong pursuit of conformity to Christ.

1–2. "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord... Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision."

Paul warns against Judaizers who corrupted the gospel by adding works. “Dogs” refers to unclean scavengers — a reversal of the Jewish insult toward Gentiles. “Concision” (katatomē, Gk.) mocks their insistence on circumcision, reducing it to mere mutilation. Rejoicing in the Lord safeguards against legalism, for grace leaves no room for boasting.

3. “For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.”

True worship is spiritual, not ritualistic. Believers are the real peritomē (circumcision, Gk.) — those inwardly renewed by faith, not outwardly marked by ceremony. Grace excludes confidence in human merit.

4–6. “Though I might also have confidence in the flesh...”

Paul lists his former credentials — lineage, law-keeping, zeal, and blamelessness. Yet these assets became liabilities when compared to Christ. Legalism counts on self; grace counts on the Savior.

7–9. “But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ.”

All human righteousness is “dung” (skubalon, Gk.) — refuse compared to knowing Christ. “Be found in him, not having mine own righteousness... but that which is through the faith of Christ” affirms imputed righteousness by faith alone. This righteousness is positional and permanent.

10–11. “That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings...”

“To know” (gnōnai, Gk.) expresses experiential intimacy, not intellectual knowledge. The power of His resurrection transforms life now; the fellowship of sufferings refines faith. “If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead” refers not to uncertainty of salvation but to longing for resurrection life manifested daily and realized at glorification.

12–14. “Not as though I had already attained... but I follow after...”

Paul clarifies he has not reached perfection. “Follow after” (diōkō, Gk.) means to pursue eagerly. He forgets past achievements and presses toward the “mark” (skopon) for the prize (brabeion) of the high calling of God. This pursuit concerns reward and maturity, not salvation.

15–16. “Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded...”

“Perfect” (teleioi, Gk.) means mature. Mature believers adopt the same perspective of pressing forward. Growth does not replace grace; it reveals it.

17–19. “Brethren, be followers together of me... for many walk... that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ.”

Those who distort the gospel are “enemies of the cross,” trusting appetite over truth. “Whose end is destruction” (apōleia, Gk.) means ruin — eternal for unbelievers, temporal for apostate professors. Paul contrasts earthly-mindedness with heavenly citizenship.

20–21. “For our conversation is in heaven; from whence also we look for the Saviour...”

“Conversation” (politeuma, Gk.) refers to citizenship. Believers already belong to heaven. Christ “shall change our vile body” (tapeinōseōs sōma) into conformity with His glorious body (doxēs sōma). The transformation is guaranteed — salvation’s completion at glorification.

Koine Greek Linguistic Notes

Katatomē (Gk., v.2): “concision,” sarcastic term for false circumcision.

Peritomē (Gk., v.3): “circumcision,” true spiritual renewal.

Skubalon (Gk., v.8): “dung,” refuse or filth, symbolizing worthless human righteousness.

Gnōnai (Gk., v.10): “to know,” experiential, relational knowledge.

Diōkō (Gk., v.12): “follow after,” to pursue eagerly.

Teleioi (Gk., v.15): “perfect,” mature, complete in attitude.

Politeuma (Gk., v.20): “citizenship,” community identity in heaven.

Apōleia (Gk., v.19): “destruction,” ruin or loss, contextually temporal or eternal.

Doctrinal Insight

Philippians 3 draws a sharp distinction between justification and sanctification. Salvation is not achieved through ritual, heritage, or law-keeping but through faith in Christ’s righteousness. Sanctification involves pressing forward in experiential knowledge of Christ. The believer’s assurance rests on imputed righteousness; spiritual growth flows from gratitude. Grace liberates from legalism while inspiring active pursuit of maturity and reward.

Free Grace Summary

Salvation is by faith alone, apart from works or ritual.

Imputed righteousness replaces all human merit.

“Pressing toward the mark” concerns reward, not eternal life.

True maturity flows from resting in grace, not striving for security.

Heavenly citizenship is a present reality and future fulfillment.

Philippians 3 declares that what the flesh cannot achieve, grace has already secured — leaving believers free to grow without fear of losing salvation.

Philippians 4 – Study Notes

Contextual Summary

Philippians 4 concludes Paul's letter with practical exhortations rooted in joy, contentment, and grace. The apostle urges harmony among believers, steadiness in prayer, and reliance on God's sufficiency. Gratitude replaces anxiety, and contentment flows from Christ's strength, not circumstance. The chapter closes with thanks for the Philippians' generous support, affirming that God rewards giving born of grace. Paul's tone blends pastoral warmth with doctrinal assurance — joy and peace are the natural outcomes of resting in Christ's unchanging provision.

1. "Therefore, my brethren dearly beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, so stand fast in the Lord."

"Stand fast" (stēkete, Gk.) means to remain firmly grounded. Their security is positional ("in the Lord"), not circumstantial. Paul's affection reflects grace-oriented fellowship, not dependency.

2–3. "I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord."

Paul addresses two women in conflict, urging unity through shared focus on Christ. "Be of the same mind" (phronein, Gk.) recalls 2:2 — harmony through humility. The "true yokefellow" is likely a mediator within the church. Their labor in the gospel affirms both are genuine believers, despite disagreement.

4–5. "Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice. Let your moderation be known unto all men."

Joy is commanded, not conditional. "Moderation" (epieikēs, Gk.) means gentleness or gracious forbearance. Such calm confidence reflects awareness that "the Lord is at hand" — both in presence and imminent return.

6–7. “Be careful for nothing; but in every thing by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God.”

“Careful” (merimnate, Gk.) means anxious. Anxiety is replaced by prayer, not positive thinking. “With thanksgiving” safeguards faith from complaint. The “peace of God” (eirēnē tou Theou) surpasses comprehension and guards (phrouresei) the heart and mind — a military image of divine protection.

8–9. “Whatsoever things are true... honest... just... pure... lovely... of good report...”

Paul gives a mental filter for fellowship with God. Thinking on these virtues cultivates stability and joy. “The God of peace shall be with you” — assurance of presence, not conditional favor.

10–13. “But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly... I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content.”

“Content” (autarkēs, Gk.) means self-sufficient, yet Paul’s sufficiency is in Christ. “I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me” affirms capability through dependence, not independence. Grace empowers both abundance and lack.

14–16. “Ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction...”

Their partnership (koinōnēsantes, Gk.) in giving demonstrated practical love. The Philippians supported Paul when others did not, proving fellowship through grace rather than obligation.

17–18. “Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.”

Paul seeks reward for their generosity, not personal gain. “Account” (logon, Gk.) alludes to eternal record for stewardship rewards. Grace gives without calculation yet receives divine recompense.

19. "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

This promise applies to those already resting in Christ. "According to" (kata) means in proportion to — not out of — God's infinite riches. The source is grace; the measure is glory; the channel is Christ.

20–23. "Now unto God and our Father be glory for ever and ever..."

Paul ends with a doxology that centers glory on God alone. "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all" encapsulates the letter's theme: grace sustains joy, unity, and contentment in every season.

Koine Greek Linguistic Notes

Stēkete (Gk., v.1): "stand fast," remain immovable in position.

Phronein (Gk., v.2): "be of one mind," share Christ-centered perspective.

Epieikēs (Gk., v.5): "moderation," gentleness or gracious spirit.

Merimnate (Gk., v.6): "be anxious," distracted care.

Phrouresei (Gk., v.7): "shall guard," protect like a sentinel.

Autarkēs (Gk., v.11): "content," sufficient through Christ's strength.

Koinōnēsantes (Gk., v.14): "shared," participated together in support.

Logon (Gk., v.17): "account," record for reward.

Kata (Gk., v.19): "according to," in proportion to divine abundance.

Doctrinal Insight

Philippians 4 links spiritual stability with mental focus, prayerful dependence, and divine contentment. Grace, not grit, guards the mind. Prayer releases anxiety, and gratitude anchors the soul. Contentment stems from Christ's indwelling strength, not circumstances. Generosity becomes worship when motivated by grace, and God's supply never depends on human economy.

Free Grace Summary

Joy and peace flow from security in Christ, not favorable conditions.

The believer's sufficiency is internal — Christ in us, not external stability.

Anxiety is replaced by prayer and gratitude, leading to divine peace.

Giving under grace multiplies eternal reward.

God supplies all needs "according to His riches," never diminishing His store.

Philippians 4 closes the epistle reminding believers that grace is the source of rejoicing, strength, and provision — the unchanging foundation of eternal security and daily contentment.