



*Study of Philippians*

*The house church at Philippi  
and beyond  
with the women who led there.*

*“Grace and peace to you from God our  
Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

## Table 2

## Philippians 1:12-30

Welcome to Table 2! I hope November treats you kindly. Kimberly and I have been a little googly eyed for October. Soon, Kimberly's going to have to dig a little deeper for her bright spots. It really was bittersweet to wave farewell to one of the best months of the year. "I'm so glad I live in a world where there are Octobers." Just a little Anne of Green Gables quote to remember until we meet October again.

Switching gears to the Church at Philippi, this sweet group of believers had been anxious to get news on how Paul was doing. Was he ok? I picture them taking a collective sigh of relief when they finally got to what we know as verse 12.

*Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel.*

*Can you reflect on your life and arrive at the same conclusion? Let's make this our goal.*

I hope you've been reading Philippians this week. Take it in. Let it become a part of you. May we soak up all of these living words until we are overflowing with the attitude of Paul. Come what may Paul was committed to giving everything he had to making Christ known to whoever was before him or whichever soldier was chained to him.

His Word before my words: [Philippians 1](#)

Listen to Season 2 Episode 43 "Captive Audience" on [Apple](#) or [Spotify](#).

*"Why are Christians and churches hesitant to collaborate with one another? I wonder what the obstacles are that keep us apart?"* These are questions Twila posed to me this morning. Twila is coordinating a [Gather 25](#) event to be held at our local church on March 1st. We are excited for this opportunity to gather in real time with the global church. **Yet, we are perplexed by non-interest from the Church.** Isn't this the goal? Isn't a united Church what Jesus prayed for?

Didn't Jesus leave us with a group assignment to take the gospel to the ends of the earth? How can we get to the ends of the earth without working together?

**To unite around one mission seems like a better plan than competing against one another. Just sayin...**

I can speculate about the obstacles, especially using the passage we happen to be studying. Could there be some envy and rivalry at play? What about selfish ambition? There are definitely powers and principalities of darkness at work to hinder the unity of the Church. But friends we have to face the facts, the Church is really good at unhealthy competition within our fragmented body. Like I said on the podcast, “We will shoot our own soldiers.” The Church has got to be set free from partisan Christianity.

This is what I know with absolute confidence: **Paul and all of the apostles would have lost their minds to see such a day!!!** What a time to be alive! This is the dream. To live with the tools at our fingertips to unite around the work of coming together to ask really important questions like, **what can I do to be a part of the final push to finish the great commission?**

Paul was in prison at Rome, which for the great apostle to the Gentiles, should have been a major obstacle to him. Instead of being discouraged, Paul looked to the soldier he was chained to and said, “Man, I have some good news for you!” Every shift change brought a fresh opportunity to share the gospel and spread joy to another soldier.

Paul writes to the Church at Philippi reminding them not to worry, because prison doesn’t slow him down. At least one household in the Church at Philippi said, “Amen.” The gospel was being preached! Who knows how many soldiers became a part of Paul’s captive audience. The good news was spreading through Paul’s suffering. Paul would at the end of his ministry during his final imprisonment write to Timothy reminding him God’s Word is not chained. Maybe you need that reminder.

*“for which I am suffering even to the point of being chained like a criminal. But God’s word is not chained. 2 Timothy 2:9*

This reminds me of a favorite quote. *“The Gospel is like a caged lion. It does not need to be defended, it just needs to be let out of its cage.”* — Charles H. Spurgeon

**What’s spreading through our suffering?** We have to ask this question. We are all entrusted with suffering. This is one of the ways the Spirit has taught me to view suffering. **Suffering has been entrusted to us (1:29-30).** I believe it’s helpful to also keep in mind that Jesus was known as “the Suffering Servant.” **Suffering is part of the assignment.** It’s unavoidable. How we suffer matters. It affects our witness.

Look around, this world is not getting more holy and sadly sometimes I wonder if the church is growing in holiness. The Church is the one being formed as the image bearer of Christ not the world. This next question might sting a little but somebody needs to ask it. Are Christians more concerned with the goings on in the world rather than in the Church? I'm asking us to take a long pause and think about our witness.

**What story is your life telling about Jesus?** If a stranger was studying your life through your reactions to your circumstances or through your social media posts, likes, and comments...would they say it's clear this person is in chains to Christ? This person follows Jesus. This person is really a Christian. I want what they have.

**When others are sidelined by circumstances does that embolden you or does fear still hold you back?**

**Holy Spirit, come and search our hearts for: envy, rivalry, and selfish ambition.**

When I read verses 19-20, my hope and confidence soars. Paul had great confidence in God's provision. He knew God was working through the prayers of the saints in Philippi. Friends, let this serve as great motivation to persevere in prayer for the global Church. Our Church family scattered around the world needs us to pray. Paul is teaching us to persevere in prayer. There are lives on the line.

Something I've started to pray is for God to give my words wings. I picture the Spirit surrounding my words empowering my words to drive back the darkness. Like Paul we know there are powers working against us. Yet like Paul we also know that greater is He that is in us than he that is in the world. Let's take our stand on the battlefield lifting up all kinds of prayer for the Church and the world.

"What has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance"...Now, that's confidence.

**"For to me is to live is Christ and to die is gain."** Let's ponder this. Paul in some ways wanted to die. Desiring to be with the Lord and no longer struggling with sin and temptation is very appealing, right? Paul had no fear of death. I pray that none of you are being held captive to the fear of death. It's understandable to be afraid of the act of dying. However, no Christian should fear death. Death has been defeated.

I think it's important to face our fears around death and dying honestly. You might find it helpful to write about your feelings. Bring these feelings before our loving Father. If your faith feels weak, ask the Lord to strengthen your faith. If you're tired, bring your fatigue before God. Whatever your feelings, just talk to your Dad about them.

Philippians 1:27 *Whatever happens, **conduct** yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel.*

The Greek word translated “conduct” means literally, to live as a citizen. Paul was giving the Church at Philippi some great advice. We need this advice! Paul was saying to the Church at Philippi and now to us, **to live first as good citizens of the Kingdom of God!**

**Are you as patriotic about being a citizen of the Kingdom of God as you are about your American citizenship?**

**Let’s turn Paul’s closing words from chapter one into our prayer.** *Lord, I am confident in your deliverance. You will take what has happened to me in the past and what is happening to me in the present and make it work for my deliverance from all of my enemies. I will have sufficient courage now as always so that Christ will be exalted in my body. I have no fear of death. Death has no hold on me. I choose to live as Christ. I will rejoice in my sufferings. I will cheer for other Christians. I choose to work for the kingdom agenda not my own agenda. I’m not looking for a good comfortable life. Let my life produce fruit for the Kingdom of God. I want to be united with other Christians assisting and being assisted in our progress for the Kingdom of God. I will boast in Christ in such a way so that joy abounds to others.*

*Whatever happens I pledge my allegiance to Christ and His Kingdom. Help me to not lose sight of the gospel. My conduct reflects where my hope is anchored. I am a citizen of heaven. In fact, I have dual citizenship. So as a citizen of heaven and as a citizen of the United States I am determined to stand firm while striving together with my fellow saints to advance if not finish the work of the gospel in my lifetime. For the glory of our King! Amen.*

I am so thankful to be studying Philippians. It feels like the sermon I long to hear from our overseers. I respond well to a joy filled exhortation of a message. Where no matter what happens, Jesus is King! We have been given a gospel message that is like a key that unlocks the doors to the Kingdom of God. Give the gospel away to everyone who is right in front of you. There are no losers in the Kingdom of God. The victory has been won!