

UPWARD  
LIVING  
*in a*  
WORLD GONE MAD!

Surrender's Joy:  
A Study of Philippians

*For Older Youth  
and College-age Students*



UPWARD LIVING  
IN A WORLD GONE MAD

Surrender's Joy: A Study of Philippians

*For Older Youth  
and College-age Students*

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# INTRODUCTION

## UPWARD LIVING IN A WORLD GONE MAD

Paul lived in a world gone mad ... literally! The Roman rulers had a history of being corrupt, egotistical, immoral and mentally unstable. The status and appearance-conscious Roman society reflected their leader's sinful attitudes and actions, with negative impact on the family unit. They worshipped a confusing and changing assortment of gods and deities, with un-godlike characteristics. Their laws and regulations often resulted in criminals going free and good people being unjustly imprisoned, as was the case with Paul during the time he wrote Philippians (62 AD).



He wrote, not knowing whether the unstable ruler Nero would allow him to live or would sentence him to death. His purpose was to redirect the Philippians from a downward focus on a church conflict, back to an upward focus. He wanted them to walk their destiny!

Paul knew that an upward focus would lead to the complete surrender of every area of their lives to God. God's peace and strength would then sustain them in the midst of the present and future crises, difficulties and persecution. Moving from self-focus, they would be able to daily live their destiny and walk as light and salt in a world filled with darkness. A victorious walk would have to be a surrendered walk. There was no other way for them to walk in victory and destiny, and there is no other way for us.

Paul had met Christ many years prior, as a Pharisee—religious, yet lost. When he met Jesus in a blinding vision, he had been busy destroying Christians. As a result, Paul embraced the Christ he had persecuted, and his life was changed forever. In this way, Paul's **Walk of Surrender** began.

Surrender took Paul to places he had never been: intellectually, emotionally, spiritually and physically. Intellectually, he had to acknowledge God's truth and not lean on his own understanding and religious traditions. Emotionally, he had to learn to walk in **Surrender's Trust** and contentment instead of reacting negatively and fearfully to difficult circumstances. Spiritually, self-effort and control had to be replaced with God-control. Logistically, he had to learn to let go of some things that might be comfortable so he could fully live **Surrender's Joyful Adventure!**

God's plan requires our surrender to Him. It is a surrender that involves a daily death to self and an offering of our life as a "living sacrifice."

#### ROMANS 12:1

*Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.*

This is just what Paul learned to do, and this is how he learned to walk in **Surrender's daily Joy, Strength and Destiny**. In surrender, Paul came to a place in his life where he could say: "*For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain*" (Philippians 1:21).



# ARE YOU UPWARD FOCUSED? HOW SURRENDERED IS YOUR LIFE?

This is more than a book or study guide. It's a revolution of thinking and living! It leads the student on an in-depth journey through Paul's letter to his beloved Philippians, written while he was imprisoned—chained day and night to a soldier. Throughout his correspondence, Paul urges his readers to rejoice, rejoice! In fact, the word *joy* or *rejoice* is found nineteen times in his letter!

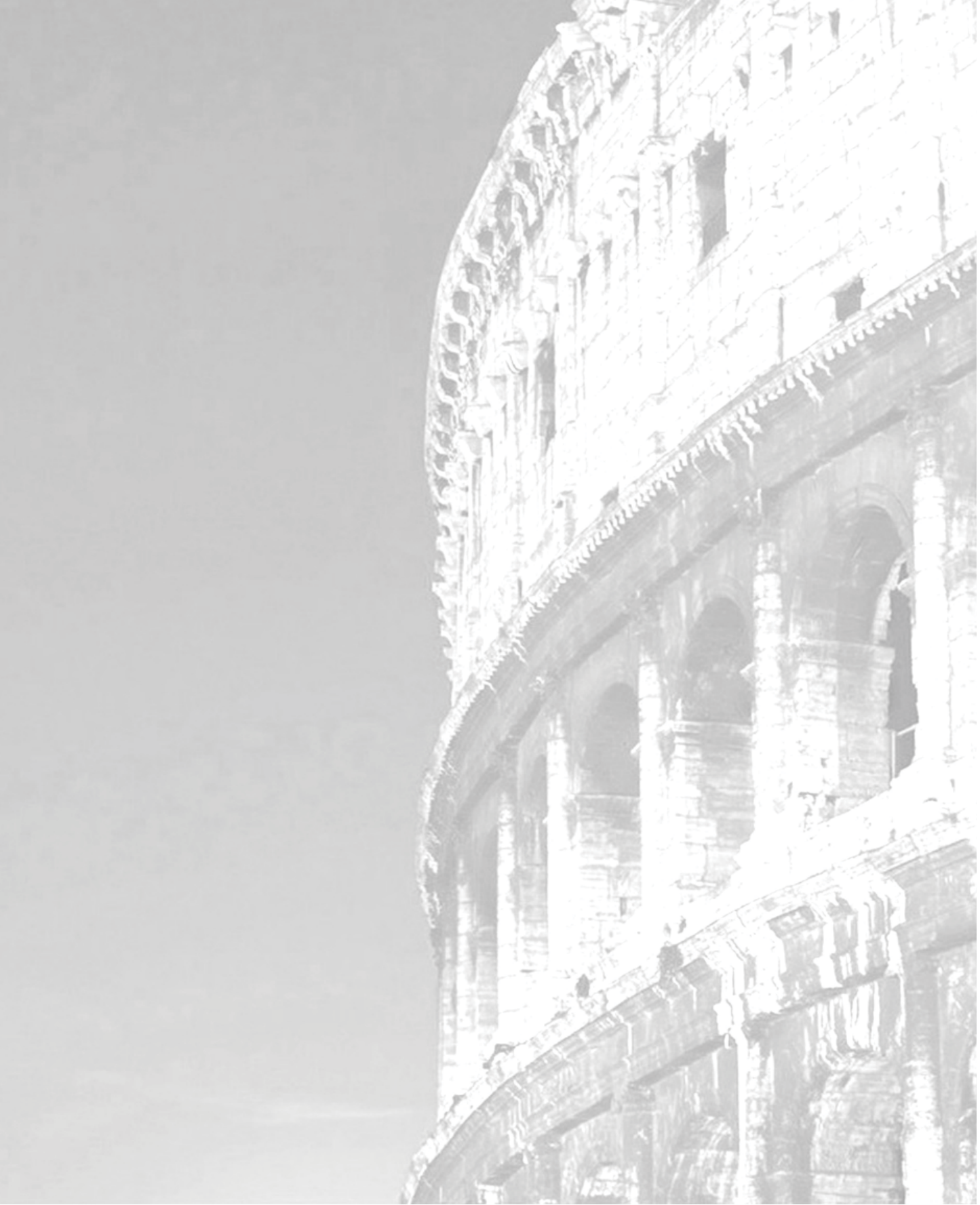
*Upward Living: The Walk of Surrender* provides you with thought-provoking Word studies and devotionals to guide you in your own daily personal study. I urge you to complete the daily assignments, meditating on the powerful Scriptural truths that surface, as a way to enhance your daily time alone with God. In doing so, your own life and thinking will be revolutionized!

**Hold on to your seat!**

**Get ready to live Surrender's Joy, Strength and Destiny!**

*Marcia L. Gillis*

Visit [upwardlivingpublications.com](http://upwardlivingpublications.com) for a free download of the *Upward Living in a World Gone Mad Leader's Guide*.



# PAUL'S MAD WORLD

**PAUL** LIVED IN DIFFICULT TIMES, SOMEWHAT SIMILAR TO OUR OWN. HE AND HIS FELLOW CHRISTIANS FACED AN UNKNOWN FUTURE. THEY DESPERATELY NEEDED GOD'S STRENGTH TO BE VICTORIOUS. UPWARD LIVING WAS THE ONLY WAY TO LIVE THEIR DESTINY.

The corrupt egotistical immoral rulers of Rome used any means at their disposal to grab and keep their power—whether it was trickery, bribery, war or murder. Their family lives were a disaster. Unbridled perversions were their downfall. Their accomplishments included a mixed assortment of the good, the bad and the very ugly.

**NERO**, the emperor during Paul's time, was born on December 15, 37. His father, Cnaeus Domitius Ahenobarbus, was a member of an ancient noble family. His mother, Agrippina, was a direct royal descendant. When Nero was born, his “crazy” uncle Gaius had only recently become emperor. The family survived the short reign of his crazy uncle emperor who was soon assassinated. It is not unlikely that it took a conspiracy to bring about the rule of the next emperor, Claudius, another of Agrippina's uncles.

In 40, Domitius died, and Agrippina became a single parent, living as a private citizen until Emperor Claudius executed his third wife, Messalina. At that point, Agrippina competed to become the new empress, marrying her uncle in 49.<sup>1</sup> Nero was soon adopted by Claudius and the philosopher Seneca became his tutor. In 54, Claudius died after eating some mushrooms many historians believed were poisoned by Agrippina,<sup>2</sup> and the 16-year-old Nero was hailed as emperor.

During his early reign, this young emperor was strongly influenced by his mother, his tutor and others. The first five years of Nero's rule are generally described as a period of good government, as he focused much of his attention on diplomacy, trade and increasing the cultural capital of the empire. Agrippina never let her son forget that she had made him emperor.

Nero's marriage to Octavia, the shy and modest daughter of the dead Claudius, was an important political step. Early on, though, he was attracted to another man's wife, Poppaea Sabina. Here is where his own downward spiral escalated. At 21, he had his mother killed! Later, he arranged to execute Octavia and married Poppaea.<sup>3</sup> Nero's rule is often associated with tyranny and extravagance.<sup>4</sup> He is known for a number of executions, including those of his adoptive brother. He gained notoriety as the emperor who "fiddled while Rome burned" and as an early persecutor of Christians.<sup>5</sup>

The year 64 was significant. His mother and wife were dead, and Seneca had retired. Now, the primary advisor to the young emperor was Tigellinus, a man described as criminal in outlook and action. Nero was enjoying his limitless power and the advantages it offered, until a far-reaching disaster occurred!



The Mamertine Prison consists of two gloomy underground cells where Rome's defeated enemies were imprisoned. Legend has it that Paul and Peter were kept here before their executions.

A fire began in a shopping area and blazed for two weeks after destroying ten of the fourteen regions into which the city had been divided. Many believed that the fires had been deliberately set. Many believed Nero was responsible. All his efforts to assist the stricken city could not remove the suspicion that "the emperor had fiddled while Rome burned." He lost favor even among the poor people, especially when it came out that a very large part of the city's center was to become his new home.

To bolster his failing popularity, Nero and Tigellinus realized that they needed scapegoats for the disaster. Christians,

unpopular because of their refusal to worship the emperor, their way of life and their secret meetings, became the perfect scapegoat solution. Even more perfect, two of their most important "teachers" were in Rome—Peter and Paul.

Christians were individuals whom most Romans loathed and who had often spoken about the end of the world. Their destruction was carried out with precision and cruelty in the guise of entertainment. In the stadium, Christians were exposed to wild animals and were smeared with pitch and set on fire to illuminate the night. The executions were so grisly that even the spectators showed sympathy for the victims. Tradition has it that Peter was crucified upside down on the Vatican hill. Around this same time, Paul was beheaded. As hard as he tried to cast blame in another direction, Nero was viewed as the arsonist and dissatisfaction over his rule grew. Eventually, after conspirators sought to displace and murder him, Nero committed suicide.<sup>6</sup>

## SOCIETY'S SAD IMITATION

The Roman society reflected its leaders' sinful attitudes to varying degrees. The closer their city was to metropolitan Rome, the greater the impact. This impact was especially visible in regard to the disintegrating health and stability of the family.

Paul described his time period in **Romans 1:18-25**.

*For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.*

*For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.*

## THE RELIGIOUS BACKGROUND OF THE ROMAN SOCIETY

The Romans had many deities, including the most important Roman god, Jupiter, and countless numbers of secret beings and teams of minor deities (existing in extensive lists) each with a minor function in assisting or hindering in each activity or fraction of various human activities, particularly those characteristic of rural areas and those involving private life.<sup>7</sup>

During the New Testament time period, there was increasing tension between Rome and Judaism, and open hostility to Jesus and His teachings by the Jewish leaders (John 11:47-50; Matthew 24:1-2; Matthew 26:59-61, 66). During the time of Nero, the Jews revolted,<sup>8</sup> paying the ultimate price—the destruction of the temple and the ransacking of Jerusalem (70 AD).

The Romans disliked Christians, even more than they disliked the Jews. The Jews were thought of as an ancient people who had remained faithful to their ancestral traditions. In contrast, the Christians had left their ancestral religions to become followers of the Crucified Christ.

Christians refused to worship Roman gods, representing them as either nonexistent or demonic, and would not even acknowledge that others ought to do so (de Ste. Croix). To the Romans this was atheism.<sup>9</sup> It alienated the gods upon whom the well-being of the empire depended.<sup>10</sup>

Paul was fully aware that his pagan society recognized many gods and lords (1 Corinthians 8:5). The Acts of the Apostles and his letters, primary sources for our knowledge of Paul, show how the Greek and Roman beliefs impacted him and his missionary activities.<sup>11</sup>

## POLITICS, LAWS AND REGULATIONS

The Roman Empire was monstrous in its size and reach throughout Europe and in its establishment of a trade route deep into Asia. During Paul's time, it consisted of 2.2 million miles and 60 million people, as many as one fifth of the world's population! 50,000 miles of roads spread Roman influence throughout the world.

Rome ruled its provinces with a strong hand. Though tradition indicates that Paul was killed by the Romans, Acts describes the Romans as rescuing Paul from Jewish hands, allowing him to continue his missionary work. One of his Roman imprisonments actually enabled him to travel to Rome and conduct missionary work at Roman expense (Romans 1:11-13; Acts 27:1-28)!

In the provinces, Rome allowed native leaders to rule and maintain order. It was these rulers who, initially, caused trouble for Paul. City officials imprisoned Paul and Silas in Philippi after they ministered deliverance to a demonic woman, therefore depriving her owners from their means of support (Acts 16:16-24). In Thessalonica, city officials were upset by the disturbance caused in opposition to Paul's ministry (Acts 17:8-9). In general, Paul was unjustly imprisoned seven times over his missionary activities, while others who were actual criminals went free.

Write down any noted similarities between Paul's mad world and ours.

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**WEEK ONE**  
**THE SURRENDER OF UPWARD LIVING**  
*Philippians 1:1-11*

Day 1 – The Church at Philippi (1:1)	1
Day 2 – Grace and Peace Be Mine (1:2)	5
Day 3 – He Will Perfect His Good Work (1:3-6)	9
Day 4 – Surrender’s Real Knowledge (1:7-11)	14
Day 5 – Surrender’s Discernment (1:7-11)	20

**UPWARD LIVING IN A WORLD GONE MAD**  
**SURRENDER’S JOY**  
*A Study of Philippians*

# WEEK ONE

## THE SURRENDER OF UPWARD LIVING

Read **Philippians 1:1-11** in your Bible. Underline the verse or verses that jump out at you. Write your favorite verse from Philippians 1 below.

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Why is this your favorite verse?

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# DAY 1

## THE CHURCH AT PHILIPPI

### *Philippians 1:1*

1 Paul and Timothy,  
*bond-servants of Christ Jesus,*  
*to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi,*  
*including the overseers and deacons:*

Paul had paid a heavy price to proclaim Christ. He was chained to a guard as he wrote, yet he rejoiced. He was more concerned about their well-being than himself and his own dire circumstances.

It was during his second missionary journey (50 AD) that a dream, and Paul's **Walk of Surrender**, led him to Philippi (Acts 16:1-5), a Roman colony and a military and agricultural center initially established by the father of Alexander the Great. There, he met Lydia, a businesswoman. Lydia's conversion led to the conversion of all the members of her household, and her home became a base of operation for Paul's work and a place of assembly for the young church, one of the earliest to be founded in Europe.

Paul's work in Philippi immediately resulted in a beating and landed him in prison after he cast a demon from a slave girl (Acts 16:16-25). Her deliverance stopped the income her demonic activity generated for her greedy owners. Yet, what Satan would use for evil, God used for good. Prayer opened prison doors miraculously and the jailer and his family were saved (Acts 16:25-34)!



This may have been where Paul and Silas were imprisoned.

Paul remained in Philippi only a short time, but this Gentile church kept thriving under the care of Luke and women like Lydia and others whom God was teaching to walk in **Surrender's Joy** (Acts 16:16-40).

Paul's writings indicate that the Church at Philippi had a prominence of women. In general, Macedonian converts were, as a class, very poor. This makes their generous financial support of the great missionary even more remarkable.

This is Paul's most personal letter. In it, he lays his heart bare, as he challenges them to be all they can be in Christ and updates them about his situation.

### **Bond-servants**

Paul describes himself and his faithful co-worker, Timothy, as ***bond-servants of Christ Jesus***. When you think of the word "servant," what comes to mind?

In this context, the Greek word for "servant" (*doulos*) is used as one who gives himself up wholly to another's will (1 Corinthians 7:23); one who is devoted to another in disregard of one's own interests (Matthew 20:27; Mark 10:42-45). The perfect example is Christ who gave Himself totally over to doing the will of His Father.<sup>12</sup>

How does the word "bond-servants" positively portray Paul and Timothy in regards to:

1) Their attitudes toward themselves?

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2) Their attitudes toward Christ?

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3) Their relationship with Christ?

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Can you describe yourself as a bond-servant of Christ on a daily basis? Why or why not?

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Think of past circumstances from your life, one in which you joyfully surrendered to doing God's will and one in which you went your own way. Briefly describe these circumstances below, and contrast your motives, feelings and the outcome.

CIRCUMSTANCE ~ SURRENDERED	CIRCUMSTANCE ~ NOT SURRENDERED
MOTIVES	MOTIVES
FEELINGS	FEELINGS
OUTCOME	OUTCOME

## Saints

Paul calls the Philippians **saints**. When you think of the word “saint,” what do you think of?

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In the Greek, the word translated “*saint*” (*hagios*) refers to people set apart for God; belonging to God.<sup>13</sup> “The focus is not upon a particular state of holiness, but upon a special relationship to God.”<sup>14</sup>

We see many places in Scripture in which God gave His People new names. For example: Abram (High Father) became Abraham (Father of a Multitude). Sarai (Contentious) became Sarah (Princess). Jacob (Deceiver) became Israel (God Fighter). As Christians, we have been given a new name by God. We are called “Saints.” The more we allow Him to control our lives, the more we live up to that name. We become Saints through our union with Christ. The more time we spend in His presence, the more likely we are to reflect Him to the world around us.

How does it make you feel to know that God has called you by a new name—Saint? Look up the scriptures below and write out other positive names that God calls you as His child.

ROMANS 1:7 »

1 CORINTHIANS 3:16 »

EPHESIANS 5:8 »

MATTHEW 5:14 »

ROMANS 8:17 »

MATTHEW 5:13 »

GALATIANS 4:8 »

ROMANS 9:8 »

MATTHEW 13:38 »

ROMANS 8:15 »

Meditate

Re-read this devotion and meditate on its implications for your life.

What is the Lord telling you? Is there anything you need to change about the way you think about yourself? If so, what is it?

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4 | Week One - Day One

# DAY 2

## GRACE AND PEACE BE MINE

*Philippians 1:2*

### **2 Grace to you and peace**

*from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

“Grace to you and peace” was the common salutation in Paul’s epistles. Grace was always first. Without grace, there would be no true peace. Inward peace comes only from a sense of divine favor, and comes through God’s provision through His Son, our Lord Jesus Christ.

### **JAMES 1:17**

*Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation, or shifting shadow.*

Certainly Paul had every reason to be anxious and even bitter. Throughout his Christian walk he suffered seven beatings and seven years of imprisonment for no legitimate cause. His only offense was that He unashamedly proclaimed Christ and set spiritual captives free! Yet, in spite of such unjust treatment, Paul walked in peace and reminded his dear Philippians to do the same. He exemplified **Upward Living!**

### **Grace**

Grace expresses God’s unconditional loving-kindness/divine favor to sinful, undeserving people, like us. That amazing love was manifested in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Look up the following verses. What do they say about grace?

EPHESIANS 2:4-11 - \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

COLOSSIANS 2:9-10 - \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

ROMANS 6:14; 8:1 - \_\_\_\_\_

Now, meditate, for a moment, on what God has done for you. What do you have as a result of God's grace? Have you been living in the light of His grace? \_\_\_\_\_

What do you need to change about your attitudes, perspectives and actions to live your life in the light of His grace? \_\_\_\_\_

What would your life be like without Him? \_\_\_\_\_

## Peace

In Philippians 1:2 peace does not mean simply an absence of troubles or anxieties, but a state of total well-being, a wholeness of life resulting from forgiveness of sins and being made right with God through Christ. Through Christ we can have peace *with* God and the peace *of* God! **Upward Living** allows this to take place even in a world gone mad!

“There is no peace, says my God, for the wicked” (Isaiah 57:21). When Christ took our punishment, He made peace with God for us and is Himself our peace. If by faith we trust in Christ alone, God drops the charges against us due to our sin. Then we can realize the inner serenity that can come to man through no other means. When Christ takes charge of our lives, we are freed of that haunting sense of sin. Cleansed of all feeling of contamination, we can walk with our heads held high.<sup>15</sup>



Look up the following verses. What do they tell you about why you can walk in peace as God's child?

JOHN 14:27

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ROMANS 5:1-11

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COLOSSIANS 3:15

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PHILIPPIANS 4:6-7

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Even when the storm rages, our surrendered hearts can be at peace in Christ.

Write out Philippians 4:6-7.

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**We surrender to God, the One who so desired relationship *with* us and good  
*for* us that He gave His own life, paying the ultimate price.  
He has proven Himself trustworthy!**

Week One - Day Two | 7

Meditate

Re-read this devotion and meditate on its implications for your life.

What is the Lord telling you?

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Memorize

Memorize the personalized version of Philippians 1:2 below, and repeat it every day.

*Grace and peace are mine from God my Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

# DAY 3

## HE WILL PERFECT HIS GOOD WORK

*Philippians 1:3-6*

**3** *I thank my God*

*in all my remembrance of you,*

**4** *always offering prayer*

*with joy in my every prayer for you all,*

**5** *in view of your participation in the gospel*

*from the first day until now.*

**6** *For I am confident of this very thing,*

*that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.*

### Joy

The book of Philippians speaks words of encouragement to us, even as it spoke to the Philippian believers. Were Paul alive today, he would be saying to us, “*I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now.*”

The Philippians were imperfect beings, as are we, but they had continued in the Faith! Their lives had changed dramatically from what they had been—before Christ took charge. Without a doubt, though, they were unhappy over the areas of their lives that still needed change, just like you and I. Just as Paul said to them, he says to you, “*For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.*”

### Prayer

Paul offered prayer for them with “joy,” not with a heavy heart. He knew God had big plans for them. In some languages, this joy would be translated as “my heart dances as I pray.”<sup>16</sup>

Why could Paul offer prayer for them with “joy?” Find two of the answers in Philippians 1:3-6 and write them below.

- 1) \_\_\_\_\_
- 2) \_\_\_\_\_

The word “*participation*” (*koinōnia*) has also been translated as fellowship, community and partnership. In general, the Greek word refers to “participation in something with someone.”<sup>17</sup> They had worked with Paul in telling others about Christ.

The Philippians were people like you. Certainly they lived in a different time period and culture, yet they had similarities. They were brothers and sisters, sons and daughters. They faced crises and peer pressure. They were busy, at times stressed, living in a time of upheaval. Yet, in the midst of living, they proclaimed Christ to those around them. They showed care to those in need.

Write out some ways you can “participate” in the gospel on a daily basis:

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Now, let’s look at the second reason Paul felt joy when he prayed for his beloved Philippians and why he would have joy in praying for you.

*For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.*

A study of the Greek meaning of the underlined words will enhance our understanding of the meaning of this verse.

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**Confident, v. (peithō)**

“To believe in something or someone to the extent of placing reliance or trust in or on it – ‘to rely on, to trust in, to depend on, to have (complete) confidence in, confidence, trust.’” In many languages trust or reliance is “to lean one’s weight on” or “to hang upon” or “to place oneself in the hands of.”<sup>18</sup>

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**Good, adj. (agathos)**

Agathos describes that which, being “good” in its character or constitution, is beneficial in its effect. For example, a “good” tree will bear “good” fruit.<sup>19</sup> In other words, someone who is of good character will **act** good.

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**Work, n. (ergon)**

Business, employment, that with which anyone is occupied; any product whatever, anything accomplished by hand, art, industry, mind; an act, deed, thing done.<sup>20</sup>

The result of someone’s activity or work – “workmanship, result of what has been done.”<sup>21</sup>

Work, employment, task.<sup>22</sup>

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**Will perform; perfect, v. (epiteletō)**

To cause to happen, with the purpose of some end result – “to accomplish, to bring about.”<sup>23</sup> To bring to an end, accomplish, perfect, execute, complete.<sup>24</sup>

Study the Greek definitions above, then write verse 6 in your own words replacing the word “you” with “me.”

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Paul was praying that nothing would prevent these Philippians from fulfilling their God-given destiny.<sup>25</sup>

God's business is to do good work, even in a world gone mad. God's work is always good work. God has done—and will do—a good work in you. "He will perfect it." He's not done with you yet. The more you focus on Him, His Words and His work, the more able He is to do His good work in you. Write out some of the good things He has done *in* you, *through* you and *for* you.

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People of faith are people of prayer. People of faith are people of the Word. **Surrender's Change** demands faith and trust. It is easy to meander. "You don't need faith to go around the same old mountain. Most aren't afraid of a shaking boat, if it's in their living room!"<sup>26</sup>

God sees something bigger for you. Are you going to allow Him to do it? Jesus has a timeless love for you. He sees you as a person of destiny. Are you going to allow Him to help you walk that destiny on a day-by-day basis?

Our kingdom is an insecure one, dependent on our limited ability to rule. His kingdom is an eternal one. In surrender, we trade *self-rule* for *God-rule*. It is a minute-by-minute, hour-by-hour and day-by-day process.

**We surrender to God because we trust Him. He has already earned our trust by making the ultimate sacrifice and by what He has done for us in the past.** What you are is not what you are going to be. Learn to live beyond yourself. Come against the negative world influences with a different Spirit—Him in you!

*Allow Him to complete His good work in you.*

Meditate

Re-read this devotion and meditate on its implications for your life.

What is the Lord telling you?

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Memorize

Memorize the personalized versions of Philippians 1:2 and 6 below, and repeat them every day.

*Grace and peace are mine from God my Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

*He who began a good work in me will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.*