



# CAPITOL<sup>®</sup> COMMISSION

*Reaching Capitol Communities for Christ<sup>®</sup>*

## **The Arkansas Capitol Devotional Philippians 1:1-11: The Divine Vantage Point**

### **Introduction**

*Capitol Commission Legislative Bible Studies are held every Monday evening of the session from 6:00 pm – 7:30 pm in the lobby of the Capitol Hill Apartments, at the Arkansas State Capitol. The weekly Bible study is nonpartisan and non-denominational. The study for the 2018 Fiscal Session of the General Assembly is the book of Philippians.*

*I pray that this study will be edifying to you. I am here to serve you and to be a resource for prayer and counsel. Please accept my study in the Word of God, as an evidence of my desire to be serving you. – Jason Palermo, Arkansas State Minister, Capitol Commission*

*According to Forrest Gump's momma, "Life was like a box of chocolates." One could also just as easily say, "Life is like a football game." For instance, what occurs when a quarterback throws an interception? He leaves the field, and then rather typically, grabs a phone and begins talking to someone. The person on the other line is generally an assistant coach, who is able to share his "vantage point."*

*Although a coach may be one hundred yards from the field, his vantage point in the press box grants a good view of the entire playing area. The coach is able to view the weaknesses in the opposition's defense, and can see the actions of all the players. The coach's vantage point allows him to explain why a pass was intercepted and how to prevent it occurring again. Even if a player disagrees with the coach, he is wise to trust the instruction because the vantage point is much better above the field than from someone in the midst of play.*

*Life is like a football game in the sense that God can be imagined as within the press box, viewing our circumstances. Through his Word – the Holy Bible – God does what the assistant coach attempts to provide for the quarterback (or any other player), namely to offer the "big picture." As he wrote the book of Philippians, it appeared that the Apostle Paul was soon to be sacked for an enormous loss. However, when we read Philippians, we find the Apostle rejoicing. How could he have joy in the midst of adversity? The answer is that he viewed his circumstances*

*from God's perspective. Consequently, he could have a clear understanding of what was occurring to him and why. Philippians 1 will provide you with God's perspective in the midst of whatever circumstances you may be experiencing (whether good or bad), so that you are able to have divine joy and peace.*

## **DIVINE GRACE AND PEACE**

The Apostle Paul visited the city of Philippi on his second missionary journey (Cf. Acts 16:11-40). The citizens of Philippi benefited from an autonomous government, immunity from taxation, and conduct as if living in Italy. The first convert of the missionaries in Philippi was “a woman named Lydia” whose heart was opened graciously and sovereignly by the Lord “to respond to the things spoken by Paul” (Acts 16:14). The church at Philippi was founded through the faithful ministry of Luke, Paul, Silas, and Timothy (16:1, 10, 12, 19; 20:6).

The Epistle to the Philippians was written during Paul's first Roman imprisonment. The theme of Philippians is “joy,” which is used thirteen times. Christ is also mentioned thirty-eight times, and therefore, “rejoicing in the Lord” is a prominent emphasis.

The epistle contains significant revelation concerning Christ's kenosis (2:7), which means his self-emptying of the prerogatives and powers that were his eternally by virtue of his divine attributes. The passage concerning Christ's humiliation explains that by not asserting his divine prerogatives and powers, the Lord Jesus took the form of a servant (while never emptying Himself of his divinity) to become true humanity (2:5-11). The epistle may be outlined quite basically: (1) rejoicing in difficulties (1:1-30); (2) rejoicing in others (2:1-30); (3) rejoicing in the future (3:1-21); and, (4) rejoicing in all things (4:1-23).

| <b>THE RECIPIENTS OF PAUL'S EPISTLE:<br/>“TO ALL THE SAINTS IN CHRIST JESUS”</b>   |
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| (1) Holy Ones: (the same Greek word is translated holy or saint): applied to God, the terms signifies his unique transcendence applied to humanity, it signifies being set apart for God's service |
| (2) Belong in Christ Jesus: the Greek genitive case (“in”) signifies belonging (possession)  |
| (3) United in Diversity: the believing Philippians constituted the church in the city  |

*(Phil 1:1-6)* Following his introduction of himself and Timothy as “slaves” (Gk. **douloi**) of Christ Jesus, the church at Philippi was addressed as “saints” (Gk. **Hagios**). Unique among Paul’s epistles is the special designation of elders and deacons. Elders were probably distinguished because of their maturity and stewardship to Spiritually propagate God’s revelation to the church (cf. Acts 20:28; 1 Tim 3:2; Tit 1:9; Phil 3:15). Deacons may have been mentioned because servant hood is a primary emphasis of this epistle (cf. Phil 2:5-11). The church would continue their unification by adopting the servant attitude as exhibited in Christ Jesus.

| <b>PRAYER THAT IS PERSONAL</b>                   |
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| (1) Frequency: “in all my remembrance” (vv. 3-4) |
| (2) Reason: participation in the gospel (v. 5)   |
| (3) Content: completing what God began (v. 6)    |

Adopting the typical practice in Greek (Hellenistic) writing to offer prayer and thanks to a god or gods, the Apostle offered his prayer and thanks to *the one true God*. He then reiterated to the church his continual remembrance of them in prayer. Paul’s prayer for the church expressed the following: (1) his thanks for their Christian life (vv. 3-4); (2) participation in the gospel (v. 5); and, (3) confidence in God to complete his good work in their lives (v. 6).

## **DIVINE WORKING**

*(Phil 1:6)* Another primary emphasis of this epistle is the confidence that the good work begun by God would be perfected sovereignly. God is both the origination and completion of faith in Him. The expression emphasizes both the sovereignty of God and the mission of those who trust in Him. The Lord is sovereign to complete the good work He began in the believer’s life because it is his intent to conform every believer to the image of his Son, Jesus Christ.

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The believer is also responsible to work diligently, as evidence of God's work (2:12-13). The work of sanctification is an ongoing work that begins with regeneration (the "new birth"), continues with conformity to Jesus in his sufferings and resurrection (3:10), and concludes with the transformation of "the body of our humble state into conformity with the body of His glory" (3:21).

## DIVINE ASSURANCE

*(Phil 1:7)* Confidence in God to complete his good work of salvation is because it is "right" (Gk. **dikaion**, "just") to think this concerning the church, as a consequence of the evidence of saving faith. The reason for this confidence is "because I have you in my heart," which indicates a tender affection to the church, as a consequence of many proofs of their salvation. The believers were certainly "partakers of grace," and therefore mutual effort in the cause of the gospel would be a shared blessing. In his imprisonment and in the defense (Gk. **apologia**) and confirmation (Gk. **bebaiwsei**) of the gospel, the church helped the Apostle in the monetary gift provided to him through the intermediacy of Epaphroditus. The love of the church towards the Apostle and his ministry, even during his imprisonment, were evidence of a mutual faith and experience of the grace of God. The heartfelt affection for one another in the cause of the gospel was clearly mutual. Therefore, Paul wrote that it was "right" to think of the church, as God was his solemn witness that he did, with such affection as that of the Lord Jesus.

## DIVINE LOVE

*(Phil 1:8-11)* We naturally pray for those we love. Therefore, the Apostle Paul prayed that God would cause the church to abound in love, to approve the best things from many good things in life, to be "sincere and blameless" when they appear before the judgment seat of Christ (cf. 2 Cor 5:9-10), and to be fruitful in righteousness. Although the object of the love is not stated, it seems evident that it is not toward the Apostle exclusively nor merely for one another, but the continual and absolute increase in love as a fruit of the Holy Spirit.

The impression is that of limitless growth of love that is founded by two dynamics — knowledge and discernment of spiritual pursuits — which yield harvests "with the fruit of righteousness." The metaphor of vigorous growth in the life of the believer is evident. An understanding of the best things in life is the outcome of discernment and approval of "the things that are excellent." The imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ is the foundation for a life abounding in love and understanding (that brings glory and praise to God, which is the ultimate and chief end of humanity).

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The parable of the vine and the gardener illustrates an important truth with regard to living for the Lord. “Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit” (John 15:2). The work of God is always good for believers because it will result in greater works, accomplished through Christ, and to the glory and praise of God.

*Thank you for allowing Capitol Commission the honor to provide Bible studies to you. If you have any questions, please talk with us, or contact by email or phone. These notes are adapted [with permission and minor revisions] from Capitol Commission Georgia.*

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#### **About Capitol Commission**

*Capitol Commission state ministers teach ongoing verse-by-verse Bible studies for the entire Capitol community, and also meet personally with many government leaders (and their staff) to proclaim God’s grace, to encourage our leaders, pray with them, and provide biblical counsel. Capitol Commission is a charitable and religious nonprofit corporation under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Capitol Commission is supported by the generous gifts of businesses, churches, and individuals. Capitol Commission is not state-funded; rather, those with a heart for the Capitol community fund it. Please join us in this ministry!*



Jason Palermo,

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