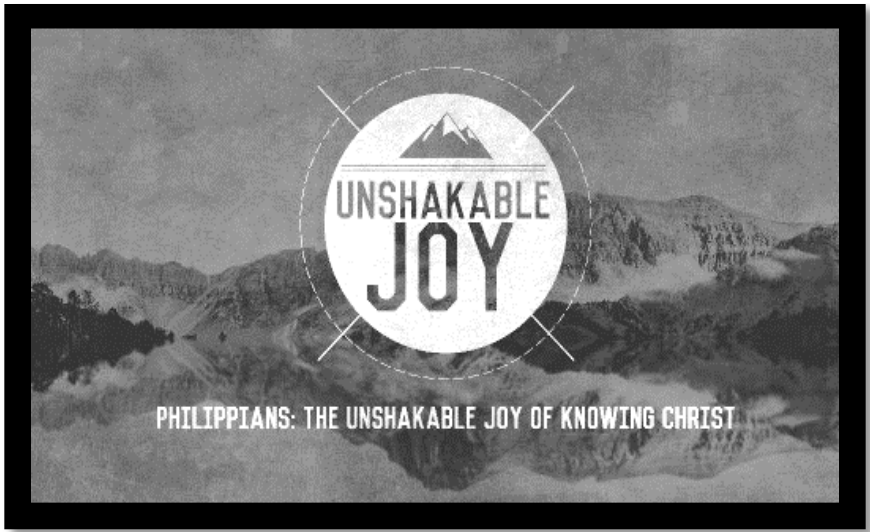


Philippians: Unshakable Joy Companion Devotional



Redeemer Baptist Church
at Romeo

Week I:
Dec. 27, 2021 – Jan. 2, 2022

WHY USE THIS GUIDE?

We are going to be covering a very rich letter by Paul in just four weeks. That means that there will be details that will not be covered from the pulpit, but we want you to walk away from this study with an understanding of the book of Philippians as a whole and the tools to feel confident to study the Bible on your own or with your family.

Try to stay on track with the readings because they will build to the message on Sunday. If you do this preparation, you will be in the best place to hear and understand all that is going on as we open the text together in corporate worship.

HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE: FIVE STEPS

1. Before you do anything, pray. This isn't some magical incantation to utter, it is a recognition that we are not in the right frame of mind and attitude often when we come to Scripture. Prayer helps us to humble ourselves to be teachable by the Holy Spirit.
2. Read the day's introduction then take your time reading the assigned passage. These are usually short passages, so read them more than once or write it down in a journal to help grasp what Paul is saying.
3. Remember that Paul is writing to a real group of people in a real time and place. Ask yourself, "What did Paul's words mean to the people that originally heard it?" Put yourself in their shoes. What is the theme, and what encouragement or criticism is being offered in this passage?
4. Work through the questions in the booklet. Ask yourself what this passage is teaching you about Jesus or about yourself. Although Paul was writing to those people in Philippi, the Holy Spirit intended this passage for you here and now.
5. Pray again. Ask God to help you live out the teachings and truths that you have learned. These could be things about the character of God in Christ, the ministry and zeal of Paul, the situation of the Philippians, or something else that God has impressed upon your heart.

INTRODUCTION

Paul traveled to Philippi early in his second missionary journey. After being forbidden to speak in Asia and not allowed to go into Bithynia, Paul came to Troas on the shore of the Aegean Sea. In a dream, Paul saw a man across the Sea in Macedonia urging him to come to help them.



Paul and his companions came to Philippi and the gospel began to take root in a completely new environment, one where there was not even a Jewish presence. This church had a rocky start with a group of women at a riverside, a fortune-telling slave girl, and jailer with his household. However, we can see Paul's love for the church in his letter years later.

The Philippians had reason to be anxious because of the Roman influence pressuring them away from Christ. In a world that's increasingly fraught with anxiety, it can be difficult to know how and where to find true joy and peace. Thankfully, we can rely on the wisdom of those who have gone before us, having found the true source of joy.

This book was written as a letter to the church at Philippi by Paul, who was no stranger to suffering. However, it is more than just a book about finding joy. It's also a book about what it means to live as citizens of heaven on this earth, how to imitate Christ in all we do, and what it looks like to stand firm in Christ amid trials and opposition.

Monday, December 27 – Week 1 – Day 1

Imagine that Paul began your church, putting a lot of blood, sweat, and tears into it. He left some of his most trusted companions behind with you to make sure that you were disciplined well. But as he has continued in his ministry, he has encountered opposition and now he is in Rome in chains. You've heard of his hardships, you have sent him help, and you are waiting to hear from him. Then this letter arrives to be read for the church.

Forget about the chapters and verse numbers and just read this letter from your friend and father in the faith. You are invested in him and he is invested in you, so read it all in one sitting. Imagine you are hanging on his every word.

Was there any verse or idea that immediately stood out to you?

Were you confused or did you feel like you were missing information?

How do Paul's words leave you feeling if you are a Philippian?

Does Paul have a legitimate reason for frustration and anxiety? Do you?

What attitude marks Paul's character? What about yours?

What is the most important thing to Paul? What about you?

Tuesday, December 28 – Week 1 – Day 2

So often we can just skim right over the opening verses of one of Paul's letters. It would have been customary in the letter writing of the day for authors to begin their work with their name as well as the recipient of the letter and a formal greeting. Paul has these elements, but he uses them masterfully to begin communicating information before the letter even truly gets started. We recognize this today; there is a big difference between opening a letter and reading "Dear John," versus "My Dearest John."

Read Philippians 1:1-2. Then compare and contrast this greeting with the ones found in Paul's other letters addressed to churches (Romans 1:1-7, 1st Corinthians 1:1-3, 2nd Corinthians 1:1-2, Galatians 1:1-5, Ephesians 1:1-2, Colossians 1:1-2, 1st Thessalonians 1:1, and 2nd Thessalonians 1:1-2).

Why do you think that Paul chooses to include Timothy as an author?

Why does Paul focus on their role as servants (literally, slaves) and not even mention their role as apostles?

Is there any significance to the order that the recipients were listed?

All saints → Overseers → Deacons

The Greek word for grace (*charis*) would have been the customary greeting, but Paul includes the Jewish concept of peace (*shalom*). Why?

In what way does Paul's greeting communicate humility and unity?

Wednesday, December 29 – Week 1 – Day 3

Paul opens his correspondence with a prayer of thanks. His primary intention for this description is to affirm his affection for them; but it also announces the theme that weaves through the letter. The believer should be joyful (1:18; 25; 2:2, 2:17–18, 29; 3:1; 4:1-4). Here we find Paul modeling for the Philippians a quality that he will encourage them to cultivate among themselves. For Paul, joy is not the result of finding himself in comfortable circumstances but of seeing the gospel make progress through his circumstances and through the circumstances of the Philippians, whatever they might be.

Read Philippians 1:3-8.

Paul expresses his thanks for their “partnership in the gospel.” The word for partnership is *koinonia* which is usually translated as fellowship. Is this the way that you think of fellowship, a partnership in the gospel?

Can you see how verse 6 could have been taken negatively by Paul’s listeners? He is confident in their spiritual growth because it doesn’t rely on them but on Christ.

Paul was like a spiritual father to the Philippians, but he knows that it is not his leadership that will bring them to completion. He positions himself as simply another partaker of grace.

Do you think of your fellow believers this way? We can so easily get distracted with our own lives or get annoyed with personality quirks, but do you yearn for your brothers and sisters and pray that God would bring their faith to completion?

Thursday, December 30 – Week 1 – Day 4

Paul didn't just tell the Philippians that he had been praying for them. He tells them what he has been praying for and the fruit that he hopes his prayers will bear in their lives.

Read Philippians 1:9-11.

Paul prays that their love may abound. Love for what?

The Beatles say that love is all you need, but Paul prays for love with knowledge and all discernment. Why are these needed?

The goal of Paul's prayer is that the Philippians would be pure and blameless for the day of Christ. Does this match the goal of our prayers for one another?

Is Paul praying for the Philippians to straighten up and fly right? What is the source of their purity and blamelessness according to v. 11?

How does this kind of foreign righteousness glorify God more than the Philippians doing it on their own?

Friday, December 31 – Week 1 – Day 5

Paul is under house arrest in Rome as he is writing this letter. This was partly by his choice since he chose to appeal to Caesar. But especially for those in Philippi which was a leading Roman outpost (Acts 16:12) there may have been temptation to distance themselves from Paul as an enemy of the state. But I think Paul is more concerned that they might begin to believe that God wasn't really in control.

Read Philippians 1:12-18.

This is not just Paul putting on a happy face and sharing a silver lining. He truly sees his imprisonment as being used by God to expand the message of the gospel. Can we learn something about the way we look at our circumstances from this?

It must have been easy for Paul to be discouraged. There is no doubt he was tempted many times to feel sorry for himself and to wonder why God would ever let this kind of thing happen to him when all he was trying to do was fulfill God's will. Do you ever feel that way?

Despite his dire situation and the impure motives that others may have (v. 17), Paul's joy rests in the proclamation of the gospel of Jesus. How much do you really care about people getting to hear the gospel?

Why is it liberating to live caring more about Jesus than our own reputation?

Saturday, January 1 – Week 1 – Day 6

I love superhero movies and stories. If you could choose a superpower what would it be? Today's passage contains what I call the believer's superpower. Paul here shows himself to be untouchable. You can beat him, put him in chains, and even put him to death, but he reveals the secret to his unshakable joy. "To live is Christ, and to die is gain."

Read Philippians 1:19-26.

Paul is already rejoicing at the outcome of the Philippians prayers. He has confidence in God's sovereignty. Are you able to rest like this?

Do you see that in v. 20, Paul says the thing that would make him ashamed would be if Christ was not honored in his body? How is that different from the things of which you are ashamed?

Think about the statement, "No one is ready to truly live until they are ready to die." Do you agree?

Dying is gain because Paul truly believes that being with Christ is far better than all the things he loses when he dies. Is dying gain for you?

There are many Christians who will claim that they are ready to die for Jesus, but they aren't prepared to live for him. For Paul to live is Christ. In other places, Paul speaks of being a slave of God (Romans 6:22). Are you prepared to give up your independence?

