

# PHILIPPIANS

## Living In Christ (1:12-26)

Notes: Week Two

### Philippians 1:12-26 (NIV)

#### Paul's Chains Advance the Gospel

<sup>12</sup> Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters,<sup>[a]</sup> that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. <sup>13</sup> As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard<sup>[b]</sup> and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. <sup>14</sup> And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear.

<sup>15</sup> It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. <sup>16</sup> The latter do so out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. <sup>17</sup> The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. <sup>18</sup> But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice.

Yes, and I will continue to rejoice,<sup>19</sup> for I know that through your prayers and God's provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance.<sup>[c]</sup> <sup>20</sup> I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. <sup>21</sup> For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. <sup>22</sup> If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! <sup>23</sup> I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; <sup>24</sup> but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. <sup>25</sup> Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, <sup>26</sup> so that through my being with you again your boasting in Christ Jesus will abound on account of me.

#### Footnotes:

- a. [Philippians 1:12](#) The Greek word for *brothers and sisters* (*adelphoi*) refers here to believers, both men and women, as part of God's family; also in verse 14; and in 3:1, 13, 17; 4:1, 8, 21.
- b. [Philippians 1:13](#) Or *whole palace*
- c. [Philippians 1:19](#) Or *vindication*; or *salvation*

## Philippians 1:12-26 (HCSB)

### Advance of the Gospel

<sup>12</sup> Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has actually resulted in the advance of the gospel, <sup>13</sup> so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard,<sup>[a]</sup> and to everyone else, that my imprisonment is in the cause of Christ. <sup>14</sup> Most of the brothers in the Lord have gained confidence from my imprisonment and dare even more to speak the message<sup>[b]</sup> fearlessly. <sup>15</sup> To be sure, some preach Christ out of envy and strife, but others out of good will.<sup>[c]</sup> <sup>16</sup> These do so out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the gospel; <sup>17</sup> the others proclaim Christ out of rivalry, not sincerely, seeking to cause me anxiety in my imprisonment.<sup>[d]</sup> <sup>18</sup> What does it matter? Just that in every way, whether out of false motives or true, Christ is proclaimed. And in this I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice <sup>19</sup> because I know this will lead to my deliverance<sup>[e]</sup> through your prayers and help from the Spirit of Jesus Christ. <sup>20</sup> My eager expectation and hope is that I will not be ashamed about anything, but that now as always, with all boldness, Christ will be highly honored in my body, whether by life or by death.

### Living Is Christ

<sup>21</sup> For me, living is Christ and dying is gain. <sup>22</sup> Now if I live on in the flesh, this means fruitful work for me; and I don't know which one I should choose. <sup>23</sup> I am pressured by both. I have the desire to depart and be with Christ—which is far better—<sup>24</sup> but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you. <sup>25</sup> Since I am persuaded of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith,<sup>26</sup> so that, because of me, your confidence may grow in Christ Jesus when I come to you again.

#### Footnotes:

- a. [Philippians 1:13](#) Lit *praetorium*, a Lat word that can also refer to a military headquarters, to the governor's palace, or to Herod's palace.
- b. [Philippians 1:14](#) Other mss add *of God*
- c. [Philippians 1:15](#) The good will of men, or God's good will or favor
- d. [Philippians 1:17](#) Lit *sincerely, intending to raise tribulation to my bonds*
- e. [Philippians 1:19](#) Or *vindication*

## Holman Christian Standard Bible - *Study Bible*<sup>1</sup>

### *Philippians 1:12-26*

**1:12** Paul's attitude was that both good and bad promoted **the gospel**. Advancement meant to blaze a trail (e.g., for an army). Paul's difficult circumstances opened new opportunities for gospel witness.

**1:13** The first opportunity (see [v. 12](#) and note) for gospel witness involved the **imperial guard**, an elite military force charged with protecting the Roman emperor and his concerns. As the soldiers rotated shifts, each heard Paul's message. Paul's **imprisonment** was for **Christ** (lit "a prisoner of Christ"). The guard knew that Paul's commitment to Christ had led to his arrest and imprisonment.

**1:14-17** The second opportunity for gospel witness involved the church itself. Responding to Paul's imprisonment, Christians divided into those who supported him and those who opposed him. Paul's imprisonment spawned renewed enthusiasm for preaching in both groups, but the group that opposed him preached the gospel out of **envy and strife**. They hoped to cause Paul greater difficulty, perhaps an unfavorable trial verdict. Their motivation was **rivalry**, intending to **cause... anxiety** by social turmoil. Paul does not say what drove the rivalry, but apparently they felt Christianity ought to have a different spokesperson than Paul. The group that supported Paul was motivated by **good will and love**. They realized Paul was **appointed** (lit "set") by God for defending the gospel, especially to Gentiles. Neither of these groups is identified. Both seem to have held correct doctrine and proclaimed Christ, yet their disparate treatment of Paul indicates that even "correct" believers can behave wrongly.

**1:18** Paul accepted the message and work of both groups. Trusting God's sovereignty, he refused to condemn improper motivations as long as, in the end result, **Christ was proclaimed**.

**1:19** Paul remained optimistic. **Deliverance** (lit "salvation") may recall Job's attitude ([Job 13:13-18](#)). Paul expected exoneration because Christianity was not illegal throughout the Roman Empire at this time. Paul hoped for **prayers**, the "human" side, and **help**, divine assistance. "Prayers" implies intense intercession. God answers prayers with help (lit "supply"), either something the Holy Spirit provides (a resource), or the presence of the Holy Spirit (the "Comforter"). The grammar of this verse joins "prayers" and "help," indicating Paul's dependence on both working together.

**1:20** **Ashamed** (lit "put to shame") implies cowering, running from battle, or embarrassment. Paul expected that **Christ would be highly honored** in his **body**. The physical body symbolizes earthly life. On earth, if Christ is not glorified in the body, He is not glorified at all. Further, Paul hoped Christ would also be glorified in his death.

**1:21-24** **Living is Christ** restates the theme of [verse 20](#). If he carried on living, every aspect of Paul's life would continue to reveal Christ, which would make his life **fruitful** and worthwhile. Likewise, his death would be **gain** since it would usher him into Christ's presence. Paul felt **pressured** (lit "in a dilemma"), acknowledging the benefits of both outcomes. The phrase **is more necessary for you** expresses Paul's servant heart. A selfish outlook would make Paul prefer glorification and reward (via death) over continued life and ministry, but his priority was that Christ be honored and glorified.

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1. Jeremy Royal Howard, ed., *HCSB Study Bible*, (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2010), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Phillippians 1".

## English Standard Version - Study Bible<sup>2</sup>

Philippians 1:12-26

**1:12-30 Paul's Reflections on His Imprisonment.** Paul assures the Philippians that, though he is imprisoned, the gospel is still advancing ([vv. 12-18](#)). He is joyfully confident that no matter what happens, he will be delivered and Christ will be honored, because to live is Christ and to die is gain ([vv. 19-26](#)). Paul then encourages his readers to walk worthy of the gospel, even amid suffering ([vv. 27-30](#)).

**1:12-18 Paul's Imprisonment Has Meant Progress for the Gospel.** Paul realizes that the Philippians are grieved over his imprisonment, so he encourages them by pointing out that his circumstances are furthering the proclamation of the gospel. His joy in difficult circumstances is meant to be an example to the Philippians to likewise rejoice even in difficult times. Further, Paul's charitable attitude toward fellow believers who make life hard for him is also to function as a model for the Philippians, since it is evident that there is some disunity in the congregation ([4:2-3](#)).

**1:12** The word Paul uses for the **advance** of the gospel (Gk. *prokopēn*) is the same word he will use in [v. 25](#) for the Philippians' "progress" in faith. He thus underscores the need to push God's kingdom forward rather than dwelling on past or present problems.

**1:13** The gospel has advanced because Paul has let the **whole imperial guard** (Gk. *praitōrion*) know that he is imprisoned only because of his testimony that Jesus is Lord. The Latin word *praetorium* could refer to a governor's residence and by extension those living in the residence. Those who believe that Paul wrote from Caesarea would understand the word in that sense here (see [Acts 23:35](#)). However, the word could also refer to the special guard of the emperor in Rome, as the translation above suggests. (See [Introduction: Date](#).)

**1:14** When the Christians in Rome, where Paul was imprisoned, saw his boldness even as his life was in danger, his example inspired them to be more courageous as well, so that they were **much more bold** in proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ.

**1:15-18** The identity of those here who **preach Christ from envy and rivalry** is difficult to determine. They are clearly antagonistic to Paul, and thus one could imagine they are the same "Judaizing" people mentioned in [ch. 3](#). But it is hard to see how Paul could **rejoice** in the proclamation of something (namely, a return to the old covenant) which he saw as a betrayal of the good news (see esp. the letter to the Galatians). It seems more likely that these were other Christians who preached a generally sound gospel but were personally at odds with Paul. They may have dismissed him because of his poor speaking abilities (see [1 Corinthians 1-2](#)) or his constant suffering and weakness (see 2 Corinthians); whatever their rationale, they were not motivated by **love** but only by a desire to harm Paul in some way. But Paul, like Jesus, is not concerned for his own interests (cf. [Phil. 2:4](#)), and he will "rejoice" as long as the gospel is progressing.

**1:19-26 To Live Is Christ.** Paul expresses the grounds of his confidence that he will be released from prison (see note on [vv. 12-30](#)). He assures the Philippians that he believes he will remain alive to minister to them.

**1:19** Paul, who has prayed for the Philippians, now solicits their **prayers** for **deliverance** (Gk. *sōtēria*), a term that could mean deliverance from prison (as some commentators understand it) or that could mean deliverance in the ultimate sense of eternal salvation (as others understand it). It seems likely that Paul intentionally left some ambiguity here, in light of the mention of his imprisonment in the preceding

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2. Lane T. Dennis, ed., *ESV Study Bible, The: English Standard Version*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossway Bibles, 2008), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, Under: "Philippians 1".

verses (see [vv. 12-14](#)) and in light of the eternal focus in the verses that follow (e.g., Paul’s desire “to depart and be with Christ, which is far better”; [v. 23](#)). The tension between temporal deliverance and eternal salvation is, in fact, evident throughout this passage ([vv. 19-26](#)), as evidenced by Paul’s words: “whether by life or by death” (in [v. 20](#)) and “I am hard pressed between the two” (in [v. 23](#)). Although Paul seems to have alluded to his temporal deliverance, clearly his longing for eternal salvation is “far better” ([v. 23](#)). In this regard, Paul alludes to [Job 13:13-18](#) in this passage, where Job clearly speaks of his final destiny; and Paul speaks of his hope of not being ashamed, which is elsewhere related to the final judgment (cf. [Rom. 5:4-5](#)). Either way, Paul wants the Philippians to know that even if his expected deliverance from prison fails to materialize, and he is executed, he will still be “saved” to eternal life by God.

**1:20** The crucial thing for Paul is not **life** or death. It is maintaining his faithful witness to Christ. **Or by death** indicates that Paul hopes to honor Christ even in the way he eventually dies.

**1:21** Paul’s life is not a matter of seeking his own comfort or advancement. It is all about seeking the advancement of Christ’s kingdom: **to live** is tantamount to serving **Christ**. In fact, **to die** should be seen as **gain**, because it would mean that Paul would be freed from his trouble-filled life on earth to rejoice in Christ’s presence.

**1:22-26** In light of [v. 21](#), Paul is **hard pressed** as to which outcome he should desire. Being with Christ now would be more attractive for him, while remaining alive (**in the flesh**) would enable him to help the Philippians further on their own spiritual journey. Since Paul knows that the way of Jesus is the way of service (cf. [2:5-11](#)), he is **convinced** that his own preferences will be put aside so that he can **remain and continue** with the Philippians for their **progress and joy in the faith**. Paul is not merely musing on his own crisis; he is giving the Philippians a model of the service-driven life.

**1:23** **My desire is to depart and be with Christ** indicates that when Christians die they are immediately with Christ, long before their bodies are raised from the dead (see note on [1 Cor. 15:23](#)).

## NLT Life Application Study Bible<sup>3</sup>

### *Philippians 1:12-26*

**1:12** In the past, missionaries—those who spread the Good News—boarded ships to go to foreign lands and did not expect to see their homeland shores again. Their good-byes were final, in terms of earth time. There was no turning back. While air travel, e-mail, and other technologies have made worldwide separation much easier, pioneering with the Good News still requires a high sacrifice. Paul’s passion was for others to discover the Good News of eternal life through Jesus Christ, no matter what the cost would be. Pressing through frontiers of spiritual darkness still requires pioneers today—people who will reach neglected people or new people groups. Pray for missionaries, support them, join them.

**1:12-14** Being imprisoned would cause many people to become bitter or to give up, but Paul saw it as one more opportunity to spread the Good News of Christ. Paul realized that his current circumstances weren’t as important as what he did with them. Turning a bad situation into a good one, he reached out to the Roman soldiers who made up the palace guard and encouraged those Christians who were afraid of persecution. We may not be in prison, but we still have plenty of opportunities to be discouraged—times of indecision, financial burdens, family conflict, church conflict, or the loss of our jobs. How we

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3. *Life Application Study Bible*, (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1988), *WORDsearch CROSS e-book*, 2015-2016.

act in such situations will reflect what we believe. Like Paul, look for ways to demonstrate your faith even in bad situations. Whether or not the situation improves, your faith will grow stronger.

**1:13** How did Paul end up in chains in a Roman prison? While he was visiting Jerusalem, some Jews had him arrested for preaching the Good News, but he appealed to Caesar to hear his case ([Acts 21:15-25:12](#)). He was then escorted by soldiers to Rome, where he was placed under house arrest while awaiting trial—not a trial for breaking civil law, but for proclaiming the Good News of Christ. At that time, the Roman authorities did not consider this to be a serious charge. A few years later, however, Rome would take a different view of Christianity and make every effort to stamp it out of existence. Paul's house arrest allowed him some degree of freedom. He could have visitors, continue to preach, and write letters such as this one. A brief record of Paul's time in Rome is found in [Acts 28:11-31](#). The "palace guard" refers to the elite troops housed in the emperor's palace.

**1:14** When we speak fearlessly for Christ or live faithfully for him during difficult situations, we encourage others to do the same. Be an encouragement by the way that you live.

**1:15-18** Paul had an amazingly selfless attitude. He knew that some were preaching to build their own reputations, taking advantage of his imprisonment to try to make a name for themselves. Regardless of the motives of these preachers, Paul rejoiced that the Good News was being preached. Some Christians serve for the wrong reasons. Paul wouldn't condone, nor does God excuse, their motives, but we should be glad if God uses their message, regardless of their motives.

**1:16** Paul could have become depressed, discouraged, or disillusioned. He could have wallowed in self-pity and despair. Instead, he regarded his imprisonment as being appointed by God. In fact, God had used Paul's imprisonment in Rome to bring the gospel to the center of the empire, as well as to give Paul lots of time to write letters that would one day end up in the New Testament and give us much teaching and encouragement. Do you have difficulty accepting your station in life? Do you resent where God has placed you? Although education and focused effort may enable us to take a new role or get a new job, often God puts us in a place to serve. Whether it is an actual prison or a place that feels like one, God wants you to serve him faithfully and joyfully.

**1:19-21** This was not Paul's final imprisonment in Rome. But he didn't know that. Awaiting trial, he knew he could either be released or executed. However, he trusted Christ to work it out for his deliverance. Paul's prayer was that when he stood trial, he would speak courageously for Christ and not be timid or ashamed. Whether he lived or died, he wanted to exalt Christ. As it turned out, he was released from this imprisonment but arrested again two or three years later. Only faith in Christ could sustain Paul in such adversity.

**1:20, 21** To those who don't believe in God, life on earth is all there is, and so it is natural for them to strive for this world's values: money, popularity, power, pleasure, and prestige. For Paul, however, to live meant to develop eternal values and to tell others about Christ, who alone could help them see life from an eternal perspective. Paul's whole purpose in life was to speak out boldly for Christ and to become more like him. Thus, Paul could confidently say that dying would be even better than living, because in death he would be removed from worldly troubles, and he would see Christ face to face ([1 John 3:2,3](#)). If you're not ready to die, then you're not ready to live. Make certain of your eternal destiny; then you will be free to serve—devoting your life to what really counts, without fear of death.

**1:24** Paul had a purpose for living when he served the Philippians and others. We also need a purpose for living that goes beyond providing for our own physical needs. Whom can you serve or help? What is your purpose for living?



# Life Essentials Study Bible<sup>4</sup>

A Principle to Live By  
Philippians #3: The Pure Gospel

*from Philippians 1:9-18*

**When evaluating various ministers and ministries, we should first of all consider what is being taught regarding the deity of Jesus Christ and how to be saved.**

We are not told who these people were who were proclaiming the message of Jesus Christ with “false motives” ([v. 18](#)) or in what way it caused trouble for Paul in his imprisonment. However, Paul would not be rejoicing if they were proclaiming a false gospel. He focused on the cross ([1Co 2:2](#)) and had no tolerance for those who insisted on works ([Gl 1:6-8](#)). The true gospel is that we are saved “by grace through faith” apart from any good works ([Eph 2:8-9](#)).

Though the bizarre and contradictory behavior of these so-called Christians caused Paul pain, he believed that his overall prison experience was a part of God’s design. Many were emboldened by his own witness for Christ in the midst of his suffering and were sharing the gospel. Though some had false motives, the important issue for Paul was that Christ was being proclaimed as the Messiah and Savior ([Ac 28:30-31](#)). If these individuals had denied that Jesus Christ was “the Word” who “became flesh,” he would certainly have joined the apostle John in rejecting their message ([Jn 1:1,14](#)).

## Reflection and Response

*Though certain ministers and ministries may agree on Christ’s deity, what false teachings might be grounds for withdrawing verbal and financial support?*

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4. Gene Getz, *Life Essentials Study Bible*, (Nashville, TN: Holman Bible Publishers, 2011), WORDsearch CROSS e-book, 1645.

A Principle to Live By  
Philippians #4: Eternal Values  
*from Philippians 1:18-26*

**As those who are free to worship God and communicate the gospel,  
we should maintain an eternal perspective.**

Most Christians who live in a free society cannot identify with Paul's dilemma or his perspective on life. While in prison, he did not know if he would live or die ([v. 20](#)). However, he knew with certainty that he would experience deliverance either way. If he were released from prison, he would be able to continue to proclaim the gospel and encourage believers to "grow in Christ Jesus" ([v. 26](#)). If he were executed, he knew that he would "be with Christ—which," he said, "is far better" ([v. 23](#)).

As Paul faced this uncertainty in his life, perhaps he was reflecting on the words of the psalmist: "For He will give His angels orders . . . to protect you in all your ways" ([Ps 91:11](#)). Or he may have been thinking about those three brave Hebrews who refused to bow down to Nebuchadnezzar's gold statue.

The majority of Christians in today's world do not face the prospect of martyrdom or even the various kinds of persecution the Philippians faced ([Php 1:29-30](#)). This, of course, is a great blessing since it's God's will that we be able to "lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity" ([1Tm 2:2](#)). However, we must not lose our perspective on why we are on this earth: to be "salt" and "light" in this world ([Mt 5:13-14](#)).

### **Reflection and Response**

*If we are living in an environment that is relatively free from persecution,  
what specific steps can we take to help us keep our eternal focus?*