

Philippians Series: Striving for the Prize

Beginning July 2017

July 2: Philippians 1:1 "Servants of Christ Jesus." Paul and Timothy introduce themselves not by meaningless formalities like we do in our letters. Their introduction is packed full of implication and purpose. They call themselves "servants" of Christ Jesus." But it's not the term for a hired household helper or a hired hand on a farm. The term Paul uses here means "slave." That was radical statement back then because slavery was a daily reality. What is Paul conveying here about the relationship between Jesus and his followers? Lots to learn.

July 9: Jim and Nancy will be on renewal leave. Yvonne Crump will be proclaiming the Word today. Pray that God would use her to bring a powerful, needed message. And be faithful to attend! Worship is not centered on the pastor, it's centered on God. God will be here today even though Jim won't be.

July 16: Philippians 1:2 "What's a True Saint Look Like?" I've heard it a hundred times when church people begin to describe themselves: "I'm no saint," they say. But Paul begs to differ with us. We make the mistake of comparing our performance to God's standard. Paul says sainthood isn't about performance; it's about God's faithfulness. He addresses the believers at Philippi as 'SAINTS.'" And it's not just the leaders he's addressing. We believe saints are those rare individuals who achieve the holiest of stature before God. That's NOT Paul's definition. Today we'll find out what a true saint looks like.

July 23: Philippians 1:2b 'The Grace and Peace of a Holy God.' Sometimes the words we skip right over in scripture contain the most powerful messages for our discipleship. That's definitely the case today with "grace" and "peace." Both come from God, and both are able to accomplish things in a human life that can't be accomplished any other way. Grace and peace at work in our lives account for revolutionary transformation the likes of which the world has never seen! Today we'll try to get beyond the words themselves to the reality of what God is doing in us as "Jesus followers." You and I have a choice to be people filled with grace and peace. I'm discovering it's a pretty awesome way to live.

July 30: Philippians 1:4-6 "The Foundations for Joyful, Confident Prayer." I haven't forgotten verse, 3. We'll return to that on Homecoming Sunday. Today and next week, we're going to focus on Paul's expression of joy and confidence through his prayers. Joy because, just a few short years ago, the Philippian people used to be a godless, hopeless, detestable people. Now, they've become solid, dependable partners in the faith! They're some of Paul's most trusted colleagues in sharing the Good News! Witnessing this miracle always begets joy. We'll talk about the essence of true joy in Christ today. Next week, we'll cover "confidence."

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August 6th: **Philippians 1:4-6** **"The Foundations for Joyful, Confident Prayer, Part 2"** Today we'll focus on Paul's confidence in the Philippians' faith. The crucial thing to focus on here is WHERE that confidence is placed. Paul is confident that the One who began a good work in them will be faithful to complete it! One piece of powerful truth we must remember as we walk the 'narrow way: God is in charge of our salvation and our sanctification! We need to stop stressing and start trusting. God requires faithfulness and obedience, period. Those two things, when we practice them according to God's design WILL bring about the results God promises. When we do our part, God will do his!

August 13: Homecoming Service: 10AM: Philippians 1:3: "Blessed Remembrance." "I thank my God upon every remembrance of thee." Today, we're going to pause and give thanks for all the saints who have gone before us. The foundation they have laid, the way they answered God's call, is the key to understanding how we, too can be faithful. Blessed remembrance of God's faithful response to his people in the past is a wonderful assurance that God will remain true to us as we seek to build his kingdom today!

August 20: Philippians 1:6 "The Day of Christ Jesus." What is Paul referring to here? What can we know for sure? How does this coming day bring blessed assurance to ease our anxious minds? Here's what we know:

1. Jesus will return to conquer and reclaim the world he made.
2. In the meantime he is always with us. Today we'll discover why His presence means everything.

August 27th: **Phil 1:7-8 "The Affection of Christ Jesus."** Today Paul celebrates the tie that binds the hearts of Christian believers together. What happens to the relationships of believers who are experiencing the transforming power of God's grace and peace? Paul gets specific with us so we can set the right goals for our lives together in Christ's body. What does his affection look like living and being expressed among us?

September 3, 10 and 17: Philippians 1:9-11. "Paul's Prayer for the Community of Faith" Make no mistake about it: Paul is praying for a miracle here! In a world wrought brokenness, woundedness and selfishness, Christ has laid out for Paul a remarkably different way to live; a way which he sees taking shape in the lives of the Philippian believers! The profound change in how we relate to God and each other is an amazing thing to watch! It's even more amazing to experience. That is the essence of Paul's prayer here. We'll take three weeks to unpack and apply it. Get ready to be challenged and convicted!

September 24: Philippians 1:12-14. "Why Bad Things Happen to Good People." We discover here today that Paul is not writing these incredible words of hope, challenge and victory from a seaside resort. He's writing from a prison cell. What Paul and Philippians knew was that he had been imprisoned precisely because of his faithfulness! Paul's attitude and insight teaches us a most difficult lesson about discipleship: SUFFERING has DIVINE PURPOSE. Today we'll see the irrefutable evidence of why this is true. Accepting the truth involves taking on God's eternal perspective about the days we spend on this earth, especially the days we suffer.