

- **\*READ Philippians 1:1-7\*** We might recall from our studies in Acts that this church that Paul established in the city of Philippi came about as a result of the Macedonian call of **Acts 16:9,10**. It seems that this was, in fact, the first church within the European region of that time. This happened around the year 50AD, and there is nearly unanimous agreement that Paul penned this letter around 10-12 years later between 60-62AD during his first Roman imprisonment.
- This letter ought to be read with a great tone of encouragement. Whereas we can see Paul clearly rebuking and chastising disciples in other locations such as Corinth and Galatia, here in this letter Paul is extremely positive and encouraging. This tone is found early on within the letter, and it is even found within the first seven verses that we read together just a few moments ago. Notice how positive and reassuring Paul is with these words.
  - ***"I give thanks to my God for every remembrance of you..." (1:3)***
  - ***"Always praying with joy for all of you in my every prayer because of your partnership in the Gospel from the first day until now..." (1:4)***
  - ***"I am sure of this, that He who started a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ..." (1:6)***
  - ***"Indeed, it is right for me to think this way about you, because I have you in my heart and you are all partners with me in grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the Gospel." (1:7)***
- Why would Paul feel the need to be so upbeat and confident about the good condition of this church? The answer seems simple...this was a solid church! They were generous. They had supported Paul, and they continued to support Paul even when things had become rough in his ministry. They had cared for Paul to the extent that they had sent Epaphroditus to go to Rome and minister to Paul. This was a church of strong faith, and it seems obvious that part of the purpose of this letter was for Paul to simply encourage them to allow for that good work of faith to be carried to completion within their lives.
- ***"I am sure of this, that He who started a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ."*** Paul seems to be very confident that these brethren could continue in their faithful works, and throughout the letter he lays out four keys that would help them to complete the good work of faith that was set before them by the Lord. Let's consider these great encouragements together this evening in hopes of ourselves coming away encouraged to all for our own works of faith to be brought to completion within our own lives as disciples of Christ.

## **4 Keys To Completing The Good Work Of Faith**

### **I. Be courageous! (1:12-30)**

#### **A. If anyone knew what it meant to be courageous, it was Paul!**

1. One of the aspects of this letter that ought to truly impress us is the fact that Paul writes to encourage these brethren when he himself is in the very precarious position of being bound in prison. He speaks beginning in **v.12** about the fact that what has happened to him has actually been done to the benefit of the Gospel. ***"What has happened to me has actually advanced the Gospel, so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard, and to everyone else, that my imprisonment is because I am of Christ."***
2. He goes on to state his belief that it was through his imprisonment that ***"most of the brothers have gained confidence in the Lord...and dare even more to speak the word fearlessly."*** Of course, there were some who spoke with poor motives of deny, rivalry, and selfish ambition, but Paul was only concerned with himself doing the right thing. ***"My eager expectation and hope is that I will not be ashamed about anything, but that now as always, with all courage, Christ will be highly honored in my body, whether by life or by death."*** Paul was surely courageous!

- B. He expected for the Philippians to be courageous, and the same expectation remains for us.
1. After speaking to his conflicting desires of going to be with Christ and remaining to be of service to his fellow brothers and sisters, Paul redirects the conversation towards those who were receiving this letter. Notice his admonitions for these disciples and how he expected for them to live as citizens of heaven.  
***"live your life worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or am absent, I will hear about you that you are standing firm in one spirit, in one accord, contending together for the faith of the gospel, not being frightened in any way by your opponents. This is a sign of destruction for them, but of your salvation—and this is from God. For it has been granted to you on Christ's behalf not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him, since you are engaged in the same struggle that you saw I had and now hear that I have." (1:27-30)***
  2. Paul speaks as if the sufferings that Christians experience because of their faiths ought to be expected, and he does that for a very good reason. That reason being that Jesus had told His Apostles that they and all who wore His Name would suffer for it. **(Matthew 10:21-25)** With this expectation, Paul encourages the Philippians to see their sufferings as an opportunity to be joined with Christ. Just as Jesus suffered and just as Paul was currently suffering...so too we ought to expect sufferings on behalf of our faith and prepare to face them head on with great courage knowing that even in our sufferings, the Gospel can be preached and advanced. If we want to remain strong and complete the good work of faith that has been started within our lives, then we must approach living out our faith with a heavy dose of courage.

## II. Embrace humility! (2:1-29)

### A. Completing the good work of faith demands humility.

1. As Paul continues through this letter, he now builds upon the idea of what Christ desires for them by considering what they ought to be able to find in Christ. In Christ there should be encouragement. There should be consolation of love. There should be fellowship with the Spirit. There should be affection and mercy. However, those things would only be realized and experienced if these brethren were willing to avoid doing anything out of selfish ambition or conceit. They had to live humbly and consider others as more important than themselves. ***"Everyone should look out not only for his own interests, but also for the interests of others." (2:34)***

### B. That great humility was first exemplified in Christ.

1. Paul not only demands humility, but he does so on the basis that this was the type of mindset and attitude that Jesus used to guide Him in everything that He did. Notice the humility and selflessness of Jesus that is to stand as our example.  
***"Adopt the same attitude as that of Christ Jesus..."***
  - Willingly gave up His divine form in heaven. **(v.6)**
  - Took on the form of man in the flesh. **(v.7)**
  - Offered up His life on the cross. **(v.8)**
2. If God was willing to sacrifice for men and women who had willingly set themselves up as enemies against Him because of their sinful rebellion **(Romans 5:6-11)**, then how could we do anything less than the same for our fellow man? Failure to have this attitude will hinder us from having the strong faith that is demanded in this life.

### C. Paul also showed great humility and expects for us to have the same mindset.

1. Paul himself was also a man of great humility for the fact that he was willing to serve his fellow disciples even if it landed him in prison like it had done presently. **(2:17)**
2. He also demanded that others (us included) would make sure that we worked to the completion of our faith with this same humble and selfless attitude. **(2:12-16)**

#### IV. Remain focused! (3:1-21)

##### E. Don't allow for false teachers to distract you!

1. Though the church in Philippi is believed to have been a church that was comprised mostly of Gentiles simply because historically there was not a large population of Jews in the city, there still seemed to be some negative Jewish influence present. This seems to be a proper conclusion based upon Paul's warnings in **3:2,3**. Paul warns these brethren to not allow for these *"evil workers"* to come in and cause for them to put their confidence in anything other than Christ Jesus.
2. Paul states of these "dogs" that they were ones who mutilated their flesh by cutting their bodies and believing that it had an actual affect upon their standing before God. Of these people, Paul warns to watch out so that their negative incidences might not draw away the focus of these disciples who were trying to stay focused on completing the good work of faith within their lives.
3. Paul even goes in depth at this point and speaks to his own background in these types of false beliefs, and he speaks to his faith that was now focused on Jesus and achieving to the point of being raised with Him in the last day. **(3:7-14)** Paul had taken his focus off of this false system of faith, and he had redirected his mind solely on possessing a faith in Christ which would lead to the righteousness of God. *"My goal is to know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death..." (3:10)*

##### F. Don't allow for earthly things to distract you!

1. Paul also gives attention in this chapter to the issue being distracted by things of this world which ties in very closely with the distractions of the false teachers. Speaking of those who were living as enemies of the cross of Christ **(3:18)**, Paul writes *"Their end is destruction; their god is their stomach; their glory is in their shame. They are focused on earthly things." (3:19,20)*
2. Probably speaking of these same false teachers who are referenced at the beginning of this chapter, Paul says that their focus on earthly things will eventually lead to their ruin for they would be judged in the end. Their focus on dietary laws and fleshly circumcision would be nothing but a waste because it meant nothing before God. Their focus was completely on the wrong things, and that earthly focus would be their undoing.

##### G. Keep your eyes firmly focused on your heavenly citizenship!

1. The efforts being put forth to complete the great work of faith that we have been created in Christ Jesus to do can be greatly helped by us being constantly reminded of the fact that our true citizenship rests in something beyond this world. Paul contrasts being focused on earthly things by reminding the disciples reading this letter that their citizenship is in heaven where our Savior is ruling at this very moment.
2. This is a reminder that our focus ought to be on doing whatever it is that will help for us to live in such a way that our bodies will be transformed from the humble bodies we have right now into those bodies that will resemble *"the likeness of His glorious body."* That great blessing is only reserved for those who have worked hard and completed the good work of faith, and that good work can be accomplished by working hard to keep our minds focused on the things of God.

#### III. Rejoice always! (4:4-20)

##### A. Joy in the Lord can sustain us through life's struggles.

1. Finally, we can be aided in our efforts to complete the good work of faith given to us by God in this life by having a mindset where we always find reason to rejoice. *"Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your graciousness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Don't worry about anything, but in everything, through prayer and petition with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus." (4:4-7)* For Paul to say that such a way of living is possible seems quite remarkable considering his own circumstances.

2. Remember, Paul is currently in Roman prison, and he thinks that this might even be the end for him considering what he says in chapter one. And yet, we find this man speaking to the fact that the life of Christians ought to be one that rejoices! How is this possible? It is possible when one focuses rejoicing in the Lord. ***“Rejoice in the Lord always.”*** It is the Lord that helped for Paul to have such a positive mindset, and it was the Lord who Paul recognized would strengthen him to do whatever he found himself needing to do. **(4:13)**

**B. Even in his difficulties, Paul found joy in his God and his brethren.**

1. Additionally and working with the previous point, the ability to rejoice has much to do with what we choose to focus on. Those people who seem to be the grumpiest and most ill-natured are almost always the same people who focus solely on the bad things that are happening in their lives. Therefore, it is no wonder that they’re always unhappy!
2. Conversely, those who seem to always be upbeat and happy are more than likely this who choose to focus on the good that is happening all around them. They are the people that focus on what is true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, and commendable. They are the people who take every situation and try to find a way in which they can give some appreciation to God for the good they observed or experienced.
3. Case in point? Consider Paul’s attitude towards the Philippian in **3:10-14**. Though Paul was in a tough place, he was able to rejoice and even find contentment in bad circumstances through the fact that it gave his brethren the opportunity to show their love for him. Hardly is there a better cause to rejoice than for a man’s friends to show up to help when everything else in the world seems to be against him.

Hopefully through our considerations in this letter to the Philippians, we have come to realize that this great opportunity to be involved in the good work of faith is absolutely possible through the four keys that we have seen that can be found throughout this letter. If we are willing to be courages, humble, focused, and joyful then we can be exactly as God would have us to be. Thankfully like Paul, we don’t have to do it on our own because we have brothers and sisters who are here ready and able to help us along the way to completing the good work of faith that we have been created in Christ Jesus to do.