

Paul's Prison Epistles

Study Guide

LESSON
FIVE

PAUL AND THE
PHILIPPIANS



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STUDY GUIDE

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How to use this lesson and study guide

- **Before you watch the lesson**
 - **Preparation** — Complete any recommended readings.
 - **Schedule breaks** — Review the outline and the time codes to determine where to begin and end your viewing session. IIM lessons are densely packed with information, so you may want to schedule breaks. Breaks should be scheduled at major divisions in the outline.
- **While you are watching the lesson**
 - **Notes** — Use the Notes section to follow the lesson and to take additional notes. Many of the main ideas are already summarized in the notes, but make sure to supplement these with your own notes. You should also add supporting details that will help you to remember, describe, and defend the main ideas.
 - **Pause/replay portions of the lesson** — You may find it helpful to pause or replay the video at certain points in order to write additional notes, review difficult concepts, or discuss points of interest.
- **After you watch the lesson**
 - **Review Questions** — Questions on the basic content of the lesson. Answer review questions in the space provided. Review questions should be completed individually rather than in a group.
 - **Application Questions** — Questions relating the content of the lesson to Christian living, theology, and ministry. Application questions are appropriate for written assignments or as topics for group discussions. For written assignments, it is recommended that answers not exceed one page in length.

Preparation

- Read the book of Philippians.

Outline

- I. Introduction (0:26)
- II. Background (2:22)
 - A. Relationship (3:33)
 - B. Suffering in Prison (8:41)
 - C. Conditions in Philippi (17:11)
 - 1. Concern for Paul (17:49)
 - 2. Problems for the Church (22:03)
- III. Structure and Content (28:53)
 - A. Salutation (29:43)
 - B. Thanksgiving (31:10)
 - C. Prayer (32:22)
 - D. Body (33:12)
 - 1. Paul's Perseverance (34:55)
 - 2. Exhortations to Persevere (39:14)
 - 3. Affirmation of Perseverance (53:23)
 - E. Final Greetings (55:34)
- IV. Modern Application (57:01)
 - A. Nature of Perseverance (58:17)
 - 1. Definition (58:40)
 - 2. Necessity (1:2:11)
 - 3. Assurance (1:4:15)
 - B. Mindset of Perseverance (1:6:49)
 - 1. Humility (1:7:16)
 - 2. Optimism (1:16:49)
 - 3. Joy (1:20:06)
 - C. Ministry of Perseverance (1:24:00)
- V. Conclusion (1:29:44)

Notes

I. Introduction

II. Background

A. Relationship

Paul had planted the church in Philippi during his second missionary journey, around the year A.D. 49 or 50.

In Philippi, Paul:

- Gained his first European convert
- Was jailed for an exorcism
- Led the Philippian jailer to a profession of faith in Christ

The church was poor and not always able to help Paul financially. But, when they had opportunity, they gave to him generously.

Paul referred to the Philippians as his “dear friends” (2:12, 4:1)

B. Suffering in Prison

Paul often suffered greatly. He did not always bear up well under these hardships. At times, he was depressed, even despairing.

Paul spoke frequently of death as welcome relief from his suffering.

Paul’s circumstances were so oppressive that the benefits of being with Christ outweighed:

- His desire to continue in ministry
- His hatred for death itself

Paul was not absolutely convinced that he would die.

C. Conditions in Philippi

1. Concern for Paul

As soon as the Philippians were able, they demonstrated their concern by sending:

- A gift to meet Paul's earthly needs
- Epaphroditus to deliver the gift and minister to Paul

Epaphroditus delivered a report to Paul expressing the Philippians' fear that:

- Paul was being persecuted by other believers
- A threat of death hung over his head

The Philippians were worried that Paul might die, whether through assassination or public execution.

2. Problems for the Church

a. Persecution

After Paul planted the church in Philippi, he encountered great resistance from Jews in Thessalonica.

The church was truly suffering at the hands of unbelievers.

b. False Teachings

Paul prepared the Philippians to reject false teaching.

Paul may have been concerned about:

- Heresies that had threatened the churches in Colosse and the other cities of the Lycus Valley.
- Christian Judaizers from Jerusalem (see Gal.2:11-21; Rom. 4:9-17)

c. Conflicts

The Philippians struggled with conflicts among believers within the church.

Paul exhorted two women, who seem to have been unable to resolve their differences, to reconcile.

Paul spent a substantial amount of his letter emphasizing the importance of unity and love in the church.

III. Structure and Content

A. Salutation (1:1-2)

Paul is the primary author of the letter. The letter also comes from Timothy.

Philippians is Paul's only letter that never calls explicit attention to his apostolic authority.

B. Thanksgiving (1:3-8)

Paul presents a fairly standard statement of thanks, speaking of:

- The joy the Philippians have brought to him
- His expectations for their ultimate salvation

C. Prayer (1:9-11)

Paul's prayer is packed with statements that reflect the emphasis of the entire letter:

- Make proper judgments
- Perform good works
- Persevere in faith and practice
- Bring glory and praise to God

D. Body (1:12-4:20)

Paul let the Philippians know how much he loved them and how thankful he was for their friendship and ministry.

1. Paul's Perseverance (1:12-26)**a. Present Ministry (1:12-18a)**

Paul persevered by finding reasons to be joyful despite his suffering.

b. Future Deliverance (1:18b-21)

Paul focused on the possibility that he might eventually be released from prison.

c. Future Ministry (1:22-26)

Paul looked to the possibility of a future ministry to the Philippians as a source of joy.

2. Exhortations to Persevere (1:27-4:9)

Paul instructed the Philippians to remain faithful to Christ and to live exemplary lives even in the midst of distressing circumstances.

a. Importance of Perseverance (1:27-2:18)

God had planned the Philippians' sufferings as a means of blessing them.

Paul wanted the Philippians to rejoice in the midst of suffering because of the blessings it produces.

b. Help for Perseverance (2:19-30)

It is much easier to endure suffering when we have real people helping us on a daily basis, and suffering right alongside us.

Paul sent Epaphroditus back to them in order to ease their minds as well as to minister to them.

Paul planned to send Timothy to Philippi.

Paul hoped that he would be released from prison, and would come to minister to the Philippians.

c. Examples of Perseverance (3:1-16)

Paul was a positive example of perseverance in the faith:

- Mindset
- Behavior

Paul refused to rely on his earthly merits. He depended only on Christ's merit, which God credited to him by means of faith.

We must maintain our faith and live holy lives, or else we prove our faith to be false.

Professing faith is not enough — we must prove our faith by persevering.

d. Challenges to Perseverance (3:17-4:9)

Paul encouraged the Philippians not to falter in their faithfulness to God because of:

- False teachers
- Conflict within the church
- Personal hardship

True believers within the church could present challenges to the perseverance of other believers.

Believers should ask God to relieve their anxieties.

3. Affirmation of Perseverance (4:10-20)

Paul loved the Philippians with all his heart. Their gift encouraged him.

E. Final Greetings (4:21-23)

The mention of believers within Caesar's household demonstrates that Paul's imprisonment had not hindered his gospel ministry.

IV. Modern Application

A. Nature of Perseverance

1. Definition

True faith and righteous living

All Paul's human status and good works were useless for obtaining true righteousness and salvation.

As long as we continue to rely solely upon Christ's merit for our righteousness, we are persevering, standing firm in our faith.

2. Necessity

If we fail to maintain true faith:

- We will not be found in Christ
- Therefore, we will not be resurrected to a life of eternal glory

If we do not persevere in righteous living, we prove ourselves to be unbelievers, and we will not be saved.

3. Assurance

In light of assurance:

- Paul's teachings on perseverance are not a threat to believers
- They are a comfort

Every true believer will certainly persevere in both faith and righteous living, so that our salvation is guaranteed.

God controls our hearts and minds for his good purpose.

- This includes perseverance.
- There is no way we can fail to stand firm until the end.

B. Mindset of Perseverance**1. Humility**

Paul had every reason to be humble before God. By accepting this reality, he prepared himself to be built up by God.

Paul patterned his own mindset after the mindset of Jesus, who willingly humbled himself in order to obtain God's blessings for himself and for us.

Some scholars have suggested the Philippians 2:6-11 is a portion of a hymn that was known in the church before Paul wrote to the Philippians.

Philippians 2:6-11 describes Christ during three stages of history:

- His pre-incarnate state
- His humiliation
- His exaltation

Humility helps us persevere in righteous living and faith.

2. **Optimism**

Paul's optimism — a conscious decision to focus his attention on those things that were truly good instead of those things that were truly bad.

While Paul was being troubled by insincere preachers of the gospel:

- He focused on the blessing that Christ was being preached
- Not on the preachers' evil motives

Focusing on the good and fighting against anxiety and discouragement is a means of calling on God to guard our hearts and minds.

3. Joy

Paul concentrated on finding joy in order to persevere through his distressing circumstances.

Paul encouraged the Philippians to be joyful because the Lord was near as:

- Their help in time of need
- The king who would return to bring his reign of peace to all the earth

C. Ministry of Perseverance

The Philippians' gift somewhat alleviated Paul's suffering, so that persevering became a bit easier.

The Philippians ministered to Paul through their love and encouragement.

We may help others persevere by:

- Spending time with people
- Helping them with their physical needs

V. Conclusion

9. Summarize three aspects of the nature of perseverance mentioned in this lesson.

10. Explain three characteristics of the proper mindset of perseverance.

11. In what ways does the church express the ministry of perseverance?

12. How should the modern church apply Paul's teachings about perseverance?

Application Questions

1. Paul wrestled between his desire to depart and be with Christ, and his continued usefulness in ministry on this earth. How can knowing that God has a purpose for each of us on this earth help you to persevere?
2. Paul had many friends in Philippi who ministered to him, which brought him great encouragement. Has anyone ministered to you in a time of need? What impact did that have, and how did it help you persevere?
3. How can our salvation be both secure in Christ (John 3:36; John 17:3; Eph. 1:13-14; Rom. 3:22-24), yet still depend upon our perseverance in faith?
4. Paul's optimism in the midst of discouragement and suffering helped him to persevere. How does the cultivation of a thankful heart to God help in perseverance?
5. How can rejoicing in the Lord and praying about our anxieties bring us peace and help us persevere?
6. How can pride hinder our perseverance?
7. What is the most significant insight you have learned from this study?