

Insights From Philippians

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Insights From Philippians

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Introduction

One of the ways I've been studying the Word of God is by making a list of everything that each book of the Bible teaches. This has resulted in more than a thousand pages of material. Although it's interesting and I've learned a lot from writing it, that's a lot of bullet points to read through!

The purpose of this book is to extract the most interesting insights from that massive list. This isn't intended to summarize each book of the Bible because that's what my "Chapter Summary of the Bible" is for. It's also not intended to list the major points of each book because you're probably already familiar with them. Finally, it's not intended to offer in-depth commentary because that's what my regular commentary is for. This book is simply a collection of points that I found interesting.

I hope there's some material here that you find edifying.

Jon Cooper
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Philippians

- This letter was written by both Paul and Timothy (Philippians 1:1).
- Paul identified himself as a servant of Jesus Christ. He didn't emphasize or even mention his apostleship (Philippians 1:1). He showed a great deal of humility.
- Paul addressed this letter to the saints (Christians), bishops (elders), and deacons. There's not a single letter in the New Testament that's addressed to the pastor of the church. The Bible teaches that *elders* are the head of the local church, not the pastor. In Acts 11:30 money was sent to the elders instead of the pastor. In Acts 14:23 Paul ordained elders instead of pastors in every church. In Acts 15:2 Paul was sent to Jerusalem to talk to the elders and not to the pastor – and there are *many* more examples of this. You can find many references to elders leading the church in the New Testament, but there are *no* references to pastors leading it. The only mention of pastors is found in Ephesians 4:11, which groups them with teachers. The modern position of pastor has no Biblical support! (Does the flock of God need shepherds? Of course – but *nowhere* does the Bible teach that the congregation is supposed to be overseen by the *pastor*. Modern pastors have taken upon themselves a job that doesn't belong to them.)
- It's good to pray for a church, even if that church is far away and you don't attend it (Philippians 1:4).
- God has started a good work in us but He hasn't finished it yet (Philippians 1:6). The work which God has started in our lives will be finished when the Lord Jesus Christ returns.

- Paul wrote this letter while he was in prison (Philippians 1:7).
- Paul had a deep love for the churches. He cared about them, he wrote to them, he tried to help them, and he wanted to visit them in person (Philippians 1:8).
- Paul prayed that the love of the church would be rooted in knowledge and good judgment, not in ignorance or compromise or sin (Philippians 1:9).
- Churches should exercise judgment by making sure they only approve of things that are excellent (Philippians 1:10).
- Paul didn't tell the church that as long as they didn't compromise the core doctrines of salvation they would be fine. Instead the standard was to be blameless and without offense in the sight of God (Philippians 1:10).
- Paul viewed Christianity as a race that we run until the Lord Jesus Christ returns. At that point the race is over and our work is done (Philippians 1:10).
- We bear fruit for the praise and glory of God, not for ourselves (Philippians 1:11).
- Being imprisoned doesn't always hinder the spread of the gospel (Philippians 1:12). God used Paul's imprisonment to advance the gospel.
- Paul never refers to anyone as "pastor so-and-so" or "reverend so-and-so" or "father so-and-so". There's no Biblical support for those titles! Instead Paul calls them his brothers (Philippians 1:14).
- There are some people who proclaim the truths of the gospel in order to hurt Christians and oppress them

(Philippians 1:16).

- Paul didn't object when Christ was preached out of bad motives. Instead he rejoiced that Christ was being preached. Paul was bothered by bad theology but not by bad motives, because when people preached with bad motives the truth was still being preached (Philippians 1:16-18).
- Paul believed that the prayers of the Philippian church would help him remain faithful to the gospel (Philippians 1:19-20).
- Paul wanted to magnify Christ by his life and his death (Philippians 1:20).
- For Christians, the point of living is to glorify Christ (Philippians 1:21).
- When a Christian dies it's not a loss for him, but is instead a source of gain (Philippians 1:21-23). The reason dying is a gain for Christians is because leaving this world and being with Christ is better than anything this world has to offer.
- Those who have died aren't experiencing "soul sleep", or remaining unconscious until the resurrection. Instead they're with Christ (Philippians 1:23).
- Paul didn't believe that going to Heaven would make him more useful to the Philippian church. He didn't teach that the saints in Heaven are praying for the church, or are interceding with Jesus on their behalf, or are doing anything for the benefit of the church. Instead he taught that in order to help he had to remain "in the flesh" (Philippians 1:22-24). This means those who are alive can help the church, but those who are dead cannot.

- Paul didn't want the church to achieve unity through compromise or pragmatism. Instead he wanted them to find unity in the truth of the gospel, and to be unified because they were of one mind about it (Philippians 1:27).
- The adversaries of the church shouldn't make us afraid. When the church isn't afraid, that's a sign to our adversaries that they're going to Hell (Philippians 1:28).
- Paul told the Philippian church that suffering was part of Christianity. He didn't hide that from them or tell them there was something they could do to avoid it. Instead he taught that suffering was from the hand of God and they needed to endure it. In fact, Paul said that in his case it had furthered the gospel (Philippians 1:12, 29-30).
- There is consolation in Christ (Philippians 2:1).
- We shouldn't do things to bring glory to ourselves (Philippians 2:3).
- We should esteem others as being better than ourselves (Philippians 2:3).
- We should be aware of the problems of other Christians and do what we can to help them (Philippians 2:4). God has given Christians the responsibility of caring for one another.
- It was not wrong for Jesus to say that He was equal to God (Philippians 2:6).
- Christians should follow the example of Jesus. Just as He humbled Himself and took on the form of a servant, so we should as well (Philippians 2:6-7).
- The reason God highly exalted Jesus was because He

humbled Himself and was obedient to death (Philippians 2:8-9).

- God has given Jesus a name that's above every name (Philippians 2:9).
- One day every single person will confess that Jesus is Lord. This includes all atheists and pagans, and all those who hate God (Philippians 2:10-11). This doesn't mean that they will be saved – only that, in the end, everyone will be forced to bow down before Jesus.
- Paul says that we must work out our own salvation, but he also says that God is the one who works in us (Philippians 2:12-13). That means we need to strive to be obedient, but at the same time God is working in us to make us obedient. Paul doesn't say that we should do nothing and wait while God works within us. Instead he tells us to fear the Lord and actively seek to obey Him.
- A church which has disputes isn't blameless in the sight of God (Philippians 2:14-15).
- Paul didn't think it was unreasonable to tell the church to be blameless. He didn't think that blamelessness was a ridiculous standard that was obviously impossible for any church to meet! He also never said that since no church was blameless, churches should do the best they could and that would be fine (Philippians 2:15). Instead he commanded churches to be blameless, the sons of God without rebuke.
- Christians must shine as lights in the world (Philippians 2:15). In order to do that we must be different from the world. Specifically, we must live blameless lives in the midst of an evil world.

- The gospel is the word of life (Philippians 2:16).
- Paul consistently teaches that the rapture is the finish line for the race that we're currently running (Philippians 2:16).
- Paul looked at martyrdom as a sacrifice where he was being offered (Philippians 2:17).
- Paul didn't think the prospect of being a martyr was unfair, or that it was cruel of God to put him through that. Instead he was willing to die for the sake of the church (Philippians 2:17).
- Even though Paul was in prison, and even though he was being persecuted, he still wanted to know the state of the Philippian church (Philippians 2:19).
- Paul said that Timothy was the only person he knew who cared for the Philippian church as much as he did (Philippians 2:20).
- Sometimes when God heals a person it's an act of mercy toward someone else, who would have been filled with sorrow if that person had died (Philippians 2:27).
- Paul didn't say that God owed healing to Epaphroditus, or that it was natural to expect God to heal him. He didn't teach that being sick comes from a lack of faith or that we can always be healed if we have enough faith. Instead he said that healing was an act of mercy from God (Philippians 2:27).
- The reason Epaphroditus nearly died was because he was trying to meet the needs of Paul – needs that the Philippian church had neglected. That means his terrible illness was actually their fault (Philippians 2:27-30).

- The church leadership needs to warn people in very clear terms about dangers which can harm them (Philippians 3:2).
- It's better to have Christ than to have the riches and honor of this world (Philippians 3:8).
- Paul's conversion brought great suffering into his life. It didn't make his life easier or increase his wealth. Instead it cost him everything (Philippians 3:8-11). In spite of that, Paul thought it was worth it. Why? Because he wanted to be resurrected. Paul taught that the *resurrection* made all the suffering worthwhile. He actually went so far as to say that if there's no resurrection then there's no hope and "we are of all men most miserable" (1 Corinthians 15:16-19).
- Eternal life is so valuable that it's worth losing everything else in order to obtain (Philippians 3:11).
- Paul didn't claim to have achieved perfection. Instead he continually sought to become more faithful to God (Philippians 3:12).
- Even though Paul understood that Jesus was the one who saved him and that Jesus would one day resurrect him, Paul didn't take that for granted or use that as an excuse to live a sinful life. Instead he continually worked to become a better servant of Jesus (Philippians 3:12-14).
- Paul believed there was a prize waiting for those who were faithful to the high calling of God, and he wanted to win it (Philippians 3:14).
- Our current physical body is vile in comparison to the one Jesus will give us at the rapture (Philippians 3:20-21).

- The Bible doesn't say that Jesus will give us an entirely different body. Instead it teaches that when Jesus returns He will transform the body that we currently have (Philippians 3:21).
- The resurrection is part of Christ's work to subdue all things unto Himself (Philippians 3:21).
- It's not wrong to tell other Christians that you take great joy in them (Philippians 4:1).
- Paul called the Philippian church “dearly beloved” twice in a single verse (Philippians 4:1). This is the same church that failed to meet his needs (which nearly killed Epaphroditus). It's clear that Paul loved them in spite of that failure.
- Paul didn't teach that since we're going to Heaven we can live as we please. Instead he said that since the Lord is coming we must stand fast (Philippians 4:1). The Lord's return should motivate us to obedience and faithfulness!
- When Euodias and Syntyche disagreed, Paul didn't tell them to major on the majors and minor on the minors. He also didn't say they should compromise, or find common ground, or agree to disagree. Instead he told them to be of the same mind in the Lord (Philippians 4:2).
- There were women who labored with Paul in the gospel (Philippians 4:3).
- Paul said we should make our requests known to God, but he didn't say God would give us everything we asked for. Instead he said God would give us peace (Philippians 4:6-7).
- We should think on things that are good, virtuous, and

pure (Philippians 4:8).

- Paul said if the church obeyed his teachings then God would be with them. This implies that if they rejected his teachings then God wouldn't be with them (Philippians 4:9). The teachings of the apostles had authority from the very beginning! The canon of the New Testament wasn't established by some council centuries later. Instead the letters of the apostles were considered binding immediately – by both the apostles and by the churches who received them.
- Christians should be content regardless of their circumstances (Philippians 4:12). We don't need the riches of this world in order to be content.
- It's not a sin to have a life that abounds in blessings and prosperity. God doesn't require Christians to take a vow of poverty and suffering (Philippians 4:12).
- When Paul said that we can do all things through Christ who strengthens us (Philippians 4:13), he was talking to a persecuted church about being content in the midst of terrible suffering and poverty.
- When Paul left Macedonia, the only church that wrote to him about meeting his needs was the Philippian church (Philippians 4:15).
- Whenever Paul talked about giving and receiving, he never mentioned tithing. Paul never suggested in any of his letters that Christians should tithe.
- Paul was grateful for the gift that the church sent him, but it wasn't because he wanted their money. Instead Paul wanted to see them bear fruit. (Philippians 4:17).
- There were Christians who were part of Caesar's

household (Philippians 4:22).

- Paul didn't think it was meaningless to send his greetings to others, because he regularly did that in his letters.