



He Who Began a Good Work Will Complete It

Philippians 1

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Introduction: Paul's letter to the Philippians begins with his thankfulness for their partnership in the gospel "from the first day until now." He recognizes their status as saints before the Lord, expresses his confidence that God is at work among them, articulates his own affection for them, and prays for their spiritual improvements. Surprisingly, Paul informs them that his imprisonment has actually served to advance the gospel. Though it has caused him to contemplate the reality of his own mortality, Paul anticipates being released with the aim of resuming his ministry among them. The appropriate response in this ongoing partnership is for the Philippians to live lives worthy of the gospel.

01. Our partnership in the gospel is premised on the sovereign grace of God who mercifully delivers us from the penalty of our sins and graciously bestows on us the righteousness of Christ.

02. Our partnership in the gospel includes our affectionate desires for one another and involves our ongoing commitment to grow together in knowledge and sanctification.

03. Our partnership in the gospel may include seasons when the gifts we bring to the body are not highlighted in ways we expect, but our longing should be to put the gospel first.

04. Our partnership in the gospel often requires some to serve the needs of the body at the expense of their own desires, so our response should be to put the gospel into action.

PARTNERSHIP IN THE GOSPEL [FOUR STUDIES IN PHILIPPIANS]

1. The origins of the church in Philippi are found in Acts 16:11-40. Notice how prayer and caring about others led to conversations about the gospel and ultimately conversions to Christ. Are you currently praying for people in your sphere of influence to hear the gospel and receive Christ as their savior? Are you mindful of the needs of people around you so you can meet their needs and point them to the Savior? How does this account encourage us to believe that God can overcome every obstacle to the gospel?

2. Philippians 1:6 is often (and rightly) used as a text confirming the doctrine of eternal security for the individual believer. In its context, however, Paul was addressing the church body. He assured the congregation that God would complete what He had started. How does this passage encourage you to value the people and ministries at Northpoint?

3. How does Paul's attitude differ with regard to those who preach Christ from rivalry and envy (1:15) and those who preach a different gospel altogether (Galatians 1:6-9)? What accounts for this difference in attitude? What lessons can we draw with regard to various styles of preaching so long as the message itself is sound?

4. Discuss the implications of Paul's statement: "For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (1:21) as it relates to our lives today. How can we live for Christ in the ordinary moments? How can we say (without being morbid or sappy) that to die is gain? What gains will we have in heaven that we do not possess here? In what way do both aspects of this passage help us to live life to its fullest?

5. What do you make of the phrase "it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake" (1:29)? In what way is suffering a gift for believers? How do our sufferings set us apart from the world? How can believers encourage one another in their sufferings?

For Further Reading: Dietrich Bonhoeffer, *Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Christian Community* (HarperOne, 2009; first English edition, 1954).

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