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## #DiscipleshipTuesday



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# Live With Confidence in Christ

Philippians 1:6-30

**Unit Theme:**

Maturing in Christ  
(Philippians)

**Central Truth:**

Christ desires Christians to live with complete confidence in Him.

**Focus:**

Know we can live confidently in Christ and rejoice in this assurance.

**Context:**

Paul's letter to the Philippian church was written near the end of his imprisonment in Rome.

**Golden Text:**

"Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6).

**Study Outline:**

- I. Confident of Maturing  
(Phil. 1:6-11)
- II. Confident of the Gospel  
(Phil. 1:12-18)
- III. Confident About the Future  
(Phil. 1:21-28)

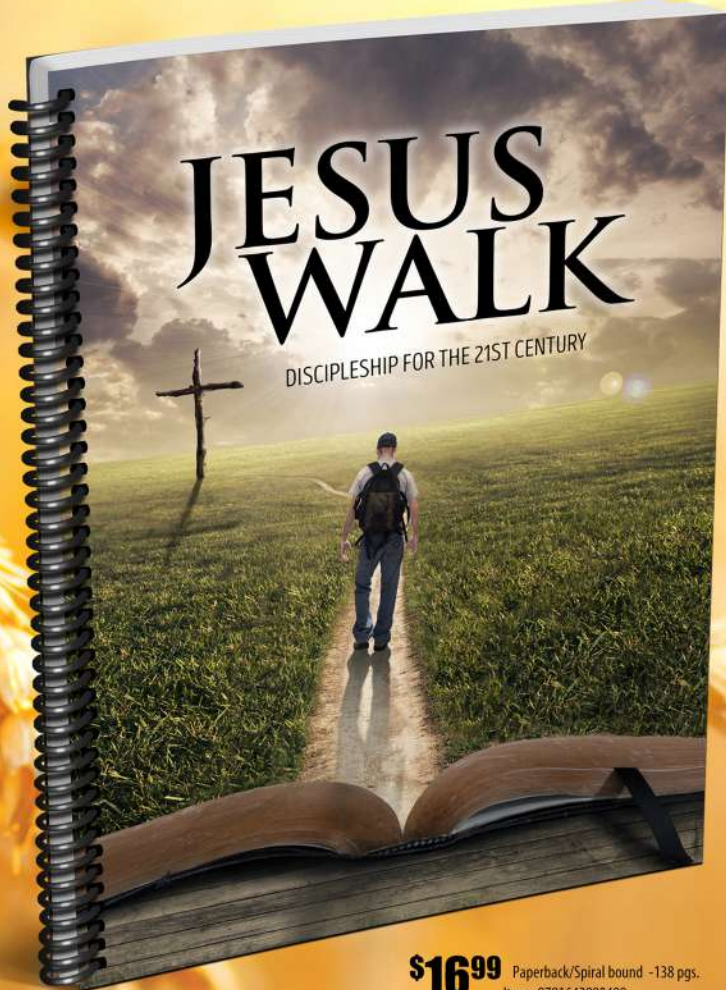
**INTRODUCTION**

The church in Philippi was the first congregation Paul organized in Europe (Philippi being in Macedonia of Greece), and it was there he was imprisoned for preaching the gospel and then set free by an earthquake (Acts 16:25-26). In the opening verses of Paul's epistle to the Philippians, he recounts his association with them and their conduct. The Philippians supported Paul with their prayers and finances while he carried out his missionary activities (see 2 Cor. 11:9). Hence, every remembrance of them brought him thanksgiving and joy (Phil. 1:3-4). He remembered their conversion (v. 6) and their subsequent thoughtfulness on various occasions (4:15-18). Paul was grateful to God for all their help. He thanked them for their joint participation with him in the great missionary enterprise "from the first day until now" (1:5).

Paul was confident of the Philippians' further spiritual growth, so he prayed with confidence for them (v. 6). Paul's confidence was not based on his own ability or persuasiveness but on the working of God among the Philippians. God began the work in the Philippian church and by His nature if He starts something, He will bring it to completion. It is evident that Paul could easily move between the tensions of human agency and divine initiative, accepting both in a natural way. The Philippians had a partnership with Paul, but God actually worked it in them.

The apostle wrote this letter to the Philippians while he was a prisoner in Rome. Despite Paul's circumstances, the letter is filled with joy and victory. G. Campell Morgan called this book a "singing letter, a love letter." It is a personal letter from an older man who remembers with fondness a body of believers who meant much to his life.

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I. CONFIDENT OF MATURING (Phil. 1:6-11)

A. Ongoing Good Work (vv. 6-7)

**6. Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:**

**7. Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace.**

While Paul rejoiced in the spiritual growth of the Philippian, as marked by their generosity, his confidence was not in the Philippians themselves but in God, who would preserve them and enable them to reach His goal for them. The source of Paul's confidence was the faithfulness of God to accomplish His will. Marcus Bockmuel commented, "Paul's confidence is not in the Christianity of the Christians, but in the God-ness of God, who is supremely trustworthy, able, and committed to finish the work He has begun" (*The Epistle to the Philippians*).

The Greek phrase *en hymon*, translated in the KJV as "in you," could also be translated as "among you." God was not only at work *in* the Philippians individually, but also *among* them in a corporate manner; that is, in the community as a whole.

What is the "good work" Paul refers to in verse 6? It is not the generous gifts of the Philippians to support Paul's evangelistic effort. Rather, it is the work of salvation God was carrying out in the church. It was God who initiated and produced their transformed lives, and Paul was confident that God would continue this work until Christ's return, bringing it to completion on the final day.

As the Philippians experienced, each of us who accepts the gospel of Christ is given a new beginning. Our salvation is in progress, and it will not be completed until the day that we see Christ face-to-face. Salvation starts and ends with God.

Paul's designation of salvation as "a good work" was probably intended to underscore its ethical dimension (cf. Rom. 2:7; 2 Cor. 9:8; Col. 1:10). For Paul, salvation must result in transformed lives; otherwise, it is not worthy of its name.

In verse 7 of the text, Paul describes the basis of his attitude toward the Philippians. He had them in his heart because they had become his fellow partakers or participants in grace. Paul probably had in mind not only the financial support that the Philippians provided for his ministry but also their own participation in affliction. The Philippians defended and confirmed the gospel through their support for Paul's ministry and by standing firm in the face of persecution by the Roman Empire.

**Talk About It:**

1. What can believers be confident about (v. 6)?
2. How does verse 7 describe the Philippian Christians' relationship with Paul?

"God dwells in eternity, but time dwells in God. He has already lived all our tomorrows as He has lived all our yesterdays."

—A. W. Tozer

B. Abounding Affection (vv. 8-11)

**8. For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.**

**9. And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment;  
10. That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;  
11. Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.**

**Talk About It:**

1. Of what did Paul say God could “testify” (v. 8 NIV)?
2. What did Paul pray would happen “more and more” (v. 9)?
3. What does it mean to “approve things that are excellent” (v. 10)?
4. What brings “glory and praise” to God (v. 11)?

Paul’s love for the Philippian church was by “the affection of Jesus Christ” (v. 8 NKJV), with whom Paul was in vital union. He loved the Philippians with the same affection Christ had for them. The indwelling Christ loved the Philippians through Paul.

In verses 9-11, Paul prays for the Philippians. His genuine thanks for the Philippian saints caused him to pray for their continued spiritual progress. Concern for others should express itself first in prayer.

Having assured the Philippians that he was praying for them in verse 4, Paul now sheds light on the content of his intercession on their behalf. Paul’s prayers always provide an important clue to his theology. His prayer in this passage, as in others, is not for something that he expects or hopes to happen only in the future. Instead, he holds it forth as a present possibility, the effects of which are to continue through the believers’ lives. This is important as it shows the “already” and “not yet” aspects of Christian life. Although the Philippians are already experiencing the benefits of salvation, God’s work in them will not be complete “till the day of Christ” (v. 10).

Moreover, Paul prays that their love will abound more and more, and as it does, they will be able to discern what is of greatest importance (v. 9). Love must be intelligent and morally discerning. Christian love is like an active ingredient dropped into our lives, so that the more of it we have, the more of knowledge and discernment we are also likely to have. We are thereby made more sensitive to God and to others.

Paul’s vocabulary in verse 10 deserves some attention. He uses words that have ethical implications. The word translated as “sincere” (*elikrineis*) means “to be blameless, pure, unmixed, possessing integrity and perfect purity of mind, heart, and conduct.” One could thus argue that sincerity in human relations constitutes an essential aspect of the transformed life. Further, Paul uses *aproskoptoi*, which means “to be without stumbling, without offense.” It connotes purity. It is clear that Paul believed in victory over sin and that perfect love is possible in this life. Stated differently, if purity is not possible in the present world, Paul’s prayer is meaningless. Purity and inoffensiveness are present moral and relational qualities to be experienced and maintained for the day of Christ.

When Paul prays that the Philippians be “filled with the fruits of righteousness” (v. 11), he is speaking of those spiritual virtues he elsewhere refers to as “the fruit of the Spirit.” The



word *fruits* here is singular in the oldest Greek manuscripts, which would make the verse read, "Being filled with the fruit of righteousness." In Galatians 5:22-23, the aspects of this fruit are "love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, [and] temperance." In Ephesians 5:9, Paul mentions the fruit of goodness, righteousness, and truth.

Paul declares that "the fruit of righteousness . . . comes through Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:11 NASB). These graces are not the same as human characteristics and qualities, but they are much more sublime because they are born of the Spirit. The fruit should be manifested in all Christian lives, and Paul prayed that it might abound in the lives of the Philipians.

## II. CONFIDENT OF THE GOSPEL (Phil. 1:12-18)

### A. Bound Yet Bold (vv. 12-14)

**12. But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;**

**13. So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places;**

**14. And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.**

Paul saw God at work in the midst of his adverse circumstances. His sufferings did not hinder the gospel, but advanced it instead. God works through adverse circumstances and not just in spite of them.

The story is told of Samuel Ajayi Crowther, the first Nigerian church leader who traveled from Freetown to Lagos in 1850 and intended to travel and preach over a wide area but could not do so for eighteen months due to a ravaging war. Instead of complaining about the adverse circumstances, he used the opportunity to translate large parts of the Bible into Yoruba. Christians must learn to turn adverse situations into opportunities.

Paul's imprisonment advanced the gospel in two ways. First, the reason for his imprisonment became clear throughout the palace (v. 13); that is, to those who were attached to the palace, such as the men who guarded him, or who had access to the palace, such as those who visited him. His bonds, or house confinement, gave him an opportunity to tell these people about the saving grace of Christ, and it gave them an opportunity to witness Christian fortitude and joy in the face of adversity.

Second, Paul's circumstances emboldened other Christians in Rome (v. 14). His imprisonment did not dampen evangelism efforts and cause the believers in Rome to go underground, but exactly the opposite was true. They became bolder to speak the word of God without fear. Christians who might have been willing to let Paul do the preaching as long as he was free and

"Christianity is the power of God in the soul of man."

—Robert Munger

### Talk About It:

1. How did Paul view his imprisonment in Rome (vv. 12-13)?
2. How was Paul's situation affecting other believers (v. 14)?

"No Christian can be a pessimist, for Christianity is a system of radical optimism."

—William R. Inge

able were emboldened to do it themselves as they realized he was restricted in his ministry.

B. Reason to Rejoice (vv. 15-18)

**15. Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will:**

**16. The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds:**

**17. But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel.**

**18. What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.**

**Talk About It:**

1. Describe the two motives spurring individuals to "preach Christ" (vv. 15-17)
2. What made Paul joyful (v. 18)?

Paul considers the motives of others in their preaching. There appeared to be two types of preachers among the newly courageous preachers in Rome. Paul knew that some preached because they wanted to "surpass" Paul in ministry, and to promote their own name and place above Paul's. These preachers were probably glad Paul was imprisoned because they felt this gave them a competitive edge over him in what they considered to be the contest of preaching the gospel. They were motivated, at least in part, by a competitive spirit, which too often is common among preachers. Yet Paul was not so critical or cynical to believe that every other preacher had bad motives. He knew that some also preached from goodwill. Others, to their credit, in their renewed vigor, proclaimed Christ as a true partnership with Paul in the ministry of the gospel.

These nobler preachers recognized the apostle's sincerity and unselfishness. They realized his present circumstances were part of a larger divine program and that he had never deviated from it. He was imprisoned not by chance but by the operation of God's sovereignty. God had brought him to this place and time "for the defense of the gospel"; no doubt, it was with some sense of awe that Paul evaluated his situation with the comment "I am put here" (v. 16 NIV). Recognition of the nature of Paul's imprisonment caused many stalwart Christians to respond out of love for him and for the cause he represented. They stepped into the breach and took their stand with him, eager to ensure that the gospel did not fail to be proclaimed while Paul was in prison. Paul's conclusion that begins with "What then?" (v. 18), or literally, "What does it matter?" reveals his sense of values. The importance of the gospel and its proclamation outweighed any personal considerations. He was convinced that Christ was being preached even by these preachers whose motives were suspect.

"Don't go out for popularity. Preach nothing down but the devil, nothing up but the Christ."

—Charles Spurgeon

III. CONFIDENT ABOUT THE FUTURE (Phil. 1:21-28)

A. Conflicting Desires (vv. 21-26)

**21. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.**

**22. But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour: yet what I shall choose I wot not.**

**23. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:**

**24. Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you.**

**25. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith;**

**26. That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again.**

Paul has raised the possibility of being executed, so he proceeds to offer his personal reflections on life and death. The phrase “for to me” (v. 21) is placed in the emphatic position, stressing the fact that Paul’s faith was unshaken, regardless of the circumstances. No adverse decision from the Caesar’s tribunal court or the alarm of his friends could shake his firm belief about his present or his future. “To live is Christ” (v. 21), or as Lightfoot translates it, “To me life is Christ.” Christ was the motive of Paul’s actions, the goal of his life and ministry, and the source of his strength. The phrase sums up Paul’s existence.

“To die is gain.” Unlike the Greek philosophers, Paul did not see death as a release from the miseries of mortal existence or an escape from mortal troubles. Instead, death would afford Paul the privilege of testifying to Christ as a martyr as well as ultimately sharing in His resurrection life. However, if Paul were to be spared the death penalty and continue to live, he looked forward to having a fruitful ministry (v. 22). The possibility of either dying or living caused Paul to be “hard-pressed from both directions” (v. 23 NASB). Were Paul to be selfish and consider his personal advantage, he would have preferred to leave this life and be with Christ. Nevertheless, Paul also conceded that there was another standpoint from which his future might be viewed. His remaining alive would offer a certain advantage to his Philippian readers—perhaps he would again be able to minister among them.

Although Paul earlier said he did not know what would happen to him, he added in verse 25, “I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith” (NKJV), repeating the hope in verse 26. Paul was not prophesying but expressing his confidence in God as one who knew God’s character and believed God was in control of his life. The aim of Paul’s ministry was the “progress and joy” of the Philippians in the gospel.

B. Heavenly Citizenship (vv. 27-28)

**27. Only let your conversation be as it becometh the gospel of Christ: that whether I come and see you, or else**

**Talk About It:**

1. Rephrase Paul’s statement in verse 21.
2. What was “far better” for Paul” (v. 23)?
3. What did Paul say was “more needful” (vv. 24-26)?

“As Catherine of Siena said, ‘All the way to heaven is heaven.’ A joyful end requires a joyful means. Bless the Lord.”

—Eugene Peterson



**Talk About It:**

1. What was Paul's desire concerning the Philippians' "conduct" (v. 27 NKJV)?
2. Explain the "proof" (NKJV) in verse 28.

"Twice in one year, John Wesley [1703-1791] was confronted by howling mobs as he tried to enter his house. Both times he calmly spoke to them about Christ until they listened quietly."

—*John Wesley's Little Instruction Book*

**be absent, I may hear of your affairs, that ye stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel;**

**28. And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God.**

"Only," or literally "whatever happens" to Paul, the Philippians must remember that the responsibility for their spiritual growth rested ultimately with them and their appropriation of the blessings in Christ. They were to conduct themselves in a manner that was worthy of the gospel. The Greek word translated as "conversation" (v. 27) means "to live out your citizenship." It is more than a call to fulfill their civil obligations. Rather, it is a call for the Philippian saints, although they were citizens of Rome, to live according to a higher, more compelling loyalty—the gospel of Christ.

Marcus Bockmuehl observed, "Against the colonial preoccupation with the coveted citizenship of Rome, Paul interposes a counter-citizenship whose capital and seat of power are not earthly but heavenly, whose guarantor is not Nero but Christ." The implication is well articulated by Dean Flemming: "This change in loyalty demands a change in lifestyle. Citizenship carries with it both privileges and obligations. Christians are called to live according to the values, norms, and priorities of their heavenly commonwealth, not those of the dominant Roman culture" (*Philippians: A Commentary in the Wesleyan Tradition*). How apt are those words even today when the lines between nationalism and Christianity continue to be blurred.

Paul exhorts the Philippians to be courageous and remain united in the face of opposition. They were to "stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel" (v. 27). The Holy Spirit is the source and enabler of their unity. "The faith of the gospel" probably refers to the content of the gospel message. The Philippians are to resist every temptation to compromise the integrity of the message of Christ.

In verse 28, Paul says the Philippians must neither be terrified nor intimidated by their opponents. Instead, they must continue to boldly proclaim and live out the gospel. By refusing to panic and be intimidated, Christians become a living proof of the gospel's offer of salvation and the victory of God over His enemies. Failure of the Church to be intimidated by enemies is a token of the ultimate failure of the enemies of God.

**CONCLUSION**

This lesson reveals the faithfulness of the Philippians as well as the commitment of the apostle to his converts. Paul was deeply committed to the gospel and those who came to trust in Christ through his preaching. He prayed over the spiritual

growth of the Philippians and used all his available energy to help them. His exhortations were written in order to direct, encourage, and “mature” them.

The lesson raises important questions for us as Christians in the twenty-first century:

- How committed are we to preaching the gospel and advancing the kingdom of God, and not just our personal or denominational agenda?
- When was the last time we witnessed about our faith in Christ?
- How do we respond to people who oppose our Christian lifestyle witness?
- What does it mean for us to stand firm in our faith—in our jobs, community, and in specific social locations?

These might be difficult questions to face, yet we must face them if we are to faithfully carry out the work the Lord has committed into our hands.

### **GOLDEN TEXT CHALLENGE**

“BEING CONFIDENT OF THIS VERY THING, THAT HE WHICH HATH BEGUN A GOOD WORK IN YOU WILL PERFORM IT UNTIL THE DAY OF JESUS CHRIST” (Phil. 1:6).

Paul observed that the Holy Spirit had done a good work in the Philippians and would continue that work until the coming of the Lord. This reflected his confidence that his Philippian converts would maintain the character that he had observed in them from the beginning. He had been led to Philippi through the agency of a vision that urged him to “come over into Macedonia, and help us” (Acts 16:9). In Macedonia, the capital city of which was Philippi, Paul found acceptance of the gospel and a Christian church was born.

Just as the Philippians enjoyed a new beginning by the Holy Spirit, so all who accept the gospel of Christ can begin anew. Whether those who start in Christ continue to grow is determined by individual sincerity and diligence. God promises to carry out His part until the end if we will do our part.

### **Daily Devotions:**

- M. Misplaced Confidence  
Genesis 11:4-9
- T. Confidence Betrayed  
Genesis 29:18-28
- W. Confidence in God  
Psalm 9:1-10
- T. Preaching With Confidence  
Acts 28:23-31
- F. Confidence by Faith in Christ  
Ephesians 3:1-12
- S. Confident in Prayer  
1 John 5:11-15