

**Winchester, Eastleigh and Romsey Circuit
Service at Home, Sunday 4 October 2026
Bible Month, Week 1, Philippians Chapter 1
“Mission Joy - Finding Happiness in
Troubled Times”**

Prepared by Graham Hepburn

Welcome to our worship today. This is the first of four services during October, following the Bible Month theme of Philippians. Today we look at Philippians chapter 1.

Call to Worship, Philippians 1, v9-11

And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, **10** so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, **11** filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ – to the glory and praise of God.

Listen, read, pray or sing along

We begin with the hymn, ‘Give me joy in my heart (Sing Hosannah), StF 76

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kZKpt9MPTSU>

Give me joy in my heart, keep me praising.
Give me joy in my heart, I pray.
Give me joy in my heart, keep me praising.
Keep me praising till the break of day.

[Refrain:] Sing hosanna, sing hosanna,
sing hosanna to the King of kings! (Repeat)
Sing hosanna, sing hosanna,
sing hosanna to the King!

Give me peace in my heart, keep me loving.
Give me peace in my heart, I pray.
Give me peace in my heart, keep me loving.
Keep me loving till the break of day. [Refrain]

Give me love in my heart, keep me serving.
Give me love in my heart, I pray.
Give me love in my heart, keep me serving.
Keep me serving till the break of day. [Refrain]
(Anon)

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A prayer of adoration

Father God, who probes our hearts with tender mercy,
how wonderful is your great love that holds us tight.

Anointed One, Son of God, full of righteousness and compassion,
how wonderful is your great love that holds us tight.

Divine Holy Spirit, who awakens our conscience, enlightening us,
how wonderful is your great love that holds us tight.
Three-fold blessings are ours.
Amen.

A prayer of praise and thanksgiving

All-powerful God,
how can we ever thank you enough for what you did and continue to do for us?
You hate sin but love the sinner.
You never give up on us. Your love never wains.
You know and understand us.
Whatever circumstances we find ourselves in, we can cling tight and draw strength from you, for you have hold of our right hand.
You never let go. You never abandon us.
Thank you that you work all things for our good, nurturing us and strengthening our character.
Lord God, we give you thanks and praise.
Amen.

A prayer of confession and an Assurance of forgiveness

A prayer of confession

Lord God, we often struggle with our conscience,
wrestling with negative emotions, weaknesses and imperfections.
We hold tight to you, but sometimes find our grip loosening.
We struggle with dread and worry about what may lie ahead,
instead of looking to you and placing our trust in your love.

Lord God, forgive our failings we pray.
Amen.

Assurance of forgiveness

Jesus, you gave up so much to bring salvation,
enduring your body being broken
and being placed on the cross to pay for our sins.

But death was overcome.

Life polluted by sin is now debt-free,
and forever more we are washed clean with loving forgiveness.

Amen.

I have split the reading of Philippians chapter 1 into three segments, each part with a reflection and a prayer.

Reading Part 1 - Philippians 1 v1-11

1 Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus,
To all God's holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons:

2 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thanksgiving and prayer

3 I thank my God every time I remember you.

4 In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy **5** because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, **6** being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

7 It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart and, whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me.

8 God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.

9 And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, **10** so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, **11** filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ – to the glory and praise of God.

Reflection Part 1- Mission Joy

'Mission Joy - Finding Happiness in Troubled Times' is the title of the film of the meeting between Archbishop Desmond Tutu and the Dalai Lama in India in 2015. Until recently it had been on BBC iplayer for the past year, and no doubt will be again in the future.

Both men have known suffering but have remained loyal to their respective faiths - Archbishop Tutu through the dark years of seeing his people suffer under the apartheid regime in South Africa, and the Dalai Lama with his flight from Tibet and exile due to the Chinese invasion of his land.

'Mission Joy - Finding Happiness in Troubled Times' would also be a good title for the letter to the Philippians. Like these two men, Paul knew what it was to suffer for his faith. He is writing from prison, having been arrested because he was following Christ's path and preaching the word of God. Yet despite his suffering, the theme of joy runs through this letter.

Writing from prison, Paul sees beyond the hardship and danger and sees the opportunity to defend and proclaim the gospel. Would you or I count this a privilege? In verse 9, Paul links together growth in love and growth in insight. The more we love, the more we will be able to recognise the things that really matter.

Prayer

Lord, may the spark of your love grow brighter and warmer within us until it so fills us that we do indeed recognise and centre our lives upon things that really matter to the glory and praise of God.

Reading Part 2 - Philippians 1 v12-26

Paul's chains advance the gospel

12 Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. **13** As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. **14** And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear.

15 It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. **16** The latter do so out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defence of the gospel. **17** The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up

trouble for me while I am in chains. **18** But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice.

Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, **19** for I know that through your prayers and God's provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance. **20** I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. **21** For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. **22** If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labour for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! **23** I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; **24** but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body. **25** Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, **26** so that through my being with you again your boasting in Christ Jesus will abound on account of me.

Reflection Part 2 - Dying or living, we belong to Christ

Paul goes on to say that Christianity is being openly discussed, although some question the motives of some of the preachers. But Paul refuses to be disheartened; if Christ is being presented then ultimately, His truth must prevail. Note that Paul is not indifferent to what is preached; we will see in week three that Paul can be very vigorous in combating false teaching.

As to his coming trial, Paul is ready to die, but sees so much work to be done that he thinks it must surely be God's purpose that he will be acquitted! Despite the uncertainty, Paul is utterly convinced that he will be safely held in the hands of Christ, whatever happens to him. Isn't this the ultimate ground for all of us to have Christian confidence, not that we shall be preserved from pain or disaster, but rather that whatever happens, God in Christ will not let go of us.

Prayer

Help us know joy as a spring
always welling up within us

and give us the power to dance through life,
not as people who are blind
to sorrow, misery or same,
but as those who know your victory over evil
and over death and who cannot but rejoice.

Listen, read, pray or sing along

We continue our service with a hymn based on verse 21, 'For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.'
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GeER6YvsQb0>

Chorus:

For me to live is Christ, to die is gain
to hold His hand and walk His narrow way
there is no peace, no joy, no thrill,
Like walking in His will
For me to live is Christ, to die is gain

Now once my heart was full of sin and shame
Till someone told me Jesus came to save
When He said "Come home to me"
He set my poor heart free
For me to live is Christ, to die is gain

Now there are things that I still do not know
But of this one thing I'm completely sure
He who called me on that day
Washed all my sin away
For me to live is Christ, to die is gain

Keith White, published in Youth Praise 2 (Church Pastoral Aid Society, England, 1969).

Reading Part 3 - Philippians 1 v27-30

Life worthy of the gospel

27 Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel **28** without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you. This is a sign to them that they will be destroyed, but that you will be saved – and that by God. **29** For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him, **30** since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.

Reflection - Part 3

'Whatever happens' (verse 27) - here we come to the heart of what Christian living is all about. It doesn't depend upon outward circumstances but on our commitment to the gospel of Christ in good and bad times alike. Paul reminds us that we should remain committed, whatever our situation.

Paul moves from writing (verse 17) about folk being moved by selfish ambition and mixed motives, to urging the Philippians to (verse 27) 'stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel' Paul offers encouragement to us in the days when we can feel very much up against it. Not by relying upon our own ability, skill or planning, but to faithfully play our part and to safely leave the outcome in the hands of God.

Prayer

Lord, we cannot know what lies before us this day, but whatever awaits us, may we face it with confidence and may our conduct be worthy of you, and the gospel.

Offering and Prayer of Dedication

Gracious God, accept all our gifts, our money, and all our offerings, and with them our lives, to be used in mission and service through Jesus Christ our Lord. **Amen.**

Prayers of intercession

(Please fill in the gaps with your own prayers)

Lord God,
we bring our prayers for your world

Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer**
for your church

Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer**
for those we know in specific need of our
prayers at this time

Lord in your mercy, **Hear our prayer. Amen**

Listen, read, pray or sing along

We end our service with the hymn, 'Your hand, O God, has guided' (StF 692),
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=la13cRtXqRw&list=RDla13cRtXqRw&start_radio=1

Your hand, O God, has guided
your flock, from age to age;
the wondrous tale is written,
full clear on every page;
our forebears owned your goodness,
and we their deeds record;
and both of this bear witness:
one Church, one Faith, one Lord.

Your heralds brought glad tidings
to greatest as to least;
they summoned all to hasten
to share the great King's feast;
Their gospel of redemption,
sin pardoned, right restored,
was all in this enfolded:
one Church, one Faith, one Lord.

Your mercy will not fail us,
nor leave your work undone;
with thy right hand to help us,
the victory shall be won;
and then, by all creation,
thy name shall be adored,
and this shall be our anthem:
one Church, one Faith, one Lord.

Edward Hayes Plumtre (1821-1891)

A sending out prayer

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ,
The love of God,
and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit,
Be with us all, now and for evermore.
Amen.

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If you wish to follow the Methodist Church daily reading guide, spreading the four chapters into 30 daily readings, you can download this at the following link -

https://media.methodist.org.uk/media/documents/Bible_Month_2026_Reading_Guide_web.pdf