

# CITIZENS OF HEAVEN

THE BOOK OF PHILIPPIANS

Sermon-Based Study Guide  
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church  
Philippians 1.1-11 | September 13, 2020

Prepared by Curtis Bronzan  
curtis@gspc.org | 562/493.2553 x115

## I. Introduction to this Series and Study

This week we begin our fall series in the Apostle Paul's letter to the Philippians. We're calling this series *Citizens of Heaven*, a theme implied within each chapter of this early Christian correspondence, but most clearly communicated in Philippians 3.20-21: "But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body."

As we will see over the next eleven weeks, our heavenly citizenship affects every part of our lives as followers of Jesus. In this week's study of the first eleven verses, we will see Paul's joy in the Philippians' partnership and his confidence in the completion of God's work in their lives.

## II. Connecting with One Another

Have you ever had a project you struggled to complete? What was it?

Why was it so difficult to finish?

## III. Study the Text

### a. Read **Philippians 1.1-11**.

How would you summarize these first eleven verses? What themes do you see?

Imagine this was written to our congregation: How should these verses make us feel?

What questions do you have about this opening section of Paul's letter?

### b. In **verse 1**, Paul and Timothy introduce themselves "servants" or "slaves" of Christ.

(Please note: Though significant disparity existed between different people groups in the ancient world, such terminology did not have any reference to race or ethnicity-based practices of slavery. In first-century Macedonia, people became slaves in three ways: After losing a military battle, to pay off a debt, or if they were born to a parent in slavery.)

Why do you think Paul would refer to himself (and Timothy) in this way, instead of declaring his status as an "apostle," as he does in ten other New Testament letters?

Why do you think he greets Philippians with a different title? (Look ahead to **Philippians 2.5-11**, especially verse 7, for a hint)

### c. Why do you think Paul refers to the Philippians as "saints" or "holy people" (meaning "set apart")? What do you think earned them such a lofty title?



- d. It's been written that "grace and peace" (in **verse 2**) could never be written in the opposite order ("peace and grace").  
Why do you think that is? Do you agree or not? Why?
- e. Why does Paul thank God for the Philippians? (see **verses 3-5**)  
What do you think he means by the phrase "partnership in the gospel"?  
What about "from the first day until now"?
- f. Read **Philippians 1.6** aloud.  
Who is "confident of this"? Who began the good work? Who "will carry it on to completion"? What do you think this "good work" is?
- g. **Verses 7-8** give us an insight to the warmth and affection between Paul and the Philippian congregation, as well as his current setting, "in chains."  
How do you think Paul is able to maintain such joyful thanksgiving in the midst of such terrible circumstances?  
How do you think you would respond if you were imprisoned for sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ? Why?
- h. If you were in chains for sharing the good news, what would you pray for? Why?  
Reread **verses 9-11**. Despite being in chains, what does Paul pray for?  
Why do you think he prays that way? (Hint: reread **verse 6**)
- i. In **verse 9**, Paul prays that certain things would increase. What are they?  
What are the results of said increase? (see **verses 10-11**)
- j. In **verse 6**, it is God who "will carry on to completion." In **verses 9-11**, Paul speaks of our love, knowledge, and fruit of righteousness.  
Which is it, then? Who is responsible for our becoming more like Jesus?

#### IV. Pray

- a. Lift up this series in Philippians, that through it God's Holy Spirit would impress upon us our heavenly citizenship, bind us together in unity, and inspire in us joy – even amidst difficulty and danger.
- b. Pray that you would have eyes to see and ears to hear God's patient, persistent work of completion, and ask to see the ways in which you can better partner with His lifelong transforming work.

#### V. Digging Deeper

- a. Learn about Paul's first visit to Philippi in **Acts 16.11-40**. Notice the very different people he shares the gospel with!
- b. See **Romans 8.18-30** for a kind of elaboration of **Philippians 1.9-11**.
- c. In **verse 11**, Paul references "fruit of righteousness." See **Galatians 5.19-26** for an example of what he may be thinking of.

