

# CITIZENS OF HEAVEN

THE BOOK OF PHILIPPIANS

Sermon-Based Study Guide  
Good Shepherd Presbyterian Church  
Philippians 1.12-26 | September 20, 2020  
Prepared by Rev. Bryan Wenger  
bryan@gspc.org | 562/493.2553 x116

## I. Introduction to this Study

This week we continue our study of Philippians, reflecting on Paul sharing his heart about how Jesus is actively at work through his life's circumstances, by powerfully advancing the good news of the gospel! So, Paul rejoices even though he is bound by chains in a Roman prison.

Paul is experiencing the joy of the Lord for two reasons amid his suffering – 1) The good news of Jesus is advancing; and 2) No matter “what ultimately happens to him,” Paul declares in **verse 21**: “*For me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.*”

Think about the story of Joseph in **Genesis 37-50**. Read and reflect through it this week. Our ways are not the Lord's ways, He is sovereign and in control, always...

Right before he dies, Joseph shares these powerful yet humble words with his brothers: “*But Joseph said to them, ‘Don’t be afraid. Am I in the place of God? <sup>20</sup> You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. <sup>21</sup> So then, don’t be afraid. I will provide for you and your children.’ And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.*” (**Genesis 50.19-21**)

May Paul's heartfelt testimony encourage you in your life and faith, even now, in the times that we find ourselves experiencing and navigating together...

## II. Connecting with One Another

When you have had a bad day, what do you do?

*There is nothing that will test our beliefs more than suffering for them.* Your thoughts on this statement?

When has it been most difficult for you to have hope in the Lord?

## III. Study the Text

- a. How can it become evident in our everyday life that, like Paul, we experience everything “for Christ” (**verses 12-14**)? What spiritual fruit did Paul witness, even while he was in chains?
- b. (**verses 15-18**) Compare the motives of the two groups described here. What lesson can we learn from Paul's rejoicing that Christ is being preached despite the false motives of others? Paul is concerned though, with envy and rivalry – in what ways can they be dangers to Christian service today? How would it manifest itself?
- c. (**verses 19-20**) Why did Paul say he could continue to rejoice despite his suffering and imprisonment?
- d. Read **verses 18b and 19**. The word, *deliverance*, in **verse 19** can also be translated, *vindication or salvation*. [*for my vindication or for my salvation*] On the one hand it may seem that Paul is thinking about being acquitted at his upcoming Roman trial, but it appears



he is thinking of himself being vindicated before the judgement of God rather than a human tribunal. What are your thoughts?

- e. , What did Paul mean when he said, “to live is Christ and to die is gain” (**verse 21**)? TO LIVE IS \_\_\_\_\_ – how has that “blank” been filled in at times in your life and faith journey? What has Paul’s testimony in this passage taught you or made you think about in a deeper, more significant way?
- f. (**verse 22-26**) Notice Paul’s honest struggle in these verses...what do you notice that really impacts you? What are Paul’s considerations in choosing between life and death? How do you begin to discern the difference between our natural desires and the will of God?
- g. Look back over the passage. Take note of several factors which can transform difficult life circumstances into a joyful, Christ-exalting Gospel-advancing moment. Share with one another.

#### IV. Pray

- a. Pray that Christ will be honored in the difficult circumstances you face.
- b. Pray for Christians around the world who are being persecuted for their faith.
- c. Pray for Good Shepherd during these unprecedented times in our nation and world. May we, with the help of the Holy Spirit, seek in new and creative ways, to invite all people to grow into a Christ-centered life in God’s family.

#### V. Digging Deeper

- a. Read the closing words of the three “synoptic” gospels (**Matthew 28.16-20, Mark 16.14-20, Luke 24.44-53**). Do you sense Jesus wanting the gospel/good news to be advanced? What jumped out at you? John’s gospel “ends differently” than the others...powerful restorative moment with Peter and Jesus. Read **John 20.30-31**. Is there a particular passage in the gospel of John that has impacted your life and faith?
- b. What difference has your personal faith in Jesus made in your attitude toward death and dying? In your attitude toward suffering?
- c. Paul sincerely believes that God can bring new blessings out of the sufferings that followers of Jesus experience. How does Paul know this? Can you think of any other passages of Scripture where Paul emphasizes it?
- d. **John 16.33**, “I have told you these things, so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world.” How are these words of Jesus speaking to you right now...?

