

Bible Month at Home

28th June 2026 - Rachel Mitchell

Philippians chapter 1



Today we start an exploration of Paul's letter to the Philippians which is our Bible Month book for 2026. Over the coming weeks we will look at the main themes in this letter, which is a favourite of so many people. Today's theme is 'A Harvest of Joy'.

Paul starts his letter:

To all God's Holy people in Christ who live in Philippi.... Grace and peace to you from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

As we start our time of worship today, let's just take a moment to remind ourselves what it means to us, as people in Christ, to know God's grace and his peace...

STF 565: Only by grace

Only by grace can we enter, only by grace can we stand; not by our human endeavour, but by the blood of the Lamb. Into your presence you call us, you call us to come. Into your presence you draw us, and now by your grace we come, now by your grace we come.

Lord, if you mark our transgressions, who would stand? Thanks to you grace we are cleansed by the blood of the Lamb.... (x2)

Only by grace can we enter....

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We pray:

Loving God, we come to you today with thankfulness in our hearts for the grace and peace you offer to us through Jesus:

- **We thank you for your unequalled kindness and grace** which has shown us the great height, breadth and the depth of your amazing love,
- **and we thank you for the true peace we know** through your forgiveness and your invitation to us to be your people, when we put our faith in Christ.

Yet Lord, we know that sometimes we still do not live fully for you. That sometimes we choose our own ways, or we struggle to show grace to the people put alongside us through whom you teach us so much.

So now, as we take a moment to reflect on the week just gone, we give over into your hands, O God, any time or situation where our thoughts, our words, or our actions have not been grace-filled; and the things that trouble and disquiet us...

Lord, as we come together now with our brothers and sisters to pray our family prayer, fill us anew with your grace, assure us of your forgiveness, and lift us into your presence where we can fully know your peace, for we ask this in Jesus' name. **Amen.**

We share in the Lord's Prayer....

Our Father, who is in heaven, may your name be hallowed so that your Kingdom may come, here on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread, and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us... and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from all that is evil. For yours is the Kingdom, the power and the glory, now and always. **Amen.**

Read: Philippians 1: verses 1- 11

This first part of chapter one includes Paul's greeting to the Philippian Christians and his prayer for them. He expresses the love and the joy he knows when he thinks of them and how they stand with him. Then he prays for them – that they may bring glory to God.

Reflect

In Acts, chapter 16, we get a glimpse of who these Philippian people may have been...

There was Lydia, who sold purple cloth and invited them to her home: there was the servant girl who was possessed by a 'special' spirit, which repeatedly called out, "These are servants of God. They are telling you how you can be saved."; and the jailer, who was ready to kill himself after a divine jailbreak, but was instead convinced by Paul and Silas to give his life to Christ. These were just some of the people for whom Paul may have given thanks as he wrote.

Just take a moment to think about the people who have helped or been alongside you in your Christian journey. What was their story and how did you come to know them? Are they still alongside you today? How was your story enriched by them and what would you pray for them?

We pray for them using Paul's prayer:

Lord, we thank you for all the people who have helped us on our faith journeys. Remind us of the joy we have known through them. As Paul prayed for the Philippians, so we pray for these people today:

For them, we pray **that their love will grow** more and more, and that they will be given knowledge and understanding with their love.

That they will see the difference between good and bad and will choose the good; that they will be pure and without wrong for the coming of Christ;

That they will be filled with the good things produced in their life by Christ and bring glory and praise to God. **Amen.**

STF 776: In the Lord I'll be ever thankful

In the Lord I'll be ever thankful,

In the Lord I will rejoice.

Look to God do not be afraid:

Lift up your voices, the Lord is near;

Lift up your voices, the Lord is near.

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Read: Philippians 1: verses 12-30

In my Bible, this section is entitled ‘Paul’s troubles help the work’. Paul shares news of his imprisonment but does not complain. Rather, even in this, he finds JOY, as he sees how Christ is being preached and made known. His imprisonment has made others bold. Whether he lives or dies is not of importance to him – what is most important is living in Christ and helping others to do the same. This is his concern.

Paul’s joy is found when others join him in the work even when it is a struggle, standing firm with him in their faith. He tells us that God not only gave us the honour of believing in Christ, but also of suffering for him. Both of these things bring glory to Christ.

Reflect

What does joy mean to us and where do we find it? This week, as we look at Philippians chapter 1, we are invited to consider what a ‘**harvest of joy**’ might look like, and where might we find it.

One place we might look is in all the blessings we have received. Often (but not always) these blessings have come through other Christians – like the ones we have given thanks for already. I wonder what our lives looked like then? Were these blessings only received in good and happy times, or were they also received in hard, more difficult times?

Paul is not going through an easy time as he writes. He is imprisoned (which may have meant being shackled to a Roman Guard 24/7) and is living under the threat of being put to death for his belief. But this was not going to stop him finding joy. In fact, it may well have focused his thinking about what was most important in life – and helped him to recognise that he had everything he needed, right where he was.

So, what does Paul have?

• **Confidence in Christ.** Paul’s life was rooted in Christ, and he knew he belonged to Him. He says that the Spirit of Jesus was with him, helping him. Paul “*knew*” Christ was with him and that one day he (Paul) would be set free, not by human hands, but by Christ. **What a Joy this was...and is!**

• **Unexpected opportunity.** Having a Roman guard shackled to him 24/7 (and sometimes others around him too) meant he also had an audience – he could still do what Jesus had called him to do, even if in an unexpected way. Yes, they might ridicule him but just having them speak Jesus’ name was still spreading the good news of the gospel of Christ....

Again, what Joy this brought!

• **A community alongside him.** Paul wrote letters, shared news, was prayed for, and prayed for others. He knew their struggles just as they knew his. Others stood with him, encouraged him and he was able to offer encouragement too. **Praise God!**

• **He saw God’s kingdom growing.** Although Paul could no longer go out in the name of Jesus, he could see new people being called to speak out for Christ – carrying on what he had started.... **and the God he knew through Jesus was being glorified...**

• **Purpose and hope in a bright future.** Death no longer had the hold over him it once had. Paul even suggests that death would be the easy option, given his suffering – but for the sake of others he would hold on to his earthly life for now, so that **others could also find faith in Jesus, and share his joy.**

As we reflect on Paul’s situation, and the harvest of joy he finds in it, I wonder if this might encourage us to look again at our own situation and seek out our own harvest of joy in the place where we are?

I wonder, do we recognise God’s grace at work in us and around us? Are there opportunities to share the gospel in our situation that we have overlooked, or do we already make the most of them?

Do we also see, in the challenges and difficulties we face, God at work, reshaping us into his grace-filled, and Christ-centred people? Is he teaching us to love someone we find difficult or to see the world differently - because of our faith in him?

And do we rejoice (which asks us to be filled with joy) in the future we have, set aside for us through Christ, who came to save us and give us life?

A final prayer

Lord Jesus, we thank you for everything that brings joy to our lives. For the world around us, the people we share it with and your presence with us. May we, like Paul, seek out all the good things that bring us real and lasting Joy, and treasure the ways of “being” that draw us closer to you. **Amen.**

As with the other hymns we have shared today, our last one is a more modern hymn (although now over 30 years old!). If this is not familiar to you, or you just prefer to rejoice with a different hymn, then please find another one that fills your heart with joy....

STF 363: My Jesus, my Saviour

**My Jesus, my Saviour,
Lord, there is none like you.
All of my days I want to praise
the wonders of your mighty love.
My comfort, my shelter,
tower of refuge and strength,
let every breath, all that I am,
never cease to worship you.**

*Shout to the Lord all the earth, let us sing
Power and majesty, praise to the King.
Mountains bow down and the seas will roar
At the sound of Your name,
I sing for joy at the work of Your hands,
Forever I’ll love You, forever I’ll stand,
Nothing compares to the Promise
I have in You.*

Darlene Zschech.

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Blessing

May God the Father, by whose hand Jesus was raised from the dead, fill us with real and lasting joy and strengthen us to walk with him in his risen life; And may the blessing of Almighty God, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit be with us and those we care for, today and forever. **Amen.**

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