

PHILIPPIANS

PRESS ON TOWARDS THE GOAL

PHILIPPIANS: Press On Towards the Goal
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Published 2014

Published by 10Publishing, a division of 10ofthose.com
9D Centurion Court, Farington, Leyland, PR25 3UQ, England

Email: info@10ofthose.com
Website: www.10ofthose.com

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data.
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN: 978-1-909611-31-3

Cover Design and Typeset by Diane Bainbridge
Printed in the UK





Kay Mumford

**30 UNDATED DEVOTIONS THROUGH
THE BOOK OF PHILIPPIANS**

INTRODUCTION

Paul is writing this letter to the church in Philippi. During his letter he makes several references to being in prison. The general consensus is that he is writing from Rome. Paul is not sure if he will die in prison or be released, so he writes to help the church at Philippi to keep living for Christ during his absence.

The church are facing opposition from outside and within. It seems they are in fear of imprisonment themselves, and need courage to stand firm in their faith. The opposition within is coming from competitive preachers, who are stirring up trouble for Paul, and false teachers, who are adding to the gospel message.

Paul's affection for this group of believers in Philippi is clear throughout the letter. He has deep gospel affection for them and this is shown in his prayers and desires for them. Paul's relationship started with a small group of converts in Philippi – their story is found in Acts 16, verses 11 to 40. This is well worth a read as it gives an insight into the varied nature of the believers' backgrounds.

The heartbeat of the letter is Christ himself. Christ is behind all that Paul thinks, says and does. Paul's ambition is to know Christ more and be more like Christ; he invites us to pursue the same ambition.

This letter is deeply challenging and Christ-centred. We cannot fail to be challenged by Paul's commitment to the spread of the gospel, and consequently his willingness to sacrifice his own interests to this end.

GETTING THE MOST FROM THESE DEVOTIONS ON PHILIPPIANS

These devotionals have short passages, which gives you more time for reflection, application and prayer. Each day:

- Pray for God's help and insight before you read the Bible passage.
- Read the passage and use the reflection questions to help you apply the passage to your life.
- Pray through the passage, using the prayer pointers to help you.

Nobody likes the idea of being a servant, but this is how Paul and Timothy describe themselves (v. 1). As founders of the church at Philippi they could have boasted about their status. Instead Paul and Timothy wished to be identified as humble servants of Christ.

In Paul's time a servant would belong to his master and have no rights of his own. He would not be able to complain if the work was too demanding. Being a servant of Christ had led Paul to being in prison, but there is no sense of him feeling bitter or resentful. Paul, and Timothy, were simply following in their master's footsteps, walking the same path of suffering and rejection. They are great examples to the church of what it means to be faithful servants of Christ, even when this means great persecution.

Paul addresses his letter to all the believers in the church, along with the leadership team (v. 1). Everyone needs to hear what Paul has got to say.

Paul bestows upon them the two gospel blessings of grace and peace (v. 2). These two words sum up what we have received in the gospel. Grace is an undeserved gift from God, who shows us mercy even though we are sinners. Peace is reconciliation with God, even though we were his enemies. It is this grace and peace from God that unites all the believers in Christ Jesus.

REFLECT

- *What hardships and suffering might you encounter as a servant of Christ?*

PRAY

- *Pray that you might be a willing servant of Christ and faithful in obedience and service.*

When we are going through trials, it is easier to be full of self-pity and self-interest than of thanksgiving. This is the reason that we might find Paul's reflections on prison life a bit surprising.

Paul starts his letter with thankfulness (v. 3). He is not thinking about himself, but he is focussed on his Christian brothers and sisters in Philippi. This causes Paul to be thankful and joyful at their partnership in the gospel. Throughout the letter we will see that their gospel partnership expresses itself in them praying for Paul (Phil. 1:19), suffering alongside Paul (Phil. 1:30) and giving financial aid to Paul (Phil. 4:18).

Even though Paul could not be with the church he founded, he is not anxious about them falling away (v. 6). There is clear evidence from their partnership in the gospel that God has started a work of salvation in them. Salvation is a process that begins when we put our trust in the Lord Jesus, but is completed when Christ returns and we meet him face to face in heaven. Paul has a deep confidence that the work of salvation that God has started in the Philippians, he will continue and complete (v. 6).

REFLECT

- *What evidence can you see in your life that God has begun a work of salvation, and how does the promise in verse 6 encourage you?*
- *Who could you be praying for regularly as an expression of your gospel partnership with them?*

PRAY

- *Spend some time thanking God for your salvation and the salvation of other believers in your church.*
- *Pray for your gospel partners.*