

Life Group Notes 9/10/2023  
Pastor Mark Warren Philippians Week 1

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[No doctrine is a given unless it has been found in the Word given by the Holy Spirit and received by you. If you have observations or questions, feel free to send me an email with your comment or observations at [tbeachhead@comcast.net](mailto:tbeachhead@comcast.net). Thank you for taking the time—Pete Mehegan, the Scribe.]

Remember: Be good to one another. Be sensitive and kind. Let God heal our hearts...and guide our discussions. **PLEASE PRE-READ THESE NOTES AND CHOOSE THE DIRECTION THAT IS APPROPRIATE FOR YOUR GROUP.** BE COGNIZANT OF YOUR GROUP'S TIME AND BE SENSITIVE! **Some groups would like to dwell on a single idea. Let the Spirit be your guide. Never feel obligated to complete this study.**

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Note: I have highlighted suggested discussion questions that Pastor Mark has raised this week, 9/10. Let's allow the Holy Spirit to guide all our discussions, using the highlights as trail blazes. **The purpose is to minister to one another.** I include each of the passages mentioned in full, to facilitate the enjoyment of these notes. Footnotes are not meant to distract. This week's footnotes include:

1. [On Philippians, and the Church at Philippi.](#)
2. [On Titles in the Hierarchy of the Church.](#)
3. [On the faith of Abraham.](#)

\*\*\***Important:** At the very [end of these notes](#), I've included passages that were mentioned in this week's message for deeper study using SOAP journaling to help further your study during the week. \*\*\*

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Pastor Richie declared, "This is practice..." as worship ended and turned to the Word.

1. What did he mean?
2. What will you be doing in heaven? Do you have scripture?
3. Are you doing that at your work today? Why not?

What was your response to Grace's response to the church in need in Berlin? What was the most gratifying part of this testimony for you?

Look up Philippians 1:

**1**Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus,

To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons:

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

1. See [footnote 1](#) if you need to. What is Paul's relationship with the church at Philippi?
2. Why does he mention Timothy?
3. What is the role of the overseer? What is the role of the deacon? ([Footnote 2](#))
4. How did Paul become an apostle? Who disciplined Paul? (Galatians 1: **11***For I certify to you, brothers, that the gospel I preached was not devised by man. **12**I did not receive it from any man, nor was I taught it; rather, I received it by revelation from Jesus Christ. **13**For you have heard of my former way of life in Judaism, how severely I persecuted the church of God and tried to destroy it. **14**I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries and was extremely zealous for the traditions of my fathers.*

*15*But when God, who set me apart from my mother's womb and called me by His grace, was pleased *16*to reveal His Son in me so that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, I did not rush to consult with flesh and blood, *17*nor did I go up to Jerusalem to the apostles who came before me, but I went into Arabia and later returned to Damascus. *18*Only after three years did I go up to Jerusalem to confer with Cephas, and I stayed with him fifteen days. *19*But I saw none of the other apostles except James, the Lord's brother. *20*I assure you before God that what I am writing to you is no lie.)

5. Who is teaching you?

### **Thanksgiving and Prayer**

*3*I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, *4*always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, *5*because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. *6*And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. *7*It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.

1. What do you learn here of Paul's "methodology" in prayer?
2. Why does he make his prayers with joy? What does he remember of the Philippians?
3. Describe Paul's reception at Philippi? Describe the Philippian response?
4. How do you know He began a good work in them?

Pastor Mark refers to Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son, Isaac.

1. What do you know of the story? Look up Genesis 17: *17*Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed and said to himself, "Shall a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?" *18*And Abraham said to God, "Oh that Ishmael might live before you!" *19*God said, "No, but Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him. Paraphrase the promise God made. Is it possible for God to lie? Is it possible for Isaac to die before he has offspring? How do you know? Understand: Your answer defines faith.
2. Look up Hebrews 11: *17*By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was in the act of offering up his only son, *18*of whom it was said, "Through Isaac shall your offspring be named." *19*He considered that God was able even to raise him from the dead, from which, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back. How was God, Who began a good work in Abraham, faithful to complete the work He had promised?
3. What is remarkable about Abraham's faith, that sets Him apart as "the father of our faith?"
4. What *exactly* did Abraham believe? What were the specific words of the promise concerning Isaac? Now, define *unbelief*, the opposite of faith.
5. Why do we walk by *faith* and not by *sight*? Is our faith blind faith? Or are we, like Abraham, motivated by a very specific promise God made to us?
6. Look up Psalm 37: *3*Trust in the LORD, and do good; dwell in the land and befriend faithfulness. *4*Delight yourself in the LORD, and he will give you the desires of your heart. *5*Commit your way to the LORD; trust in him, and he will act. *6*He will bring forth

*your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday.* Explain this promise. Is God a genie in a bottle? Or do your desires begin to grow and match His?

7. Now explain what that “good work” is that He began in you, that He is also bringing to completion faithfully. What stumbling blocks hinder that completion?
8. What does it take to “delight yourself” Jesus? What does a Lamborghini have to do with that?

Look at the questions Pastor Mark raises:

1. Who is He, Who began that good work?
2. What IS that good work that He is doing in you?
3. And what is He completing it for?
4. And when is it completed? How will you know it has been completed?
5. And what is the day of Jesus Christ?
6. Look up Hebrews 12: *1Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2looking to Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.* How does this parallel what Paul is telling the Philippians? Who is the First Word in our understanding? Who will be the Last Word?
7. How does this parallel your own experience in the gospel? How much did you understand when you began to follow Jesus? Do you understand more today?
8. Can you see that God is doing something good in you...” ...even though it might not feel so good,” as Pastor Mark said? Explain. Where does hope come from?

Look up Romans 8: *28And we know that for those who love God all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose. 29For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. 30And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified.* According to this, how has God begun a good work? How will He complete it?

Mark says, “He takes all things and works in and through every circumstance.” Explain.

He says, “The Kingdom of God is like a mustard seed in our heart, and His desires in your heart begin to grow and expand. The moment we begin to say, ‘Jesus I want you at the center of my universe, and I want to seek you,’ you realized that what comes out of our heart brings joy and peace.”

1. Do you have a testimony?
2. Mark mentions the new song that was sung this morning with God’s names: God Who heals (*rapha*), God our Banner (*nissi*), God Who is Peace (*shalom*), God Who provides (*Jireh*). Why is it good to know God’s titles? How does each announce God’s good work in us?
3. Look up Matthew 24: *12And because lawlessness will be increased, the love of many will grow cold. 13But the one who endures to the end will be saved.* What is the challenge to our faith? What must not grow cold?
4. What does endurance (*ὑπομένω/hypomeno* to **persevere**: absolutely and emphatically, under misfortunes and trials, unwilling to recede or concede) require? Why is cold love not endurance?

5. In Luke 22:61, Jesus turned and looked at Peter upon his third betrayal. Did Jesus' love grow cold at this point? Can you prove it? (John 21:15-19) How do we handle betrayal and denial? How do circumstances help to perfect us?
6. Mark says, "This is why we can trust Him when the pressure goes awry. We can trust Him when we feel we cannot take another breath." He says this is what is meant by "praying without ceasing." Explain.
7. Look up Proverbs 3: [5](#)*Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; [6](#)in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.* How does Solomon's word line up with Paul's? Why is it important to acknowledge Him in *all your ways*?
8. Mark mentioned Audra's prayer, "Lord help us to see what You are doing today, and help us to join with that." What is the potential in that prayer? What changes as soon as God answers?
9. How do we know this is a prayer God will answer?
10. How do we become "attentive to what God is doing?" Is this possibly what Paul means when he exhorts us to "...walk in the Spirit?" Explain.

Pastor related the story of his daughter's trials in college. Volleyball has always been important to her, and this year, she was not chosen for leadership. As a senior, she is required to be part of a "co-op" and the date for that is fast approaching, and there was no apparent breakthrough. Audra said to her, "Abby, would you be willing to let volleyball go, even as a senior, to take a co-op that God has for you." Abby responded, "I don't know." Then Mark the ever spiritual brought up the whole thing about Abraham and Isaac. (See above and [footnote 3](#).) "You have to be willing let things go," he said. Then her coach came up in the middle of the week, and asked the same question, "Would you consider giving up volleyball for your co-op." Not knowing what is going on, it turns out Abby had just designed a pair of Nike shoes for a class. "Maybe you can work for Nike." Mark called a pastor friend where Nike has its headquarters. Strangely it turns out the head designer at Nike was a Foursquare pastor for four years. Pastor Mark says, "God is teaching me to trust Him, that He loves my daughter more than I love my daughter." God is disciplining us to draw closer to Him. Look at James 1: [2](#)*Consider it pure joy, my brothers, when you encounter trials of many kinds, [3](#)because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. [4](#)Allow perseverance to finish its work, so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.*

1. What are your thoughts about Mark's testimony?
2. Do you have a testimony to share, where every door seemed to close, and God led you into His fields and pastures?
3. Write the end of the story. Now pray for Abby and favor.

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### **The Follow-up Application**

1. Use the [SOAP journal studies](#) below throughout the week.
2. Pick a time where you believed disappointment was the only outcome, and you were surprised by success.
3. Pick a friend who is being tried today, and pray for him.
4. Pray for Abby, and success.
5. Note this week what stumbling blocks hinder your growth.

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**Take the time to pray.**

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**Scribe's Notes:**

- 1. On Philippians and the Church at Philippi**—The church at Philippi is the first church on the European continent, and key to Luke's theme of Holy Spirit guidance throughout the book of Acts. The testimony of Philippi sounds remarkably like Pastor's testimony concerning his daughter Abby's struggles, where doors open wide in the face of adversity. At the end of Acts 15, we witness the first "church split" where the partners of the first missionary journey, Paul and Barnabas, disagreed strongly over Mark's participation in the second journey, because he had left after the incidents on Cyprus, and not completed the first with them. Paul argued that "...he had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not accompanied them in the work." No one on the continent would know Mark. So, Barnabas took Mark with him back to Cyprus, from whence Barnabas was, and where Mark had participated, and Paul...took a perfect stranger and a prophet named Silas, and set out on the second missionary journey. In the area of Lystra and Derby, where Paul had been stoned on the first journey, he allowed Timothy, the son of friends whom he knew from his first trip, to join them. From there, they set out to evangelize all of the provinces of present-day Turkey, but "the Holy Spirit forbade them." It was not Asia's time, but in a dream at the port of Troas, Paul was invited by a Macedonian man to come to Europe, to Macedonia. The promise of success was palpable. Their first stop was an inland city, Philippi, which, like Paul's hometown Tarsus, was a Roman Colony. This detail is vital to understand what happened. Citizens of any Roman colony were Roman citizens with all rights and privileges of any Roman citizen. And so, Paul and Silas and Timothy arrived in Philippi to announce the Kingdom of God. At first, the only interest Paul could stir up was in a godly merchant woman named Lydia, who was praying outside of town. She was a god-fearing woman from Thyatira, the region they had just left. She was neither man nor Macedonian. Paul eventually did come to the attention of a demon-possessed slave woman, a fortune teller who followed him for days telling everyone to listen to Paul, because he knew the truth of the Most High God. This is the woman out of whom Paul cast the demon that ruined her owners' chance of profit, so they had him whipped and jailed as a common foreigner. We don't know if Silas and Timothy were whipped, yet we know Silas was singing with Paul in the prison. We do not know what happened to Timothy in Philippi. The rest of the story is well-known. The Philippian jailer, indeed a man, converted, the magistrates, also men, relented and set Paul free...and the church of Philippi was born. The church's love and gratitude for Paul and Paul's for them is followed throughout Paul's epistles, and we learn of Epaphroditus, a Philippian who was commissioned to bring financial support to Paul and almost lost his life trying. This story is VITAL to Mark's message today. Can you see why? How did God begin the work in Philippi? How was He working to complete it? How did God cause everything to work together for good in Philippi?
- 2. On Titles and the Hierarchy of the Church**—This letter is written to the elders (*episkopos*—overseers/elders) and deacons (*diakonos*—servants/ministers) of Philippi. These titles became traditional to the church, and hence obfuscated in their sense and their meaning. The church quickly adopted a hierarchy to organize, develop, serve and strengthen the church. The apostles were the first, and the first apostles were chosen by Jesus during his earthly ministry. The word "apostle" is significant, and like "baptism" it

is a clumsy transliteration of the Greek term *apostolos*, which means “the one who was sent.” When Jesus sent them out to heal and raise from the dead, they became apostles at that moment. The title was not a degree of holiness or even of giftedness. It was a factual designation. (Holiness is never found in a title, but in a lifetime of good deeds. Think of the apostle Judas.) In the early church, the apostles went everywhere appointing overseers in the towns where they were led. Soon the apostles were overwhelmed by the scope of the work in Jerusalem, so, as Moses did in the desert, they appointed folks equally gifted to help in the work of the ministry. In Acts 6, these are called “deacons,” another transliteration, but more fortunate. At this point, the apostles, overseers of Jerusalem, delegated the practical working of service to the church to the deacons while their time was spent in prayer and in teaching. Paul became an apostle in Antioch, a church overseen by prophets and teachers, when he and Barnabas and later Silas were sent out by the Holy Spirit. Paul appointed elders wherever he went, and elders would appoint deacons as the need would arise.

3. **On the Faith of Abraham**—Abraham is said to be the father of our faith. What does that mean? It is essential that we take time to examine our relationship to God in terms of Abraham’s. We first meet Abram in Ur of the Chaldees, where he moves with his father north and west, away from the city, to settle in an area around Syria. He then is told to leave all, and travel to a land that God would show him. He does. He then receives promise after promise, and acts on each, obeying where direction is given, and grasping and holding on to where nothing more could be done. There is an error we make concerning faith that leads to placid indolence that does not emulate Abraham’s faith in any way. “Faith in God” is not the goal, where “obedience to God” or “ignorance of God’s Word” is part of that faith. “He who comes to God must FIRST believe that He is, AND *that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.*” That latter portion is more important than the first. The devil believes that He is, and trembles in fear. Romans 4 teaches us what Abraham’s faith entails: “And he received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. So then, he is the father of all who believe but are not circumcised, in order that righteousness might be credited to them.” Abraham took God at His word, to the most intimate and secret degree, and for the glory of His company, did as he was directed.

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**For further study:**

Take a moment each day this week to apply the **SOAP**... (Scripture—Copy the scripture. / Observation—Write what you see. / Application—What is God saying? / Prayer—What is your response?) ...method to some of the scripture we looked at this week:

Monday: Philippians 1:9-11
Tuesday: Galatians 1:11-12
Wednesday: Jeremiah 31:33-34
Thursday: Genesis 17:17-19
Friday: Hebrews 11:17-19
Saturday: Psalm 37:3-6
Sunday: Hebrews 12:1-2