

Be  
Free



DAILY DEVOTIONS

PART : 1



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Week 1

# Philippians 1: 1-11

**MONDAY** – Freedom to serve



**Philippians 1: 1-2** *Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all God's holy people in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Paul wrote the letter to the Philippians whilst he was in jail. As I write this it is Day 12 of the South African Covid-19 lockdown. We can therefore all relate to how Paul must have felt at the time he wrote this letter. His opening sentence proves that he realises who and what he and all Christians are – servants of Christ Jesus.

He knows that despite his circumstances he remains a slave of the Lord and that we all remain His holy people. The church of Christ is filled with saints. We all have high value because we are owned by God the Father and that anyone should recognize us not

only by our words but mainly by our good deeds. Even when we are “locked up.”

We are set apart by God and therefore all equal. We are all to share in the free favour of God, namely the gifts of grace and peace. These gifts bring joy to all of us whatever our circumstances.

- Are you a joyful servant of Christ Jesus?
- Do your friends and family see you as a servant of Jesus?



**Prayer:** Dear Jesus, may I receive your gifts of grace and peace with joy! AMEN.

## TUESDAY – Free to Remember



**Philippians 1: 3-6** *I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*

Paul remembers the fellow Christians of Philippi with joy in his heart. Whilst being alone or only surrounded by your immediate family during the lockdown we long to see or just meet up with either other family members far away, friends or colleagues whom we remember with love. We are thankful to God for the good memories we have of them.

We also remember those who are less fortunate and try to reach out in any way we can during these strange and difficult times. We are almost automatically drawn to pray for either those close to us or strangers in difficult and trying circumstances because of the Holy Spirit guiding us.

Paul reminds us that the Lord will never stop improving and strengthening our love for others whilst we follow him. It is within this gift of grace that we are able to bear good fruit and think of others and not only ourselves. We give thanks to God for the good memories of others and the ability to reach out to others with love.

- What brings you joy when you are alone? Thank God for it.
- Are there perhaps people you can think of who need your love at this time? If so, reach out to them today.



**Prayer:** Father, I thank you for all those people who bring joy to my heart. Lord help me to bring joy to the hearts of others – even those I don't like very much. AMEN

## WEDNESDAY – Free to live a better life



**Philippians 1: 7-8** *It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart and, whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.*

It was not all wine and roses whilst Paul and his friends were ministering in Philippi and establishing the church. People became jealous and scared. They tried to stop Paul and once he was caught and arrested, stripped of his clothes, beaten, jailed in a dungeon with his feet clamped in stocks.

The fact that the church in Philippi was getting stronger and even concerning themselves with Paul's imprisonment and sending him gifts, made him realise that all his hard work was not in vain. They became a loving church. This was the reason why Paul thought of the Philippian church with so much love and joy.

Jesus died for us on the cross. Then He sent us the Holy Spirit to guide and teach us how to cope with any situation this world can

throw at us. With holy intervention the Bible was written to also give us the opportunity to know the Trinity better. So much was sacrificed and fought for to offer us a better life. Let us not take all these sacrifices for granted and live in such a manner as to allow Jesus and all the saints to remember us with love.

While the world as we know it has slowed down and changed, let us make full use of all the gifts of grace to move closer to Jesus.

- Do you utilize the gift of more time to get to study the Bible?
- Do you use the gift of more time to pray for the whole world?



**Prayer:** Show me your ways, O Lord, and teach me your paths. Lead me in your truth and guide me. AMEN

## THURSDAY – Freedom of prayer



**Philippians 1: 9-11** *And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ—to the glory and praise of God..*

Paul realized that the Christians in Philippi have strong faith. They demonstrated love towards each other and had good relations between the church leadership and one another in the church. But he sensed they needed something more.

He therefore prays that they obtain a better understanding of the gospel. That their hearts and minds grow into deeper discernment between right and wrong, vital and trivial and between good and bad. Our new world needs the same prayer.

The rush of life has been slowed down significantly during this pandemic. It allows for us to pray

for exactly the same discernment within our various societies. We have seen people becoming more loving, more caring and reaching out to one another. World leaders are even becoming more tolerant of each other's views and reach out to one another. When last did one read about military conflicts and racial disputes? Let us pray that these acts of love will remain and grow. May we all brush up on our ways of demonstrating the Fruit of the Spirit ([Gal 5:22](#)).

- Do your prayers include a prayer for better discernment today?



**Prayer:** Dear Lord. Give me a deeper understanding of how to be like Jesus and that others can see Him in me. AMEN

## FRIDAY – Count your blessings – free gifts



**Isaiah 41: 10** *So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand*

Throughout our reading of Philippians 1:1-11 this week we are reminded that Paul was full of joy and love for the people there. Paul knows that believers can have profound contentment, serenity and peace no matter what their circumstances. This joy comes from knowing Christ personally and depending on His strength rather than our own. As Christians, we must not rely on what we have or what we experience to give us joy, but on Christ within us.

We read today that God made this promise to Israel and therefore all who belong to him. So likewise we do not need to fear. We should rather count our blessings and not fret.

I am a privileged South African. A single day is too short to count my

blessings received. There are others who do not have so many and probably have to think hard to find 10. Whatever your situation though, you will always be able to think of a few.

Once you have an idea how the Lord is “strengthening, helping and upholding” you, spare a thought for those who have less than you and maybe are “dismayed” and then make a plan to share your excess. Use this time to think how you can be God’s hands and feet to “uphold” others. Allow them to be free! When we give up our self-interest, we can serve with joy, love and kindness.

- How can you help others through your blessings?



**Prayer:** Lord, Thank you for my many blessings. AMEN

Week 2

# Philippians 1: 12-26

**MONDAY** – What's happening?



**Philippians 1: 12-13** *Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ.*

Paul had set out on an entirely different journey and ended up in a Roman prison in order to stand trial. This amazing man asked God to use his chains. And unfortunately for the soldiers guarding him, neither they nor Paul had any where to go, so they just had to listen to Paul speaking of Christ.

The Romans, through Paul's trial had to figure out what to do with this new Christian 'sect'. So Paul was called to be a pioneer. The authorities thought the chains would bind him, but they served to release his spirit.

The world is being held prisoner. We have not seen anything like this before. It is unexpected, it is

frightening, it is devastating. Change is inevitable. Many things will not be the same again. The world stands in union in its grieving.

"God sometimes uses strange tools to help pioneer the Gospel" (Pastor Darrel Koop). He used Moses's rod, Gideon's pitchers, David's sling and Paul's chains. Could He use Covid-19? Could you be a pioneer of the Gospel in these times?

What is happening is never  
the last word when we hold on  
to Christ!



**Prayer:** Lord, we do not know what is happening. We do not understand the breadth or depth of this crises. There is fear and panic, heartache and anger, but we pray that this may not be the last word. Enter this crisis and let Your light flood every corner of the globe. May we each hold a candle up in union to let that light spread. Lord in You, the darkness will be turned to light. AMEN

## TUESDAY – Who’s to blame?



**Philippians 1: 15-18** *It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of good will. The latter do so out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defence of the gospel. The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains. **But what does it matter?** The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached.*

Have you asked who is to blame?

- Is it the Chinese?
- Is it mankind’s greed that has altered a cosmic balance?
- Is it God?

Human nature seems to have the need to assign blame to situations that are beyond our understanding. But does it matter?

We have a choice as to how we respond to this crisis and lockdown: complaining, negative and blaming OR acceptance, prayerfulness, kindness and creativity. Our choice will influence the way we cope in such adverse times.

Paul seemed to welcome his imprisonment. His prayer was for opportunities to spread the gospel – not for freedom. Paul didn’t plan this journey to Rome and prison. And

we didn’t plan this either! None of us in this country, at our New Year celebrations, would have imagined the world would change in just a few short months.

We see the joy with which Paul embraces his circumstances – there is an excitement for the opportunity of preaching! However, Paul is a tough act to follow, but can we at least look for our own opportunities to bless and help others? And for those of us who are in real need, can we humble ourselves and ask for help? Let us stop blaming and be ‘Christ’ to each other.

Let Christ be the  
last word!



**Prayer:** Lord, into Your hands I commit the days of my lockdown. May I seek You more intently, spend more time in prayer and let my spirit rest in you. Help me to find ways of spreading kindness and love and be eager to use this time for You. AMEN

## WEDNESDAY – Who’s in charge?



**Philippians 1: 18b &19:** *Yes, I will continue to rejoice, for I know that through your prayers and God’s provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance.*



**Romans 5: 8** *But God demonstrates His own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.*

God created.

This means He probably created viruses too. It **does not** mean He caused this pandemic. God’s will is ALWAYS to bless us. *“The intentional will of God pours himself out in goodness, such as the true father longs to do for his son.”* (Lesley Weatherhead, The Will of God)

Man still has free will. He is free to interfere in nature; free to move throughout the world and free to pursue selfish and greedy means – or free to love. But despite what may happen, through God’s circumstantial will, He will use this crisis to further His Gospel. He will use this world-wide pandemic for His glory.

Can we not see Him at work in the kindness that is being displayed, in the global unification of the

world, in the dedication of the medical profession world-wide and in the sustaining of brilliant scientific minds?

Jesus rode into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday as a King and Saviour. Thus saying to us: despite what was about to happen to Me, I am still in charge.

Embrace the comfort He offers. He is always with His people to protect, guide and uplift us; and ultimately strengthen us in our suffering.

*Whatever we are experiencing  
it is never the last word – our  
Lord and Saviour has this!*



**Prayer:** Lord, I turn my eyes upon You and look full in Your wonderful face. And the things of this earth and pandemic will grow strangely dim, in the light of Your glory and grace. AMEN

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kDBJNQiu9M>

# THURSDAY – What about me?



**Philippians 1: 19-21** .....for I know that through your prayers and God's provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance. I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

Paul's faith and courage should inspire us to refresh our own faith in Jesus.

There are two possible outcomes of Paul's trial:

- Death at the hands of the Romans, and straight into the arms of Jesus OR
- Freedom and his continued ministry.

And he is happy with either.

**John 16: 33** says *"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."*

And so we are forced to face our mortality in the light of Covid-19. It excludes no one, and none of us knows the impact it may have on our lives. But if we can look to Jesus and begin to say it doesn't matter because I live for Christ –

drawing courage from what Paul experienced – we will find peace and calm.

Jesus's disciples and followers had to endure the dark days of Easter Friday and Saturday with the dreadful feeling that that was the end. But you and I have the assurance that it is not the end – Christ did conquer it all. Through life or death, Christ will conquer this pandemic. Easter Sunday will come.

We are vulnerable but we need not be weak. If we can embrace that, we can provide strength and comfort to others as well.

*In Christ my vulnerabilities  
are not the last word!*



**Prayer:** Lord, I need courage right now. Courage to face the fact that I am also vulnerable to this virus. Courage to know that I can handle whatever it throws at me. Grant to me this strength and calm as I turn to You. AMEN

Jesus will calm this storm too



He's got the whole world in His hands



Acknowledgements: The Wiedmann Bible

## FRIDAY – What next?



**Philippians 1: 25 & 26** *Convinced of this, I know that I will remain, and I will continue with all of you for your progress and joy in the faith, so that through my being with you again your boasting in Christ Jesus will abound on account of me.*

This is not the time for theological pronouncements on how to cope with this pandemic. It is a time to be more Christ-like. It is a time to remind ourselves of Easter Sunday. To look to the cross and see what Jesus did in love.

We, like Paul need to firmly hold on to the fact that God is love. And we need to be that love to others, even in our own pain. For many of us it is not that difficult to isolate ourselves in our homes - our family with us, and let the wave go over our heads. For many it is life-threatening. But we need to stay connected to the world. Be creative and think and 'do' beyond our boundary fence.

This pandemic is not God's judgement on the world. Yes, it is a world of uncertainty and we are all asking the rhetorical questions

- How long? When will it be normal? What is going to happen next? How will it affect me? Yet all we can really do is to say each day: **“God, I can’t, but You can. I think I’ll let You.”**

Paul carried on with his incredible ministry with passion, love and courage. It is okay to be fearful and angry but perhaps we could try and shift our focus to what God **can** do, rather than how awful this is. Let us use this time of lockdown to grow in Christ, dig deep for courage and reach out to others.

Covid-19 has us hostage. But Jesus, through the cross, has the last word. This is not beyond the scope of our Lord. He has guided and upheld His people through all the centuries and through all their crises. He will do the same for us!

*Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today and forever.*

**Hebrews 13: 8**



**Go in strength and peace. AMEN.**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v8YOPi5TnUM>

Week 3

# Philippians 1: 27 - 2: 4

## MONDAY – Reflecting



**Philippians 1: 27** *Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel.*

Paul's challenge to the Philippians, as set out above, is a plea to match our lives to our belief. In verse 27, he gives the Philippian believers one assignment, to live a life worthy of the gospel.

Paul desires for Christians to show unity and reflect positively to a lost world. As a result, we should, especially in this time of uncertainty and difficulty, brought on by the COVID-19 pandemic, conduct our lives like citizens of heaven.

While the world lives in fear, we must look to the peace and power of God and reflect the hope found in His name. Faith can be an antidote to fear, and nothing strengthens a believer's faith like the unity we find in God's Word.

*Are we reflecting to others  
God's love for us in this  
difficult time of uncertainty?*



**Prayer:** Loving heavenly Father, at this time of great need, please pour out Your saving grace on our world and use even these circumstances to bring people into Your kingdom. AMEN

## TUESDAY - Suffering



**Philippians 1: 29** *For it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him.*

Paul clearly teaches that both believing and suffering are parts of faithful Christian living. His readers had likely already faced some persecution, and may have wondered why they had to suffer if they were faithfully living for God. Paul makes it clear that godliness and suffering often go together.

As our collective suffering regarding the COVID-19 virus is likely to get worse before it gets better, we have to remember that God is always with us. And, as we look to the future, we have to trust in the words of Jesus (**John 11:**

**25-26):** *“I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me will live, even though they die; and whoever lives by believing in me will never die”.*

*Amid the present chaos,  
do we remember that,  
despite all that is  
happening, God is with us  
always?*



**Prayer:** Loving God, in this time of COVID-19 we pray that when we aren't sure, You will help us be calm; when information comes from all sides, correct or not, You will help us to discern; when fear makes it hard to breathe, and anxiety seems to be the order of the day, You will help us to remember that You are always with us. AMEN

## WEDNESDAY – Hope



**Philippians 1: 30** *since you are going through the same struggle you saw I had, and now hear that I still have.*

Paul ends the chapter with a note regarding his own suffering. He was arrested in Palestine and barely escaped with his life after the ship carrying him to Rome was shipwrecked. On finally arriving in Rome, he was rejected by many Jews and put under house arrest for two years.

Despite all of these sufferings Paul was still able to preach to many, write letters of encouragement to believers, and be used by God to encourage the spread of the gospel.

At the moment the world is struggling to come to terms with

the COVID-19 virus. Each day we are bombarded by tales of gloom and doom and predictions of how our situation is going to have to get worse, before it gets better.

However, as believers, while the world lives in fear, we as Christians must look to the peace and power of God and be living the hope found in His name.

*Are we asking God to guide us in our handling of these difficult circumstances?*



**Prayer:** O Heavenly Father, let my fear just fall away, as my heart desires to seek You. For You are the rock of my life, my fortress, and my strength, even when I am weak. AMEN

## THURSDAY – Love



**Philippians 2: 2** *then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind.*

In Philippians 2:1-5 Paul connects the blessings of Christianity with the corresponding results that are experienced in a Christian's life, by telling us that we should express comfort, encouragement, love and unity to our fellow believers.

As in all struggles, COVID-19 brings out the good and the bad in humanity, with health workers engaging in great sacrifices and others rushing to help, while others show prejudice against people accused of being the bearers of the disease or those who are vulnerable.

In this time of great difficulty and uncertainty, we as Christians must be seen to be working together to show unity and love by giving comfort and encouragement to others; the same love that Christ demonstrated for us through His death on the cross and His subsequent resurrection.

*How are we presently demonstrating Christian love to all those around us?*



**Prayer:** Lord Jesus, may Your life of love, service and sacrifice be our guide to love and serve all those in need during these difficult and challenging times. AMEN

## FRIDAY – Outward focus



**Philippians 2: 3-4** *Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.*

Here Paul commands his readers to avoid acting in greediness or dishonesty, with his point being to remove our focus from ourselves to others. He is addressing the motives of wrongful ambition and pride, by reminding us that when these drive our decisions, love and unity are not our true goals.

In effect, Paul is teaching that Christians ought to treat the needs of others as more important than their own. By putting the needs of others before our own, we move away from over emphasising our own needs. Those who put others first exhibit Christ-like character through love and humility.

In these times when so many are suffering hardships, we need to be intentional about looking away from ourselves and to the needs of others. In this way we are sure to find happiness in serving God through serving them.

*What are the distractions  
that keep you from  
focusing on the needs of  
others?*



**Prayer:** Dear Lord, I pray that You will help all people with the struggles they are going through in this season. You know exactly what they need in this moment, so please draw near to them and let them feel Your presence. AMEN

