

Studies in Philippians (1:1–11)

First, a quick Outline of Paul's Life Story

The Tarsus Years (5-17?)

5 *If any other man thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: **circumcised** on the eighth day, of the people of **Israel**, of the **tribe** of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews...* (Philippians 3)

*The tribune answered, 'I bought this [Roman] citizenship for a large sum'. Paul said, 'But I am **a citizen by birth**' (Acts 22)*

The Jerusalem Years (17-34)

18 *'I am a Jew, **born in Tarsus** in Cilicia, but brought up in this city, educated at the feet of **Gamaliel** according to the strict manner of the law of our fathers, being zealous for God as all of you are this day'* (Acts 22)

34 *as to the law a **Pharisee**, as to zeal a persecutor of the church, as to **righteousness** under the law blameless* (Philippians 3)

*For you have heard of my former life in Judaism how I persecuted the church of God violently and tried to **destroy** it. I was **advancing in Judaism** beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers* (Galatians 1)

Damascus (34)

34 *And I was advancing in Judaism beyond many of my own age among my people, so extremely zealous was I for the traditions of my fathers.*

But when he who had set me apart before I was born and who called me by his grace, was pleased to reveal his Son to [in] me, in order that I might preach him among the Gentiles,

*I did not immediately consult with anyone; nor did I go up to **Jerusalem** to those who were apostles before me, but I went away into **Arabia**, and returned again to **Damascus**. Then after three years I went up to **Jerusalem**... (Gal. 1).
Jerusalem→Damascus→Arabia→Damascus→Jerusalem*

37 *Then after three years I went up to Jerusalem to visit **Cephas** and remained with him fifteen days. But I saw none of the other apostles except **James** the Lord's brother* (Gal. 1).

The 'Hidden' Years (37-47)

37-47 *Then I went into the regions of **Syria and Cilicia**.*

And I was still unknown in person to the churches of Judea that are in Christ. They only were hearing it said, 'He who used to persecute us is now preaching the faith he once tried to destroy'.

The Mission Years (47-57)¹

47 *On the contrary, when they saw that I had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised, just as Peter had been entrusted with the gospel to the circumcised (for he who worked through Peter for his apostolic ministry to the circumcised worked also through me for mine to the Gentiles.*

*When James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me, they gave **the right hand of fellowship** to Barnabas and me, that we should [go] to the **Gentiles** and they [should go] to the **circumcised**. Only, they asked us to remember the poor, the very thing I was [had been] eager to do. (Gal. 2)*

47/8	Paul and Barnabas: missions in Cyprus and southern Galatia
49	Jerusalem Council
50	Paul, with Silas and Timothy travel via Galatia to Troas In Macedonia (Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea)
50/52	In Achaia (Athens, Corinth)
52	Corinth→Ephesus→Jerusalem→Galatia→Ephesus
53-56	In Asia (Ephesus)
56/7	In Macedonia (Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea) and Achaia (Corinth)
57	Travels to Jerusalem with Collection from gentile churches for Jerusalem
57/59	Imprisoned in Caesarea.
60	Appeals to Caesar. Shipwrecked at Malta.

*For I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me to bring the Gentiles to obedience – by word and deed, by the power of signs and wonders, by the power of the Spirit of God – so that **from Jerusalem and all the way around to Illyricum** I have fulfilled the gospel of Christ...(Rom. 15)*

The Prison Years (57-64)

57-60	Caesarea in Judea	
60-62	Rome	Philippians
63	Back to Aegean	1 Timothy, Titus
63/4	Rome	2 Timothy

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.

¹During this decade as well as founding churches in Macedonia, Achaia and Asia Paul wrote

Galatians	From Antioch in Syria
1 & 2 Thessalonians	From Corinth
1 Corinthians	From Ephesus
Colossians	From Ephesus
Philemon	From Ephesus
Ephesians	From Ephesus
2 Corinthians	From Macedonia (Berea?)
Romans	From Corinth

Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that Day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing (2 Timothy 4:7-8).

Philippians 1:1–11

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.*

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.*

‘Saints’ (‘holy ones’) — Paul’s preferred way of referring to believers.

‘Grace’ is God’s absolute mercy which when received issues in profound ‘peace’.

Thanksgiving usually *precedes* requests to God, creating deep engagement.

‘Partnership’ (*koinōnia*) = ‘a participation in’, ‘a sharing in’ a venture.

Their ‘fellowship’ was to send *money* and a *person* to Paul to support his ministry.

Paul worked as tentmaker (by night) so as to avoid being paid by the new churches:

- To avoid the ill-repute of travelling religious hucksters.²
- To ‘model’ the work ethic (as e.g., from Proverbs 6:6-11; 19:24).
- To teach ‘grace’ – the gospel is free of charge to them.

Yet, once a congregation is established it is to support its teacher (Galatians 6:6).

Now, they have sent money and a person to Rome in ‘fellowship’ with him (2:25-30).

A long and precarious journey: Philippi–Dyrrachium-by ship-Brundisium–Rome

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.*

God *first* works within us before we respond to him; ‘prevenient grace’³.

Then he ‘perseveres’ us through to ‘the day of the Lord Jesus’.

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 [‘fellow-shippers’] with me of grace,
both in my imprisonment
and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.*

They are sharing [‘fellowshipping’] in the grace (!) of his imprisonment,
where he is able to engage in – his *apologia* (legal defence⁴) of the gospel

²‘We are not like so many, who peddle the word of God...’ (2 Corinthians 2:17).

³Doctrine of ‘Prevenient Grace’³ attributed to Augustine (*praevenio* – ‘I go before’), as in Rom. 2:4 – ‘the goodness of God leads you to repentance’; Acts 16:14 – ‘the Lord opened Lydia’s heart to give heed to what was said by Paul’.

⁴Via Burrus (Praetorian Prefect) and/or Seneca (Nero’s chief advisor)? As well as murdering numerous political enemies, including Agrippina his mother, and others gratuitously, Nero also murdered his half-brother Britannicus and his half-sister Octavia (who was also his wife), and literally kicked to death his pregnant wife Poppaea. Nero forced Seneca to commit suicide. After the fire of Rome in 64 Nero ordered the crucifixion and immolation of ‘large numbers’ of Christians.

– his *bebaiōsis* (creation of a foundation) for the gospel

- 8 *For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ.*
 9 *And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more,
 with knowledge and all discernment,*
 10 *so that you may approve what is excellent,*
and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ,
 11 *filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ,
 to the glory and praise of God.*

We express Christ's love for us through our love for one another.
 Paul is praying for abounding and ever-increasing love for one another.
 However, it is to be an informed, discerning love — not blind sentiment.
 A love that is expressed in the approval of what is morally excellent.
 And which is fruitful and ever-increasing until the 'day of Christ'.

We can neatly summarize Paul's prayer:

v. 9	Its content:	their love to overflow with knowledge and discernment
v. 10a	Its outcome:	their maturity to approve what is excellent
v. 10b	Its consequence:	they will be pure and blameless
v. 11a		they will be filled with fruits of righteousness
v. 11b	Its ultimate purpose:	the glory and praise of God

Paul did not write out of a good situation for him.
 He was in prison awaiting trial and possible death

We pray that his words, as inspired by the Holy Spirit, will bring us encouragement in our difficult and trying times