

# PHILIPPIANS Bible Reading Schedule

## 1 Week

If you are like me, reading Philippians is similar to a leisurely ride through rolling hills and pleasant scenery. But don't miss the landmarks on the journey. Some of the most precious promises of God are found in this short letter. I could reference a dozen of them right here but I will wait until we read them. Like Alister McGrath wrote, "One of the most positive and delightful of Paul's letters, setting out the sheer joy of the gospel." May the Lord lift up your spirit as you read this marvelous letter.

### WEEK 1

#### DAY 1 – Philippians 1

One of the best promises in the letter is recorded in the first full paragraph: "And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ returns." (Verse 6) If God starts something, he will finish it. He saved us and he promises to keep it up. His goal is clearly presented in Romans 8:29, "For God knew his people in advance (predestined), and he chose them to become (conformed to the image) like his Son so that his Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters." God can be trusted to continue his work of changing people into the likeness of his Son. Secondly, Paul is honest about his longing for heaven which would be so much better than life on earth. Verses 21 – 24 share these inspiring words about being with Christ forever compared to living out one's purpose on earth. His choice is to go to heaven now, but God's choice for Paul was to complete his purpose on earth. So, he says, "But for your sakes, it is better that I continue to live." I am reminded of something David wrote. He announced that all our days are ordained by God and will be numbered according to his sovereign plan. Do you remember Psalm 139:16? "You saw me before I was born. Every day of my life was recorded in your book. Every moment was laid out before a single day had passed." I will go to heaven on the day the Lord has chosen for me. Not one day before or after he has planned. At the close of his greeting, Paul shares a benediction with the Philippians: "May you always be filled with the fruit of your salvation—the righteous character produced in your life by Jesus Christ—for this will bring much glory and praise to God." I am drawn to this benediction in verse 11 because they are words pointing to spiritual blessings that accompany those who live for Christ. May you receive that blessing today. Any reflective thoughts from this first chapter?

#### DAY 2 – Philippians 2

In a letter, you would expect some personal topics like the well-being of Timothy and Epaphroditus. Paul makes sure the church in Philippi is up to date on these two men who are especially important to him and will be with them in the near future. But my eyes are riveted on the first 11 verses and especially this amazing hymn. I call it a hymn because other scholars have done so. In fact, it is often referred to as the

“Christ Hymn.” This hymn says so much about Jesus. He is truly elevated in this poetic hymn. The hymn affirms his preexistence and divine nature. The Early Church never thought of Jesus as just another human prophet. “Though he was God,” are words in the first stanza of the hymn. He has been with the Father since the very beginning, even before time itself. He is and always will be the “exalted One.” But the hymn makes a sharp turn as it announces his humble position and uses the word “empty,” in most translations. “He gave up his divine privileges.” (V7) Literally, “he emptied himself.” It is interesting to realize that the characteristic of humility in that day was not thought of in a positive way before Christ. A show of humility was associated with defeat and weakness. But Christ brought out this quality so that we would all do well to embrace humility. AMEN! Humility began with his birth. Where he was born; how he was born; with whom he was born... all of these unexpected aspects for the Son of God give a clear picture of humility. This all leads to the humiliating conclusion of the cross as he was executed as a criminal. But this answers the “why” question. He died a sacrificial death for the sins of mankind so God might offer forgiveness and reconciliation to sinful people destined for life apart from God forever. The hymn does not specifically say he rose from the dead but the idea of being “elevated to the place of highest honor” affirms such a victory. This all leads to the eternal triumph of God through his Son, Jesus Christ. One day, all created beings will bow before him and acknowledge that he is Lord of the entire universe, deserving of worship that God alone is worthy to receive (Rev. 5:8-14) I can imagine the believers in the Early Church singing this hymn of adoration to Jesus. I am awestruck by these words and shout an “Amen” as I recite them again in prayer and worship. What does this hymn say to you; mean to you?

### DAY 3 – Philippians 3

I am sure my most quoted verse in this chapter is 13. “Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on...” This is often a theme verse when we begin a new year. We can’t change the past so let’s look forward, with the lessons we have learned from the past, helping us make better choices in the future. It is a very practical perspective. I also appreciate Paul’s personal words about how he once lived in opposition to Christ. He did look back with honesty but also with gratitude for God’s grace to show him Christ. He considered his past life as worthless compared to the “infinite value of knowing Christ.” (V8) Verses 5 & 6 remind us about Paul’s religious life and how devoted he was to something that was not life-giving. He tells us that he was zealous but his zeal was misguided and motivated by the flesh. In other words, he was self-reliant based on human effort (the flesh) compared to relying on Christ and being empowered by the Spirit. This theme is very important to Paul and tells us why he wanted to know Christ and the power of his resurrection. God’s enabling was central to Paul’s life in the Spirit. He was not opposed to the effort even as he already wrote in 2:12-13, “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.” The combination of God working and you working are part and parcel of the partnership we have with the Lord. That’s why we press on because knowing Christ and living for him is not passive. Our lives are meant to be fully engaged and spiritually zealous. Paul’s conversion was transformational as he once was zeal for religion, now he is zealous for Christ. Paul feels so positive about how God has spoken to him and directed his life he says, “Pattern your lives after mine...” (V17) How do you respond to Paul’s example outlined in this chapter?

## DAY 4 – Philippians 4

I think this chapter has as many highlighted verses as any chapter with only 23 verses in it. The theme of this letter is summarized in verses 4 & 5. One of the most powerful promises about prayer is found in verses 6 & 7. Whole books have been written on verse 8, (I'm not kidding.) The amazing possibilities of being content unfold in verses 11 & 12. So many people have been comforted and empowered by verse 13. The beauty of generosity overflows in verse 18 and we can be confident God will meet all of our needs according to his riches in Christ Jesus (V19)! Is that enough to excite your walk with Christ? If you must choose just one of these marvelous truths, which one would it be and why? I think this chapter speaks for itself so I leave time for you to take in the timeless message found in these verses. How might God be speaking to you? It has been a rich four days in Philippians.