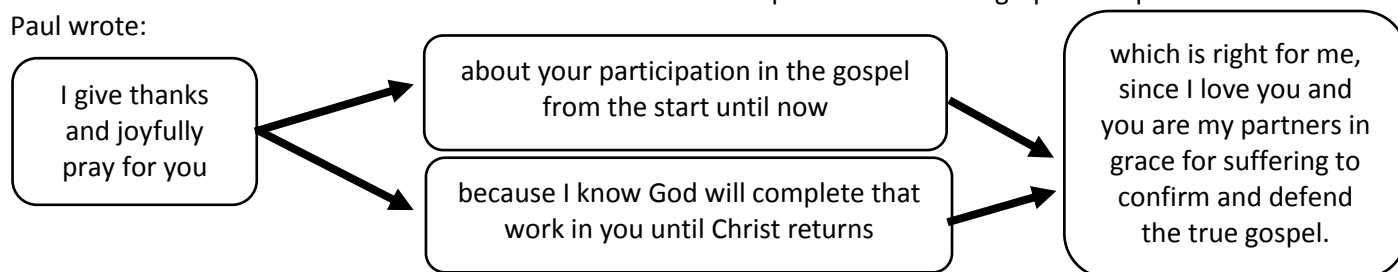


## Day 1

**Learn:** Prayerfully read Philippians 1.1-8. In Greek, Paul wrote 1.3-7 as one long and complicated sentence. It can be hard to understand that way, so English Bibles break it into smaller sentences. Unfortunately, doing that sometimes obscures the connections between the ideas Paul expressed. Here is a graphical representation of what Paul wrote:



Paul says he is thankful and joyfully praying for them on the basis of their participation [or partnership, depending on your translation; 1.5] in the gospel. Then he refers to them as his partners in grace for defending and confirming the gospel. Just like today, there were attacks on the true gospel. In this case, people were denying that salvation and righteousness are gifts of grace, instead arguing that you have to earn them by obedience. The Philippians – whatever doubts they might have at this point – in the past partnered with Paul by supporting him sacrificially, even while he was in prison. They had prayed for him [1.19], provided financial support [4.10-18], and sent one of their own spiritual leaders in the church to help Paul [2.25-30]. They also partnered with Paul by joining in the gospel mission, themselves: they suffered for their faith in the face of opposition [1.27-30], and lived as God’s witnesses in their society [2.15-16], as they defended and confirmed the true gospel [1.7].

**Reflect:** One goal Paul surely had when he wrote this part of the letter was to encourage the Philippians that they had rightly aligned themselves with him through their support of his mission and their own evangelistic efforts. He was thankful for their participation. Would Paul express thankfulness about your participation? How involved are you in supporting the world-wide mission? Prayerfully consider providing more prayer, money, and encouragement to missionaries, church planters, or seminary students. Are you willing to go on a church short-term missions trip, or to help those who do go, with help organizing the trip, prayer, money, and encouragement?

## Day 2

**Learn:** Prayerfully read Philippians 1.3-5. In 1.5, “participation” [or “partnership”] translates the Greek word *κοινωνία* [koy-no-NEE-uh], which usually is translated as “fellowship.” As we saw yesterday, the thrust of Paul’s thought was that the Philippians had fellowship with him in that they partnered with him in the gospel mission. Another way the Philippians had fellowship in the gospel with Paul was that they believed in the gospel themselves and thus were in the true church with Paul. This fellowship called the church is about more than just hanging out with friends. There is purpose to it. In other letters, even the way Paul used the word *κοινωνία* showed he meant active participation in something for some purpose. Within the church, it certainly is important to have fellowship, but even those relationships and that social time have purpose: we gather to worship God together; to encourage each other and provide accountability; to serve one another and shine God’s light out into our communities; and to help each other become spiritually healthy and growing. Participation in the gospel for their own salvation and growth naturally led the Philippians to participation in the gospel mission for the salvation and growth of others. Their sacrificial involvement as Paul’s partners in grace was strong evidence that their salvation was real.

**Reflect:** Just like the Philippians, we can choose to participate in the church that follows apostolic teaching in the Bible or we can choose to participate in a church that largely ignores or has abandoned and replaced that teaching with something else. Or we can choose not to participate, to affiliate ourselves with a church but not really participate in it. You should see yourself progress in time in the fellowship of the church, from steady worshipper to committed member to committed small group participant; and you should see yourself progress in time as a spiritual participant in the ministry, from steady worship attendance to serving on a ministry team to teaching to leading teams. What is your next step of engagement? What is holding you back? Pray and discuss!

### **Day 3**

**Learn:** Prayerfully read Philippians 1.3-7. Paul says he is thankful and joyfully praying for them because he knows that God, who began a good work in them, will perfect it [or complete it, depending on your translation] until the end, when Christ returns [1.6]. The context of this passage and of the letter as a whole makes clear that this “good work” is their participation in the gospel mission, their defense and confirmation of the true gospel. Paul not only is thankful for their previous partnership, he is joyfully confident that they will continue to partner with him. Some people, taking 1.6 out of context, think the “good work” is about salvation or spiritual growth; some scholars might say it is about church unity. These are not the right answers for what the “good work” is, but all these concepts are related. Paul believed the Philippians were truly saved by the gospel of Christ [a work God began and would complete], and thus they would progress in their spiritual growth toward Christ-likeness [a work God began and would complete], and thus they would continue to have fellowship/participation in the true church which was aligned with Paul [a work God began and would complete], and thus they would continue to pursue the mission of spreading the gospel of Christ [a work God began and God would complete].

**Reflect:** This should be true for us, but there often is a fading as we progress through the parts, leading to a breakdown in the last part, which is the actual focus of what Paul was saying. We come to saving faith, which is assured to persevere; we cannot screw that up! We join a good church, but then we often do not fully engage, treating it on the same level [or lower] as our other social activities. We grow spiritually, but because of our faulty engagement in the church, we experience slow growth, inconsistency, even stagnation; and that leads to further disengagement in the church. And the upshot is we often fail to pursue the gospel mission, never developing a sense of priority and urgency about it, never integrating it into our way of life. However much that describes you, it is *not* the Christian way described by God in the Bible! Assess your attitude and efforts toward evangelistic outreach: is this a life priority for you [does your lifestyle reflect that]? how often do you share any part of the gospel with someone? how often do you invite someone to church? how often do you invest time in building relationships with unchurched people? have you developed skills and a comfort level for talking about spiritual things with non-believers? do you partner with other believers to pray for unbelievers you know and to build relationships with them together? do you participate in your church’s evangelistic events? Pray about your next steps to grow in this area.

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### **Day 4**

**Learn:** Prayerfully read Philippians 4.6-8; do you see Paul apply this himself in 1.1-8? We know that while Paul was in prison in Rome, some in the Philippian church were succumbing to the combination of suffering from persecution and deception from cultists with a false gospel, such that they were becoming doubtful about Paul and his gospel. Yet Paul, rather than himself succumbing to anxiety, was able to pray with joy and thanksgiving in his heart. How? He stayed focused on his confidence in Christ and God the Father, trusting in their provision and peace and grace; he stayed prayerful, allowing his knowledge of God and Christ to fill his mind, pushing out worry and anxiety; he reminded himself of all that God had done and could do, of how much God had blessed them all for which he could be thankful; he trusted that God had a plan and would carry it out, that God would fulfill his promises, and so he trusted that God would complete the work he had begun with the Philippians; and relationally he focused on how much he loved the Philippians, allowing that love and his confidence in God’s work to push out any hurtful emotions he might have felt.

**Reflect:** Stress, anxiety, worry, fear, frustration, anger, depression . . . these things plague even true believers, but they should not. They succeed in tearing us apart and tearing us down because we do not win the battle for our minds. To do this, we have to learn from Paul’s example and teaching in this letter. Read through the above paragraph again, and circle or highlight the things Paul did which you need to do better. Start practicing now! Pray for help with this, and make a note that you can read every morning for a month to help you reset your thinking patterns. Talk with others about this too, to share ideas, encouragement, and accountability.

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### **Day 5**

**Learn & Reflect:** Prayerfully read Philippians 1.1-8. What can you learn from the way Paul wrote that would help you minister to others? Can you see anything about his love, his attitude toward them, his actions for them, what he was hoping to accomplish with what he wrote and how he wrote it?