

A Distant Presence

Text: [Philippians 1:27](#)

Prayer

Tonight, an overview of Philippians

[Philippians 1:27](#)—Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel,

#1 Background

A. “You Know”

1. He established the church in Philippi around A.D. 50, near the start of his Second Missionary Journey.
2. [Acts 16:11-12](#)—Therefore, sailing from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrakia, and the next day came to Neapolis, and from there to Philippi, which is the foremost city of that part of Macedonia, a colony. And we were staying in that city “for some days”.
3. [Acts 16:13-15](#)—1st contact: Lydia,
4. He names them by name—Euodia, Syntyche, Clement, Epaphroditus, who may have become a preacher.
5. [Acts 16:16ff](#)—Thrown in jail, converts the jailer and told to leave town

B. “Perhaps you didn’t know”

1. From Philippi, Paul went to Thessalonica, then to Corinth.
2. They didn’t forget him.
3. Twice Paul sent Timothy to them for their encouragement.
4. 6-7 years later, at the end of the 3rd Missionary Journey, he visited.
5. [Philippians 2:25-30](#)—Over ten years had passed when he met up with Ephaphroditus, who brought him a couple gifts, got sick and Paul nursed him back to health, put a letter in his hand and sent him home.
6. **Paul had been absent more than he had been present.**

#2 Paul Missed Philippi

A. They were Special to him.

1. [1:5](#)—His Partners in the gospel
2. [1:7](#)—“I have you in my heart.”
3. [4:1](#)—3x “Beloved” (NIV--“Dear Friends”)
4. [4:1](#)—His Joy & Crown & he longed for them.

B. He Missed them.

1. In prison, lonely, rejected, tired, one of them comes to see him.
2. [1:21-26](#) He indicated he may never see them again, but hoped to.
3. He had to be content, for the time being, with their distant presence.

#3 They Missed Him.

A. Opponents troubling the church

1. [3:1-3](#)—Jewish Christians, circumcision, the Law
2. Not physical, but mental, spiritual discouragement.

B. Worse News:

1. [2:14](#)—People in the church grumbling and complaining.
2. [4:2-4](#)—An internal division.
3. [4:6](#)—Anxiety is running high and they are taking it out on each other.
4. They want Paul to come home. He’s been gone too long.

#4 Exhortation

A. Paul can’t be there, but...

1. He’ll try to come soon, but not now.
2. He’ll send Timothy, instead.
3. If he can get out of prison, he’ll come.
4. If he survives the trial, he’ll come
5. He is present at a distance.

B. Is that enough? That’s why He WRITES this letter.

1. To tell them [1:27](#)—“contend for the faith of the gospel.”
2. To tell them to “stand firm as ONE man.”
3. To tell them “no matter what, live worthy of the gospel.”

C. Why did God PRESERVE this letter?

1. WE have enough external pressure to kill a Philippian.
2. WE face temptations and dangers they could not imagine.
3. We are not flogged, jailed or burned on a stick either.
4. Yet, we suffer and struggle to live faithfully in this antagonistic world.
5. Like them, we are familiar with grumbling and complaining.
6. Like them, we share anxiety and too often take it out on each other.
7. Like them, too often it’s every Christian for himself!
8. Like them, we let our critics get to us because we fail to stand together.

D. We are Missing our Lord

1. We want to see him, we need him present in our lives
2. We need Him to sort through some things we can’t handle.
3. Jesus has been gone a long time. We need him back.
4. But he can’t come right now, so we live with his distant presence and we read his letters, until we see him again.

And, “let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your affairs, that you stand fast in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel,