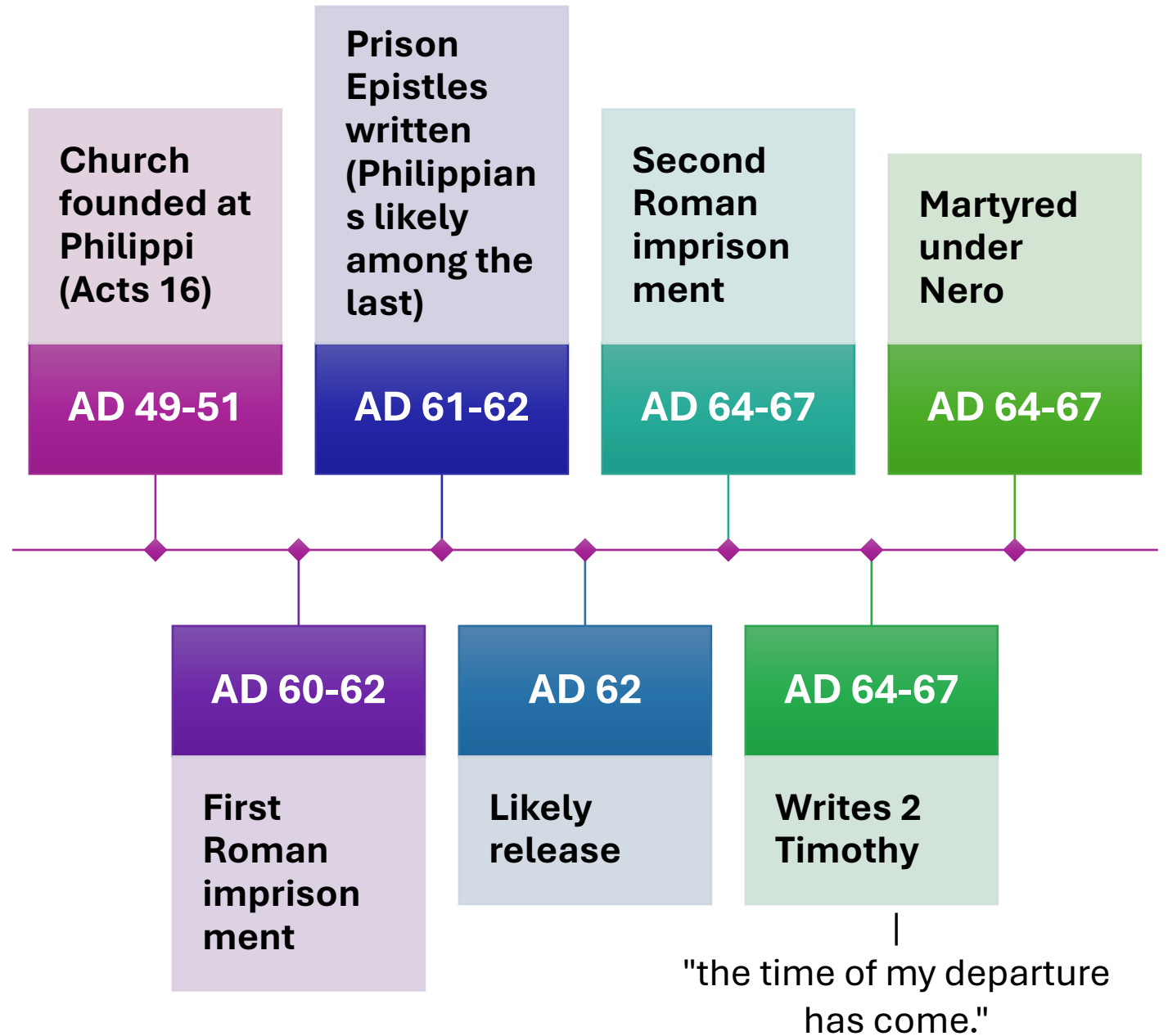


Introduction to Philippians

Frank Napoleon, Jr.

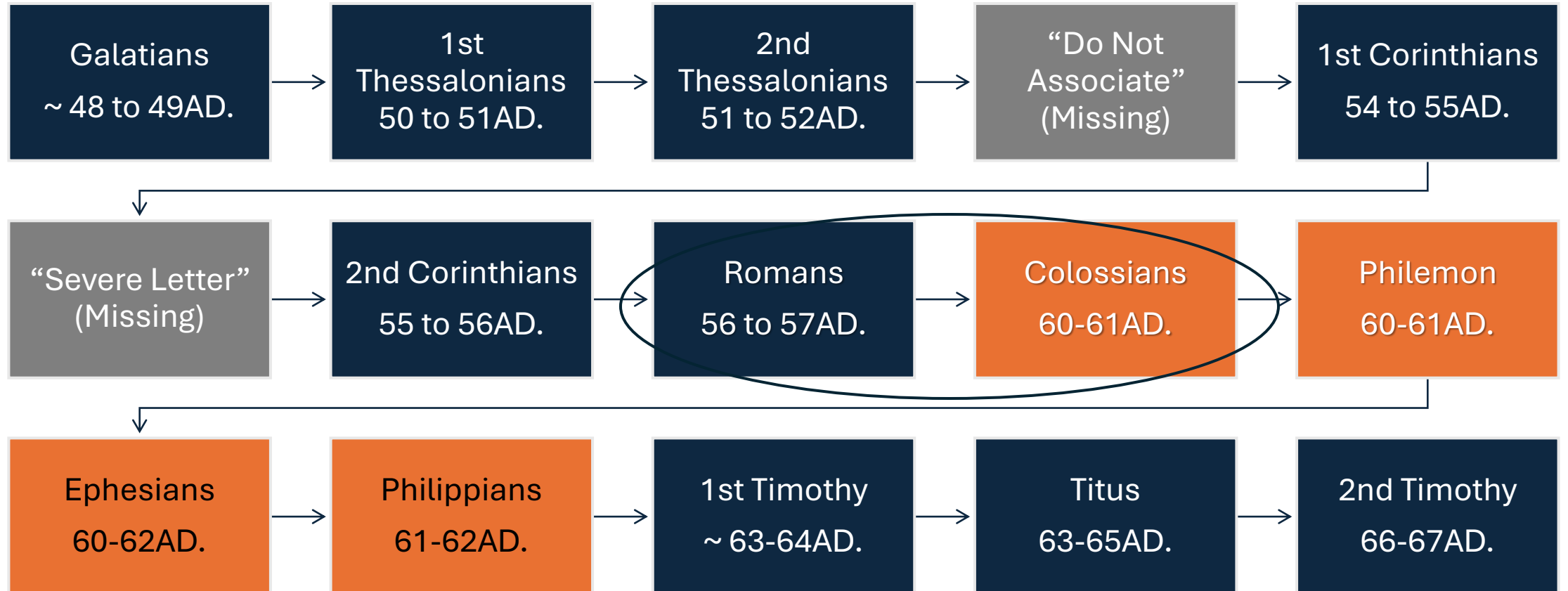


Paul's Last Years



Paul's Letters Timeline

48% of the NT (by book count)
23% (by word count - Greek)



Prison Letters

Churches not started by Paul

Themes of Paul's Letters

- **Galatians** — *You've distorted the gospel.*
- **1–2 Thessalonians** — *You're confused about Christ's return.*
- **1–2 Corinthians** — *Your church has serious problems.*
- **Romans** — *Let me explain the gospel systematically.*
- **Colossians** — *Your understanding of Christ is being challenged.*
- **Philemon** — *Here's what the gospel looks like in a personal relationship.*
- **Ephesians** — *Here's who you are in Christ and how the church should live.*
- **Philippians** — *You're doing well—keep going.*
- **1 Timothy & Titus** — *Here's how you organize and protect the church.*
- **2 Timothy** — *Remain faithful; my race is nearly finished.*

Philippi Facts

- A Roman colony (in modern Greece) who enjoyed the same privileges as Roman citizens.
- 1st Church Paul started on his second journey. (Acts 16:11-40)
- Founded without a synagogue, Paul preached to mostly gentiles and women.
- Converts included Lydia, the Philippian jailer (and his household), and people from both Jewish and Gentile backgrounds.



Letter to the Philippians

- Written by Paul around 61 AD while under house arrest in Rome (1st imprisonment)
- One of the four “prison epistles” (Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon, and Philippians)
- Known as the “joy” letter (“joy” 16 times) - Joy in: Suffering, Serving, Believing, Giving
- Unlike Galatians or Corinthians, Philippians contains no major doctrinal correction.
- Paul expresses gratitude, encourages perseverance, addresses a minor disagreement between two women (4:2–3), and urges humility and unity in Christ.



Memorable Excerpts by Chapter

1:21 – “**For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.**”



2:9-11 – “Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him **the name that is above every name**, that at the name of Jesus **every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.**”



3:20 – “**But our citizenship is in heaven.** And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, **will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body.**”



4:6-7 – “**Do not be anxious about anything**, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. **And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.**”

Chapter One

- Written from prison to thank the Philippian believers, encourage perseverance, and show that Christ is exalted whether through life or death.
- Encourages the Philippian believers to remain joyful, united, and faithful despite hardship.
- His own imprisonment demonstrates that God often advances the gospel through circumstances that appear to hinder it.
- The chapter climaxes with one of Paul's greatest statements of Christian purpose: "For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain."



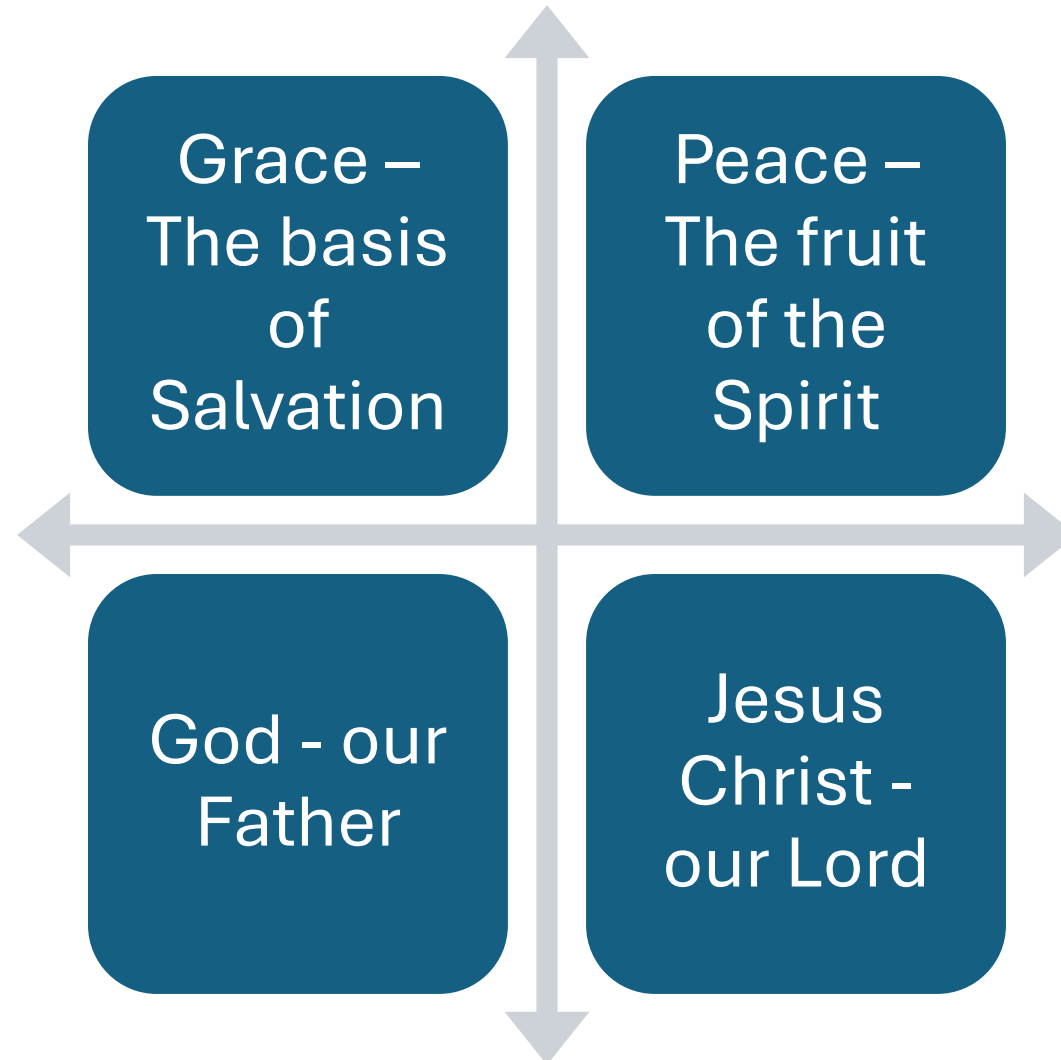
Verses 1:1–2 Greeting

Paul identifies himself and Timothy (serving together for 10+ years) as slave/servants ([douloi](#)) rather than emphasizing his apostleship.

The letter is addressed to believers, elders, and deacons, showing an organized church existed in Philippi.

Grace and peace remain Paul's customary Christian greeting. The same phrase, in the same order, can be seen in Galatians 1:3, Ephesians 1:2, 1 Corinthians 1:3, 2 Corinthians 1:2, and Romans 1:7.

Paul's Christian Greeting (1:2)



Verses 1:3–8 Thanksgiving for Their Partnership

Paul says he continually thanks God for the Philippians' faithful partnership in the gospel.

Their support included prayer, encouragement, and financial gifts.

Paul expresses confidence that “he who began a good work in you...” will carry it on to completion.

Partnership, Greek: *Koinōnia*, implies active participation in gospel ministry, not merely friendship.

Verses 1:9–11

Paul's Heartfelt Prayer

That their love
will continue
to grow.

Christian love
should be
guided by
knowledge and
discernment.

The goal is
sincere,
blameless
living until
Christ returns.

Be filled with
righteousness,
a spiritual
fruit, which
brings glory to
God.

Verses 1:12–18

The Gospel Advances Through his Imprisonment

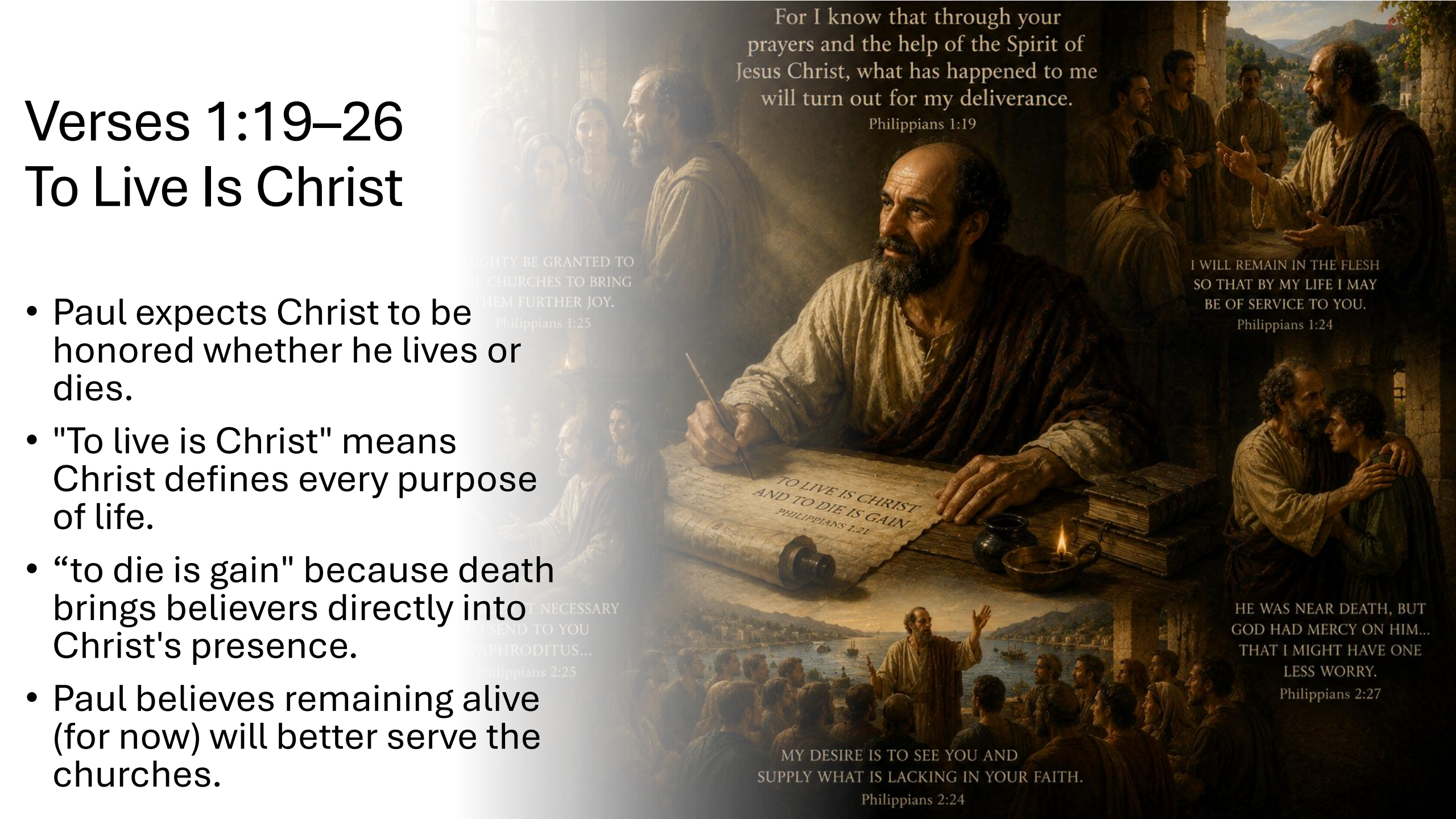
- Paul's imprisonment expanded opportunities for evangelism.
- Members of the Praetorian Guard have learned why Paul is imprisoned.
- Other believers have become more courageous in proclaiming Christ.
- Paul rejoices whenever Christ is proclaimed, even when some preach from selfish motives.



Verses 1:19–26

To Live Is Christ

- Paul expects Christ to be honored whether he lives or dies.
- "To live is Christ" means Christ defines every purpose of life.
- "to die is gain" because death brings believers directly into Christ's presence.
- Paul believes remaining alive (for now) will better serve the churches.



For I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance.

Philippians 1:19

...MIGHTY BE GRANTED TO THE CHURCHES TO BRING THEM FURTHER JOY.

Philippians 1:25

I WILL REMAIN IN THE FLESH SO THAT BY MY LIFE I MAY BE OF SERVICE TO YOU.

Philippians 1:24

TO LIVE IS CHRIST
AND TO DIE IS GAIN
PHILIPPIANS 1:21

...IT NECESSARY TO SEND TO YOU PAPHRODITUS...

Philippians 2:25

HE WAS NEAR DEATH, BUT GOD HAD MERCY ON HIM... THAT I MIGHT HAVE ONE LESS WORRY.

Philippians 2:27

MY DESIRE IS TO SEE YOU AND SUPPLY WHAT IS LACKING IN YOUR FAITH.

Philippians 2:24



Verses 1:27–30

Live Worthy of the Gospel

- "Conduct yourselves worthy" literally means live as upstanding citizens, an image especially meaningful in proud Roman Philippi.
- Believers are to stand united against opposition.
- Fearlessness in suffering becomes a testimony to unbelievers.
- Paul reminds them that suffering for Christ is part of the Christian calling.

Chapter Two

- Philippians 2 moves from discussing Christ's humility to the believer's humility.
- Paul calls the church to unity by putting others ahead of themselves, then points to Christ's incarnation, obedience, death, and exaltation as the supreme model for living.
- He follows Christ's example with two practical examples—Timothy and Epaphroditus—showing what Christlike service looks like in real people.



Verses 2:1–4

The Call to Humility and Unity

Paul appeals to their shared life in Christ as the basis for unity.

They are to put aside selfish ambition and consider others more important than themselves.

Christian unity requires looking beyond personal interests to the interests of others.

Verses 2:5–11

Christ's Humility and Exaltation

- Paul points to Christ Jesus as the supreme example of humility. Christ willingly took the position of a servant and became human.
- His obedience extended to death, even death on a cross.
- God therefore highly exalted Him, establishing Christ's universal lordship.
- "Form of God" - The word *morphē* concerns the essential presenting Christ as truly sharing the divine status while voluntarily taking the status of a servant.
- "Emptied himself" - *ekenōsen* does not mean Christ ceased being divine but taking the form of a servant and humbling Himself.



2:12–18 — “Work Out” Your Salvation

- Paul urges the Philippians to continue obeying even when he is absent.
- Work out your salvation, *katergazomai*, the idea is to bring something to its intended result - living out the implications of the salvation God has already given, not earning salvation.
- God is actively working in believers both to desire and to accomplish His purposes.
- Christians are to live without grumbling or arguing, shining as lights in a dark world.

Verses 2:19–24

Timothy: A Proven Servant

- Paul hopes to send Timothy to Philippi to learn how the church is doing.
- Timothy genuinely cares about the Philippians rather than pursuing his own interests.
- Paul says that Timothy has been proven through faithful service.
- Timothy's character makes him an unusually trusted representative of Paul.



Verses 2:25–30

Epaphroditus: Faithful at Great Cost

- Epaphroditus was sent by the Philippians to assist Paul and serve alongside him.
- He became seriously ill and nearly died.
- Rather than focusing on himself, he was distressed that the Philippians had heard he was sick.
- Paul sends him home and describes Epaphroditus as his "brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier"—three increasingly vivid descriptions of partnership in the gospel.



Chapter Three

- Philippians 3 warns against putting confidence in religious credentials, personal achievement, or earthly identity.
- Paul considers everything secondary to knowing Christ and receiving righteousness through faith.
- He uses the picture of a runner to describe the Christian life: forget what lies behind, press forward, and pursue the goal in Christ.
- The chapter ends by contrasting those whose minds are fixed on earthly things with believers whose citizenship is in heaven.



Verses 3:1–3

Rejoice in Christ, Not Religious Credentials

- Paul begins by calling the Philippians to rejoice in the Lord, then warns them about teachers who insist on circumcision and Jewish law.
- He calls these teachers "dogs," "evil workers," and the "mutilation", deliberately strong language.
- True believers are defined not by physical circumcision but by worshiping God in the Spirit and boasting in Christ.
- Paul establishes the central contrast: confidence in Christ versus confidence in human religious achievement.



Verses 3:4–11

Paul's Religious Credentials Are Loss

- Paul lists credentials that would have made him exceptionally impressive within Judaism, yet he now considers those achievements “dung” compared with knowing Christ.
- Paul wants righteousness that comes through faith in Christ, rather than righteousness based on keeping the law.
- His goal is to know Christ—including the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings.



Verses 3:12–16

Pressing Toward the Goal

- Paul makes clear that he has not already arrived spiritually; he continues pursuing Christ.
- He deliberately refuses to live in the past, whether relying on previous accomplishments or dwelling on previous failures.
- He uses the image of a runner pressing* toward the finish line. We should maintain this same forward-looking attitude.
- *- "I press on" — *diōkō*, the word can mean to pursue, chase, or press toward something.



Verses 3:17–21

Two Ways of Living

- Paul tells the Philippians to imitate faithful believers and to observe those who live according to the pattern he has taught.
- Some professing Christian's focus is earthly and self-centered, while believers' citizenship is in heaven.
- Christ will ultimately transform believers' bodies and bring everything under His authority.
- "Our citizenship is in heaven" — *politeuma*, this would have had special meaning in Philippi, a Roman colony where citizenship was a significant part of civic identity.



Session Introduction

Memorable Excerpts by Chapter

1:21 – “**For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.**”



2:9-11 – “Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him **the name that is above every name**, that at the name of Jesus **every knee should bow**, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”



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4:6-7 – “**Do not be anxious about anything**
....**And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding**
...**I can do all things...**”

Chapter Four



Philippians 4 brings Paul's themes of unity, joy, prayer, contentment, and generosity together.



He calls the church to stand firm, resolve disagreements, replace anxiety with prayer, and cultivate disciplined thought.



Paul's famous statement, "I can do all things through Christ," is fundamentally about Christ enabling faithful contentment in both abundance and hardship.



The chapter closes by showing that the Philippians' generosity was not merely financial support—it was gospel partnership expressed through sacrifice.

Verses 4:1–3

Stand Firm and Pursue Unity

Paul expresses love, joy, and urges the Philippians to stand firm in the Lord.

He addresses a disagreement between Euodia (e yo dee ah) and Syntyche (sin tic key). These women had worked alongside Paul, indicating that the conflict was not between an unbeliever and a believer.

Paul asks the church to help restore unity between them.

The Book of Life is referenced (6x in Revelation) and implied in Luke 10:20)

Women evidently held important roles in the Philippian church.

Important roles filled by Women

Euodia and Syntyche — Philippi: Paul says they "**labored side by side**" with him in the gospel (Philippians 4:2–3), indicating substantial involvement in the church's missionary work.

Lydia — Philippi: First recorded convert in Philippi; she opened her home to Paul and his companions, and her household became an important part of the new church (Acts 16:14–15, 40).

Priscilla — Corinth/Ephesus/Rome: Along with Aquila, she **helped instruct Apollos**, an influential preacher, giving him a more accurate understanding of the faith (Acts 18:24–26). Paul also calls her and Aquila his **fellow workers** (Romans 16:3).

Phoebe — Cenchreae: Paul calls her a **diakonos** of the church at Cenchreae and a **prostatis** (often translated "patron," "benefactor," or "helper") of many, including Paul himself (Romans 16:1–2). She may also have been the person who carried Paul's letter to Rome.

Junia — Rome: Paul describes Junia as "**well known among the apostles**" (Romans 16:7). Whether this means she was herself an apostle or highly regarded by the apostles is one of the major interpretive questions surrounding women in early Christianity.

Verses 4:4–9

Rejoicing, Prayer, and Peace

- Paul repeatedly commands the believers to rejoice in the Lord, regardless of circumstances.
- Instead of anxiety, believers are instructed to **bring everything to God through prayer, supplication, and thanksgiving.**
- God's peace “guards the hearts and minds” of those who trust Him.
- "The peace of God...will guard" — *phroureōsei*, the verb is a military term meaning to guard or keep watch over something, imagery particularly vivid to a man under arrest.
- Practice these things!



Verses 4:10–13

Contentment in Every Circumstance

- Paul rejoices because the Philippians have renewed their concern and support for him.
- He explains that he has learned to be **content whether experiencing abundance or need**, contentment which comes from knowing Christ, not from favorable circumstances.
- "I can do (endure) all things through Christ" refers specifically to Christ empowering Paul to endure both plenty and poverty.
- His point is Christ gives him strength to remain faithful whether he has much or very little.



Verses 4:14–20

The Philippians' Generosity



Paul emphasizes that the Philippians alone did well by sharing in his difficulties.



He assures them that God will supply their needs according to His riches in Christ.



They had repeatedly supported Paul financially when other churches did not.



Financial support is participation in gospel ministry, demonstrating their partnership with Paul and their commitment to the gospel.



Paul describes their gifts as "a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God."

Verses 4:21–23

Final Greetings

- Paul sends greetings to every believer (saint) in Philippi.
- He specifically mentions believers associated with Caesar's household which could refer to the large network of imperial employees, servants, and officials turning to Christ.
- The letter closes with Paul's familiar emphasis on the **grace of the Lord Jesus Christ**.



Chapter Summaries

- **Chapter 1:** Paul explains that his imprisonment has actually advanced the gospel and rejoices that Christ is being proclaimed. He calls the Philippians to live courageously and unitedly, knowing that “to live is Christ and to die is gain.”
- **Chapter 2:** Paul calls believers to humility, unity, and putting others ahead of themselves, using Christ's humility and exaltation as the supreme example. Timothy and Epaphroditus demonstrate what this kind of selfless Christian service looks like.
- **Chapter 3:** Paul warns against placing confidence in religious credentials or human achievement and considers knowing Christ worth more than everything he once valued. He urges believers to press toward the goal and remember that their citizenship is in heaven.
- **Chapter 4:** Paul calls the Philippians to stand firm, resolve disagreements, rejoice, pray instead of being anxious, and cultivate godly thoughts. He then thanks them for their generous partnership and explains that Christ gives him strength to remain content in both abundance and need.