

Phil.1:1 Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:

1:2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

1:3 I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,

1:4 always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy,

1:5 for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now,

1:6 being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;

From today's sermon.

The book of Philippians, along with the letters to Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon, was written by Paul in prison.

It is a letter written in prison under persecution and hardship, and yet it contains the repeated words, "Rejoice.

Today's passage is also full of strong faith and thanksgiving: "I thank my God," "I pray with joy," "I am thankful," and "I am confident that He who began a good work will finish it.

As we go through life, there may be times when we have smooth sailing, and there may be times when we are going through headwinds, when it is difficult and painful, when nothing we do seems to be working, when we seem to be getting tighter and tighter, when things are not going our way and we are sinking, when we feel as if we are in a prison cell.

You may feel as if you are in prison. You may even feel resentful toward God, wondering why you should be punished in this way when you have kept a firm conscience and done good works.

You may experience deep disappointment, thinking that God does not exist in the first place, that you have come all the way here believing in Him, only to be subjected to this.

It is to such a heart that the words of this prison letter will resonate. What did Paul see, experience, and speak about while in prison? We can learn deeply about the life of a believer.

Good morning, everyone.

This is the last week of August. It is as hot as ever, but the mornings and evenings have become easier to get through, and dragonflies can now be seen flying.

Typhoon No. 10 is expected to pass through this area around Wednesday. Please be careful.

Now, we have entered the book of Philippians. Along with Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon, it is called the prison epistle.

The book of Philippians is said to have been written by Paul in Rome around A.D. 61. In Acts 16, it is recorded that he was imprisoned in Philippi for freeing a woman who was possessed by the spirit of divination. The book of Acts is a record of God's work through the Lord's disciples over a period of more than 30 years beginning around 30 AD. Luke meticulously researched and compiled the history of that period, and Paul, who was compiling his book at the same time, must have been deeply and variously reflecting on the city of Philippi.

In Acts 16, we see how God worked in the midst of turmoil and persecution to create the Philippian church as it is today. Paul wrote the word "thanksgiving" while in prison, remembering God's glorious work in Philippi and how He raised up believers in that city, and remembering God's subsequent work. The book of Philippians often uses the word "thanksgiving."

Paul wrote this book with the deep conviction that God is good to believers who are in the midst of difficulties, when things are not going their way, when they are discouraged and stuck, when they are anxious and sad, and when they are grieving in this way. I recommend this book to all who are grieving in the midst of difficulties, to all who want to gain courage and hope.

Acts 16:11 So we sailed from Troas and sailed straight to Samothrace, and the next day arrived at Neapolis.

16:12 From there we went to Philippi. From there we went to Philippi, the first city in this part of Macedonia, which was a colony. We stayed a few days in this city.

16:13 On a certain Sabbath we went out of the gate of the city to the bank of the river, where we thought there was a place of prayer. And we sat down there and spoke to the women who had gathered there.

16:14 But a woman named Rudea, a merchant of purple cloth in the city of Theatrera and a God-fearing woman, was listening. The Lord opened her heart and made her listen to what Paul was saying.

16:15 And both she and her family were baptized together, and she beseeched us, saying, "If you consider me a believer in the Lord, please come and stay at my house," and she took us with her.

16:16 On one occasion, as we were on our way to the place of prayer, we met a female slave who was possessed by the spirit of divination. She was the one who had been telling fortunes and making her masters much profit.

16:17 And this woman followed Paul and us, crying out, "These are the servants of the Most High God, who tell you the way of salvation.

16:18 And they continued in this way for many days. Paul was troubled, and said to the spirit,

“I command you in the name of Jesus Christ, get out of her. Get out of her. And at that moment the spirit departed from her.

16:19 When her masters saw that their hope of making a profit had ceased, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them to the square to deliver them to the officials.

16:20 Then she brought them before the magistrates and complained, saying, “These men are Jews, and they have stirred up our city, and they are not worthy of us,

16:21 They are propagating a custom that we Romans should neither adopt nor practice.

16:22 And the multitude also stood together and reproached them, and the magistrates ordered that their coats should be taken off them and that they should be beaten with whips.

16:23 After giving them a number of lashes, they put them in prison, and ordered the jailer to watch over them.

16:24 The bailiff, having received this strict order, put them both in the inner prison cell, and fastened shackles around their feet.

16:25 About midnight, Paul and Silas continued praying and singing to God, while the prisoners listened attentively.

16:26 But suddenly there was a great earthquake, and the foundations of the prison shook, and all the doors were opened at once, and the chains of all were loosed.

16:27 When the jailer woke up and saw that the prison doors were open, he thought that the prisoners had escaped, and he pulled out his sword and almost committed suicide.

16:28 Then Paul cried out with a loud voice, “Do not commit suicide. Every one of us is here.

16:29 And the jailer, having obtained a lamp, rushed into the prison and fell down before Paul and Silas, trembling.

16:30 Then he brought them out and said to them, “Teachers, what must I do to be saved?”

16:31 They said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus. 16:31 And they said, “Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you and your household will be saved.

16:32 Then he spoke the word of God to him and to his whole family.

16:33 And he took them both in, even at midnight, and washed their wounds. And he baptized them both there, himself and his whole family,

16:34 And he took them to his house and gave them a meal, and rejoiced with his whole family that they had become believers in God.

16:35 At daybreak, the chief magistrates sent for the constables, saying, “Release these men.

16:36 Then the jailer delivered these words to Paul, saying, “The magistrates have sent me to have you released. Now come out and return safely.”

16:37 But Paul said to the constables, “They have whipped us, Romans, in public without trial, and have put us in prison. But now, in secret, do they seek to release us? That is wrong. They themselves should come and take us out.

16:38 The guards reported these words to the chief magistrates. And when they heard that they were Romans, they were afraid,

16:39 They came and apologized, and asked them to take the two out of the prison and leave the city.

16:40 They left the prison and went to the house of Rudea. And they met with the brethren and gave them advice, and then they went out.

Thus, God did a remarkable thing in Philippi through Paul and others.

They must have found their own desire to be saved in this woman who followed Paul and the others for days, saying, “These are the servants of the Most High God, who preach the way of salvation to you. Paul and the others avoided doing so, fearing that it might cause trouble, but finally, when they were at their wits' end, they turned to the spirit and said, “In the name of Jesus Christ, I command you, get out of her. Get out of her,” and at that moment the spirit left her.

16:19 When her masters saw that their hope of making a profit had ceased, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them to the square to hand them over to the officials.

16:20 Then she brought them before the magistrates and complained, saying, “These men are Jews, and they have stirred up our city, and we are not worthy of them,

16:21 They are propagating a custom that we Romans should neither adopt nor practice.

16:22 And the multitude also stood together and reproached them, and the magistrates ordered that their coats should be taken off them, and that they should be beaten with whips.

16:23 After giving them a number of lashes, they put them in prison, and ordered the jailer to watch over them.

16:24 The bailiff received this strict command, and put them both in the inner prison cell, and fastened shackles around their feet.

This was what they had feared. The masters did not care about her, they just cared about making money. She was simply being used, and the masters did not care about the pain and sorrow she was going through as she spent her time obsessed with their example. But her life changed when she met the disciples of the Lord, “servants of the Most High God, preaching the way of salvation to you. But because of her good works, Paul and his acquaintance were imprisoned. She was flogged, thrown into prison, and shackled.

16:25 About midnight, Paul and Silas were praying to God and singing songs of praise, while the prisoners were listening attentively.

16:26 But suddenly there was a great earthquake, and the foundations of the prison were shaken, and all the doors were opened at once, and the chains of everyone were loosed.

16:27 When the jailer woke up and saw that the prison doors were open, he thought that the prisoners had escaped, and he pulled out his sword and almost committed suicide.

16:28 Then Paul cried out with a loud voice, "Do not commit suicide. Every one of us is here.

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16:32 Then he spoke the word of God to him and to his whole family.

16:33 And he took them both in, even at midnight, and washed their wounds. And he baptized them both there, himself and his whole family,

16:34 And he led them to his own house, and gave them a meal, and rejoiced with his whole family that they had become believers in God.

How is it that Paul and Silas were able to pray and praise God in prison, even while rubbing their painful bruises? God answered their praises and prayers, an earthquake occurred, the prison doors were opened, but the prisoners did not escape, and a remarkable deliverance took place in which the guards and their families were saved. The prisoners, who were probably thugs, were overwhelmed by the pious attitude of Paul and Silas and the work of God in answering them. And not a single one escaped. The lifeline of a believer in God is always God Himself. If the One who controls everything in the world is with us, regardless of any visible circumstances, what do we have to fear?

God is able to use Joseph, betrayed by his brothers and sold into slavery, to bring him out of prison to become the Prime Minister of Egypt. And He is able to accomplish the reversal of the subject and object by making the jailer say to the prisoner, "Teacher, what must I do to be saved?"

1:1 From Paul and Timothy, the servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus, who are in Philippi, and to the overseers and stewards.

1:2 Grace and peace be unto you from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

1:3 And I will give thanks to my God every time I think of you; and I will give thanks to my God every time I see you; and I will give thanks to my God every time I see you,

1:4 When I pray for you all, I pray always with joy,

1:5 And I thank God that ye have the gospel from the first day unto this day.

For Paul, it was not so much a big deal that he himself was in persecution and in prison, but he hoped that even through his own suffering and sorrow, he could bring as many people as possible to salvation. Even if something not pleasing happens, God will work every opportunity to turn it into profit. And in the midst of it all, we give thanks to the living God who has guided and enabled those who believe in Him, and our gratitude wells up as we think of each and every one of those irreplaceable saved people. I give thanks to the living God who has led us to believe in Him, and I give thanks when I think of each one of those irreplaceable saints who have been saved. He always prays with joy for those saints, and his gratitude to God overflows when he knows that they have been partakers of the gospel from the first day of salvation to the present day, and that they have been kept alive by the grace of the gospel, and that they have been made worthy of the gospel.

Paul was a man who was willing to suffer for the sake of those who received the gospel. Rather, he was a man who offered prayers of thanksgiving, seeing suffering as an opportunity. He was a man who believed that this suffering would not end in suffering.

1:6 And I am confident of this, that he who has begun a good work in you must complete it before the day of Christ Jesus.

He who began a good work in our beloved Philippi, He is the One who will finish it.

There is One who will do good works in our lives. It is not a life of suffering, stagnation, and falling. It is not a life of ever-increasing sorrow, ever-increasing brokenness, and ever-increasing fall. There is One among us who has begun a good work. So I am convinced and my heart is persuaded. There is One among us who has begun a good work.

The word “good” seems to have many meanings. Good, useful, satisfying each and every one of our purposes, fittingly fitting, profitable, wholesome, fertile and fertile, a hotbed of new things, happy, morally right, just exactly, precisely, kind, generous, plain and clear, perfect, (God's) essential goodness, and so on, really! It can mean many things. The One who initiates these good things will bring them to completion by the day of Christ.

What is the Day of Christ? When is it? Is it the day of the Second Coming? If so, we do not know when, but we are told that there is a time of the Lord. And we may know that our patience, our sorrow, and our anxiety are of limited duration.

1:6 And I am confident of this, that he who has begun a good work in you must complete it before the day of Christ Jesus.

Even though we may be shut up in prison, God will begin a good thing. And He will complete it in due time.

God does not give up on us in the midst of our circumstances, but uses us. Let us believe that He begins good things in us, shows us good things, and that this is the deep arrangement of our blessed God, dealing with us in hope and power, always desiring to do good works in us. And at the time of Jesus Christ, He will complete everything. The day of Jesus Christ will come when we will be able to understand what we did not know what it means after the completion. Even if you are in prison now, even if you are in the midst of disappointment, the Lord will start a good work. And the Lord who completes all things is ready before us, Takutoshi Higawa. Let us offer our joy and gratitude to God, pray for those who will be saved because of these difficult times, intercede for the saved who are the fruit of our labor, and continue to pray, believing that salvation will be extended to the generations to come.

Prayer: Heavenly Father, thank you for today's worship. Thank you for the powerful words of encouragement, empowering words, and words of faith from Paul, who is in prison and in the midst of difficulties. We have received God's grace and peace and are blessed with the good news of the gospel. We are thankful to be taught that we have One who has begun a good work in us and will bring it to completion. Please bring all sufferers into God's salvation and peace. Bless our families and the people in our community. We pray in the name of the Lord Jesus. Amen.