

# KEEP THY HEART

A Bible-Based Devotional

Turn to: **Philippians 1:1-11**  
“Supporting Fellow Christians”

Paul and the Philippian church had a very special bond; they loved Jesus and loved each other. Today, I believe we can learn a few tips from them on how to support fellow Christians who are in the spiritual fight for Jesus; and doing so will make us more joyful.

**1: Pray for them (v1-5).** I wonder if the wording means that **Timotheus** (Timothy) is partly writing this book; does he interject, "Put this in there!" Or, "Don't forget to say that!" Paul writes **to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi**, not just to a single church; and all who are truly saved are part of the same church. I believe **the bishops** are like pastors, Sunday School teachers, etc., and the **deacons** are servants, administrators, bookkeepers, those in charge of lawn care, distribution of goods to the poor, etc. All Christians are important, whatever their role.

**(v2)** Paul says **Grace be unto you, and peace**, not just one or the other. Grace without peace would be like begrudgingly showering someone with blessings because "it's the right thing to do," or because you're obligated. On the other hand, peace without grace would be simply agreeing not to punish someone for wrongdoing, or simply not being hostile; but **God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ** give us both. God has not only forgiven us (peace), but on top of that has blessed us (grace).

**(v3)** Apparently, Paul was praying an awful lot! He isn't using hyperbole. His prayer life is certainly convicting to me, and I've been trying to pray more lately myself. When is the last time you **remembered** someone and prayed for them? Or when is the last time you **thanked God** for a godly person in your life?

**(v4)** Joy is said to be the theme of Philippians. This must have been a special church; can you imagine Paul having joy *every* time he prayed for them? **(v5)** If you don't have

the joy of the Lord the way you want, one way to help, I believe, is to have **fellowship** with other Christians. Do you have friends who are bad influences, bringing you *down* spiritually instead of up? Or are you trying to find godly friends? If you are able, are you actively involved in a church? It's not always easy; but God does command us to assemble with other Christians (Hebrews 10:25). But let our fellowship be **in the gospel**, not just in surface topics like food or sports or hobbies (though it's great to have these conversations also). Is Jesus Christ truly the underlying bond in your close friendships? Or is it more of a "country club" atmosphere, where the talk is basically secular with a few religious references sprinkled in every now and then, insincerely?

**2: Keep them in your heart (v6-7a).** Jesus doesn't start a project and abandon it halfway through. Can you imagine a massive downtown infrastructure project, with torn up roads and pipes everywhere, that ran out of funds and was abandoned? That would be a disaster; but Jesus will never let that happen with His work in the hearts of Christians; of that we can **be confident**. If you're God's child, don't ever be afraid that Jesus will abandon you; He never will, no matter how rough things may get.

**(v7a)** Paul assures us that this confidence is **meet**, not just wishful thinking; and he has these Christians **in his heart**, which is sweet. How many people do you have in your heart? Or is it too cluttered with worldly TV shows, magazines, and ideas, that there is no room for what should be in there? They were so close to Paul's heart, in part, because they stood with him **in his bonds**. Do we stand behind those who are persecuted for Jesus? Or do we shy away? Do we stand with Christian apologists who **defend** the gospel? We should also be on the *offense* in witnessing, **confirming** the gospel. Maybe we can try to look for more opportunities during normal, everyday conversations where we can steer it toward Jesus and the Bible.

**3: Stand up for them (v7b).** How can we be **partakers of the grace** of other Christians like Paul? Well, suppose someone stood for a biblical principle in a godly way and then was

attacked for it; would you be willing to stand with that person, or would you abandon them (II Timothy 4:16)? When Kim Davis stood for the biblical definition of marriage, even going to jail for it, I was surprised when some in the church said she should resign rather than take a stand. Why are professing Christians often so timid in standing with others to the extent that they stand with the Word of God? I'm afraid the modern church at large would have abandoned Paul during his imprisonment; but Paul had a sweet bond with the Philippians because they stood with him in his persecutions for the Word of God.

**4: Love them (v8).** Paul talks about how much he loves this church, saying **God is his record**; we can't always see what's in the hearts of others, but God can (Psalm 56:8). Do you **long** to see other godly Christians? Let's make sure we don't act cold or uncaring. Paul felt the way he did **in the bowels of Jesus Christ**—Jesus' feelings were his also. And "bowels" indicates deep feeling; we should ask ourselves whether we really *feel* for others. Do we ever have deep concern in our heart, something no one else can necessarily see, which drives us to try to help them? Or do we help them only because we think we must, or because it will look good superficially?

**5: Desire the best for them (v9-11).**  
**(v9)** The flatterer may say nicer words (Psalm 55:21, Proverbs 27:6); but the true friend is willing even to risk his own reputation to speak the truth. We should **pray** that God will work in others' lives; that their **love** will be, first, in **knowledge**; we should really want to know more about other people rather than being self-centered or conversation "hogs." Are we excited to tell them of our own lives without caring about theirs? Second, in **judgment**; when we must reprove or rebuke, love should be a driving factor. The Pharisees made errors in judgment perhaps out of a lack of love (John 7:24, Luke 14:5). But a lack of love can also keep a person from rebuking at all; some say that Christians are "haters" for simply proclaiming the truths and warnings of the Bible; but really, those approving of sin are the haters (Leviticus 19:17), since they are

encouraging others onward and providing validation in their journey toward hell.

**(v10)** Interestingly, our love helps us to **approve** the right things; what are your "likes" on social media? What movies or books do you recommend to others? Are they **things that are excellent**? If we took the first 10 favorites on your social media accounts, how many could be really classified as "excellent"? Only when you follow godly principle can you be **sincere**. Those who approve of vile movies on Friday nights will be phony with their spiritual talk in Sunday School. An online post for a Bible verse beside another post for an evil movie is hypocritical. But when we live right, we are also **without offence**; the world cannot legitimately point a finger at our lives and claim that we don't believe the Bible. But most importantly, approving of bad entertainment will make you offensive in God's eyes. You will say dirty things (Colossians 3:8) and think dirty thoughts (II Peter 2:14). One **day Jesus Christ** will return in judgment and go through all your conversations and posts, and you will have to explain it all to Him; so don't be a hypocrite.

**(v11)** Are you **filled with the fruits of righteousness**, or are the fruits too scrawny and small, or not even there at all if you haven't been saved? They come only **by Jesus Christ** (John 15:5); you can't manufacture them through willpower. You must be connected to the Vine to get the nutrients you need to grow this fruit. And since we can't manufacture it on our own, we shouldn't brag about how loving, peaceful, etc. we are—it should be **unto the glory and praise of God**.

So how can we support fellow Christians? (1) Pray for them; take some time to pray for others, not just yourself; (2) Keep them in your heart; try to think about them from time to time, not just when you see them; (3) Stand up for them; don't back away from godly Christians suffering persecution for standing with the words of Jesus; (4) Love them; make sure you have deep concern and feeling for other godly people; and (5) Desire the best for them; be willing to lovingly speak the truth.