

# AGAIN I SAY REJOICE!

An Inductive Bible Study  
of Philippians

RACHEL COLLINS



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*“But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”*

*(Matthew 6:33)*

May the glory of His Kingdom be our heart's greatest joy.



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# Acknowledgments

What a joy it is to be a part of the Lord's work!

For those who love to read these acknowledgments, let me just tell you a little story and give the Lord the glory and credit that He is due. This study was born in a little cabin in the woods owned by my in-laws – Rick and Ceil Collins. In the fall of 2020, I was seeking the Lord's direction for what to study with the women of Calvary Chapel Fredericksburg for the upcoming semester. I had a plan, but as time went on it became clear that my plan was not the Lord's. With retreats cancelled that year, a friend and I went on a retreat of our own – me seeking direction for studies for the ladies, and her seeking direction about the Lord's plans for her to go into mission work. It was in the middle of the night during that weekend that the Lord gave me the plan for *Yet I Will Rejoice* and this study. The Lord showed me the thematic connections between Habakkuk and Philippians that I had never before noticed, a basic outline of what the studies could look like, and a schedule for how to complete everything in time for our quickly approaching start dates.

The women of Calvary Chapel Fredericksburg worked through *Yet I Will Rejoice* and this study back-to-back in winter and spring of 2021. When we were done, I was ready to set these studies aside and get started on something new for the ladies. I soon found that even though I was done, the Lord wasn't. Just as Paul used Olympics metaphors for the Christian walk in his writings, the Lord used the Olympic trials of 2021 to impress on me the need for a "coach" to help me improve as a writer. He kept bringing Kathleen Duncan to mind, even though it had been many years since we had last connected. A Facebook message, an email, and a phone call later, He set something in motion that I'm finding is far bigger than me.

I share all this because it is so plain to me that in every way, He is truly the One who is worthy of glory, honor, and praise for any fruit that comes from this study.

With this study coming so quickly after *Yet I Will Rejoice*, many of the acknowledgments in that book could easily be copied and pasted here. Even so, I want to share a few thank-yous to some precious friends that the Lord has called to partner with me in accomplishing His work in this project.

Kathleen – thank you for being the coach the Lord showed me I needed. You are more than an editor – you have become a friend, a counselor, an encourager, a teacher, and a cheerleader. I'll keep putting in those hard questions that get in your business so long as you keep tearing apart my work, deal?

Margot Bass, Carleigh Martin, Melissa Alani, Kim Daniels – thank you for your keen eye to catch all the stray commas, periods, spaces, capitalizations, and all the other oddities that manage to survive the first rounds of edits. To anyone who happens to read these acknowledgments – if you are the first to catch any strays that this team of proofreaders somehow missed, get in touch with me and I'll gladly give you a gold star and a free copy of the next study! I am positively convinced that typos multiply like Tupperware in a drawer!

Donna Freed – I'm sure you wouldn't expect to be mentioned here, but your prayers and encouragement mean more to me than you know. I know that it is no coincidence that the Lord has laid this project on your heart as a prayer partner, and I'm excited to see what He has in mind.

Mandy, Tonya, and Cecile – for being vessels that the Lord used to fill me up when I was drier than I realized. Your love and prayers are worth more than gold.

And of course my family, both my husband and my kids, and my church family. Thank you for being supportive of the sacrifice of time and energy it takes to bring something to publication, for your prayers, and for your encouragement. You are all a gift!

One final acknowledgment – and that is you, my friend. What I have come to realize after publishing *Yet I Will Rejoice* is just what a joy and an encouragement it is to me every single time I see a study being shipped. It is absolutely surreal to me to think that I have the honor of sitting next to you as the Lord connects with you in His Word. Know that you are individually prayed for even if I do not know your name. Drop me a note on Facebook or Instagram, or email me at [Rachel@treasuringgodsword.com](mailto:Rachel@treasuringgodsword.com) and let me know how the Lord is speaking to you in this study! Until we meet face to face, either here or in eternity, I would love to hear from you!

As Paul said to the Philippians,

*Therefore, my brothers (and sisters), whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.*

*Philippians 4:1*



# Before You Begin

As we prepare to enter into this time in His Word, spend a few moments considering ways that you can make spending time with the Lord a priority in your schedule. What a beautiful gift He has given us as He offers to fellowship with you regularly to speak with you. Enjoy the gift of hearing from His Spirit, who will open His Word personally to your heart.

Our study in Philippians is based on the inductive method of Bible study. If you are new to inductive Bible study, you'll find a brief explanation of this method in the Appendix that will help you understand the intent of the questions that are being asked. As you work through the lessons in this guide, you'll find that the bulk of your time will be spent directly interacting with the text of the Scriptures themselves, with just a few summaries and explanations included to aid your study. Rather than telling you what to believe about the Scriptures, the goal of this study is to come alongside you as you look at the text to see what it says, to guide you through a proper understanding of what it means, and to challenge you to consider your responses to what the Lord is showing you.

The amount of time you spend in your study is entirely up to you. Each of the six lessons in this study is divided into four parts, each designed to be completed in about 30 minutes, and concluded with a fifth part titled *Wrapping It Up*, which can also be used as a basic discussion guide. Sprinkled throughout each lesson are sections titled *Deeper into the Word*. These optional exercises provide you with opportunities to deepen your study and critical thinking skills as you research related Scripture or outside resources. At the end of each regular lesson, you will find an additional optional section titled *For Further Study*. This section will give you an opportunity to explore a topic related to that lesson in much greater depth.

The questions in this study are based on the English Standard Version (ESV) of the Bible. You will find the full ESV text of the book of Philippians in the Appendix of this study guide. Feel free to make a copy of these pages for your personal use so that they can be readily available. Mark them up, take notes, record any questions you have, and answers you receive. You can choose any translation you prefer for your study, but if a question doesn't make sense in your preferred translation, see if referring to the ESV aids in your understanding.

Just a note about marking or highlighting the text: My best advice to you is to keep it simple. Don't fall prey to the temptation to obsess over how to mark any given word. It is easy to get so caught up in the mechanics of the marking or highlighting that you lose sight of the purpose of interacting with the text in this way. I've intentionally kept the highlighting suggestions to a minimum, just enough to encourage you to pay attention to exactly what the text is saying and notice important themes without getting overly bogged down in unnecessary details.

Remember that Bible study is a sweet privilege, not an obligation, and that working through this study guide is not to be seen as homework. Enjoy this opportunity to get to know the Lord personally, to learn about His attributes, His ways, what pleases Him, what displeases Him, how He sees you, and how He wants you to see Him. If you are using this guide as part of a group, don't worry about falling behind. Begin each new lesson along with your group with no guilt for what didn't get completed in the previous lesson.

Most importantly, make sure to begin your time of study in prayer. This is so easily neglected and yet is the key to a rich, deep time in the Word. As 1 Corinthians 2:6-16 explains, it is the Spirit of God who explains to us the wisdom of God. Through prayer, we recognize our need for the Spirit to open our ears and our hearts to the things of God, so that we are reading His Word with spiritual understanding rather than natural understanding. Pray for an open heart as you begin your study, pray for understanding as you continue in your study, and pray in response as you complete each time of study.

May the Lord pour out His unlimited riches of wisdom and insight into your heart as you meditate on His Word!

# Introductory Words

We rejoice at the birth of a child. We rejoice with a friend at her engagement. We rejoice when a friend achieves her health goals and when a loved one is declared cancer-free. The Bible tells us to “rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep” (Romans 12:15), and we understand that to mean “enjoy the good times with those who are enjoying the good times, and empathize with the struggles of those going through hard times.” At least that’s where my mind goes when I read verses like that one.

Then there are books like Philippians, with the command to “rejoice” repeated over and over. When we first read Philippians we find a friendly letter, affectionately written to a beloved group of people. Then we start to look a little closer and discover that Paul’s circumstances were such that we would expect rejoicing to have been the farthest thing from his mind. If we were in prison, facing death, and someone came to us to tell us to “rejoice,” we would likely get offended! “What do you mean, ‘rejoice?’ This is a time to weep with me!” But this isn’t Paul’s mindset. He seems to have a different understanding of rejoicing than we may have.

So, what is this mindset? Why can Paul, at a time of uncertainty, of deep persecution, of a loss of freedom, still say “rejoice” and mean it with all sincerity? What does that mean for us? When Paul writes to the Thessalonians, the neighbors of the Philippians, he echoes his words to the Philippians, “Rejoice always” (1 Thessalonians 5:16). Always. Not only when life is pleasant, but always. Is that possible? How?

You’ll notice the pomegranate blossom on the cover of this study and throughout its pages. We are blessed to have Elizabeth Hodes of White Stone Art Studio ([www.whitestoneartstudio.com](http://www.whitestoneartstudio.com)) paint this for us. She says, “The book of Philippians speaks to the joy we have in Christ - in every season and every circumstance of life. The pomegranate flower speaks *abundance* to me. It speaks of abundant hope and the abundant sweet fruit to come, just as we anticipate Jesus’ return and all that entails while even now living in the reality of Christ. This is true joy.”

May you discover the source of true joy as you meditate on His Word!

*These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.*

*John 15:11*



# Lesson 1 – “Come and Help Us”

*A vision in the night, a women’s riverside prayer group, a demon-possessed slave girl, an earthquake, and a terrified jailer. These are the beginnings of the first church in Europe, the beginning of a new arena of ministry for a man who had once sought to eliminate followers of Jesus from existence, but who was now the Lord’s chosen instrument to spread the gospel far and wide. There’s a story behind this letter that we are about to study, a relationship to uncover, and an incredible God for you to get to know.*

## Part 1 – A Letter from the Heart

Letters are designed to be read from beginning to end, so that’s what we’re going to do over the next few days. We are going to put ourselves into the mindset of the author and recipients of this letter, answering some questions as we read: Why was this written? What seems to be the concern of the author? What was going on in the recipients' lives that needed to be addressed? And even more, how does this letter speak to our lives today, even as it spoke to their lives thousands of years ago? As **Hebrews 4:12** says, “*For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart.*” Listen for the living Word to speak into your life, addressing your concerns, answering your questions, and challenging you to grow in your faith.

Remember to always begin your study in prayer. The Lord has a purpose for you in working through this study of Philippians. Each day as you sit down to study, pause for a few minutes to speak with Him, to ask Him to open your ears to hear what He has to say to you, your eyes to see His truths, and your heart to respond to what He wants to share with you. Studying the Bible is not an academic exercise, but instead is an intimate conversation between you and the God who loves you, who has redeemed you, and who is sanctifying you (**John 17:17**).

**Read Philippians** in its entirety, using the text in the Appendix. Answer the following questions briefly without worrying too much about details. The goal is to read this letter as a single unit so that we can begin to hear it in the same way as the original hearers did.

What are some of your first impressions?

What themes do you notice in this letter? Simply list them at this point; we will go into detail in the lessons to come.

**Read through Philippians** a second time. As you do:

- Put a ? in the margin next to anything you don't understand.
- Put a ! in the margin next to anything that surprises you.
- Put a \* in the margin next to anything that encourages you.

What were some of the things that you had a question about? (Come back to this as we continue our study and see how the Lord answers your questions.)

What were some things that surprised you?

What was encouraging to you?

From what you've seen so far, how might this letter, and this study, speak into your life?

## Deeper into the Word

**Read Philippians** a third time through. This time make a brief note, in pencil, about what the main idea of each chapter seems to be at this point. Do the same for each paragraph. These notes do not have to be extensive as just a few words will do. See if you can begin to discern the flow of thought in this letter, a practice we will continue as we work through this study. How does chapter 1 flow into chapter 2? Chapter 2 into chapter 3? Chapter 3 into chapter 4?

## Part 2 – Paul, the Servant of Christ

Letters, of course, have authors. That seems like an obvious statement, but it can be easy to forget that there is a context in which a letter is written. While we understand that the Holy Spirit is ultimately the One who inspired the Scriptures, this inspiration flowed through individual authors, each of whom had a personality, a background, a passion, and a purpose in writing that is important to understand as we read their writings. Often this information is right there on the surface and obvious, while at other times we must read between the lines to see the implications that can be discerned from the text.

### Deeper into the Word

The word translated “servant” in this passage is *doulos*. Look up this word in any word study resources you may have access to, or you can find it on [www.blueletterbible.org](http://www.blueletterbible.org). You can also use a concordance or search tool to find other places in Scripture where this term is used. What does it mean to be a servant of Christ? What does this tell you about Paul that he considered himself to be Christ’s servant? How about you? Do you identify yourself as a servant of Christ in this way?

Let’s go through Philippians and see what we can learn about the author and his situation.

#### Read Philippians 1:1

Who wrote this letter?

How do they describe themselves?

While both Paul and Timothy are mentioned in the greeting, you’ll notice that the rest of this letter is written solely from Paul’s perspective. From this point on we will consider references to the author as speaking of Paul alone.

**Read through Philippians.** This time, highlight references to *Paul* as you read. You do not have to highlight every single instance, only where the text tells you something specific about who he was, what he was experiencing, or any other pertinent information. Remember that you do not have to be perfect in your highlights. The point of highlighting is to help you to consider the text more carefully as you read, to ask it questions, and to hear it speaking to you - not to create a perfectly color-coded Bible. Use your best judgment, knowing that the more you study the more you will learn to discern when the text is telling you something important that you will want to make note of. Using the worksheets in the Appendix will give you the freedom to experiment with developing your personal style of highlighting.

At this point, what can you tell about Paul’s situation? Include verse numbers that support your thoughts.

## Again I Say Rejoice!

### Lesson 1 - Overview

How did he feel about this church that he is writing to? Again, include verse numbers that support your thoughts.

Let's go through the book of Philippians and see what Paul says about his circumstances. Look up these verses and make note of what you see in them. Where was he? Why? What struggles did he face? What was his hope? *(You may have picked up on some of this in the above questions. If so, you do not have to write it out again. Use this list to pick up on anything that you may have missed previously.)*

1:7

1:12-14, 17

1:19-20

2:17 (We'll interpret this more as we study chapter 2 in depth.)

2:22-24

3:4-6 (We will study this in-depth and in context in Lesson 4. No need to analyze at this point, just list the attributes that Paul claims for himself as they are true descriptions of his background.)

4:22



It is commonly believed that Paul wrote Philippians while he was in prison in Rome, around 60-62 AD, about ten years after he visited Philippi for the first time. If this is the case, then Philippians, Ephesians, Philemon, and Colossians were written at about the same time. Assuming that Paul did write Philippians during that first Roman imprisonment, Scripture gives us some details about this time in his life. The whole story can be found in Acts chapters 21 through 28. Today we will look only at the summary as Paul recounted the events to the local Jewish leaders in **Acts 28**. We pick the story up after Paul had been taken into custody in Jerusalem, rescued from an assassination plot, pled his case before Festus, appealed to Caesar, and was sent via ship to Rome, surviving a shipwreck on the way. He finally arrived in Rome in **Acts 28:14**.

**Read Acts 28:14-31**

Why was Paul in prison? (vv. 17-20)

Based on what you read here, what was his situation like? (Notice vv. 16, 20, 23, 30)

How did he occupy himself while there? (vv. 23, 30-31)

How does this compare with what Paul wrote to the Philippians concerning his circumstances?

How do you see God at work in Paul's situation in Rome?

How does all of this that you've seen in Paul's life so far compare with your expectations of what it means to be a follower of Jesus?

## Part 3 – The Beginnings of the Philippian Church

What a difference it makes when we can start putting names and stories to the people that Paul was writing to! The Book of Acts records Paul's first visit to Philippi and his encounters with some of the people who lived there. While these individuals were not mentioned by name in the letter, they were likely prominent in this young church as founding members. Let's look at how Paul and Timothy first came to Philippi, and who they met while they were there.

### Read Acts 16:6-7

Where had Paul wanted to go?

Who prevented him? Does this surprise you?

### Read Acts 16:8-12

What vision did Paul have?

How did Paul and his team interpret this vision?

How is Philippi described in verse 12?

**Read Acts 16:13-15.** Paul's typical plan when he came to a new city was to begin his ministry in the local synagogue. However, according to Jewish tradition, for a city to have a

### Deeper into the Word

This journey to Philippi is part of Paul's second missionary journey. Paul is well-known for his missionary journeys, where he and his team traveled from city to city proclaiming Jesus and founding churches. Paul's first journey, in approximately 47-48 AD (recorded in **Acts 13-14**), took him through the cities in Asia (modern-day Turkey) before he headed back to his starting point in Antioch. After a few years, in approximately 49-51 AD, Paul wanted to revisit these cities and churches that he had founded. He, along with his new missionary partner Silas, set out to see how they were doing and to share some encouragement and exhortation from the apostles in Jerusalem (**Acts 15**). Find a map of Paul's second journey and trace his path to Philippi. (There's one available on Blue Letter Bible at <https://tinyurl.com/blbpaul2>). Where is Macedonia? What cities are located there?

synagogue, there had to be a minyan (a group of ten Jewish men) to allow formal prayers to be recited or Torah to be read aloud in a community situation. Without ten men, there could be no formal Jewish synagogue. But that didn't stop Paul, or the Holy Spirit.

Where did Paul go?

Who was there? How is she described?

What happened after she heard Paul speak?

### **Read Acts 16:16-18**

Where were Paul and his team heading?

Who did they meet on the way? What happened?

We can only speculate about the future of this young woman. Did she become a believer after her deliverance? While we can't say for sure, we do know that she experienced the power of the Most High God in a very personal way.

### **Read Acts 16:19-24**

What happened to Paul and Silas because of that young woman's deliverance?

## Again I Say Rejoice!

### Lesson 1 - Overview

How does this give insight into the culture of the city of Philippi?

#### **Read Acts 16:25-34**

How did Paul and Silas respond to their imprisonment?

What happened in verse 26? Whose bonds were unfastened, and whose doors were opened? What effect do you think this might have had on those prisoners?

How did all this affect the jailer in verse 27? How does Paul encourage him? (v. 28)

Notice again what Paul says in verse 28. What does this tell you about the witness and effect that Paul and Silas had on the prisoners while they were in prison with them?

How did the jailer respond? (vv. 29-34)

**Read Acts 16:35-40.** How did Paul's time in Philippi end?

By the end of **Acts 16**, the church in Philippi consisted of the members of at least two entire households. There was the affluent household of a wealthy merchantwoman, a seeker of God who had the means to host Paul's mission team and provide a home for the young gathering. There was also the middle-class household of the jailer, a servant of Rome, whose first introduction to the living God was the witness of the prisoners who had been set free. The young church may even have included the slave girl who was now of no use to her previous owners, a woman likely discarded and without any means of her own, as well as potentially some of the prisoners who had seen Paul's testimony in the prison. These individuals represented diverse backgrounds with vastly different life experiences, who came together under one roof to form a single body of believers serving the same God. As we read the letter that Paul wrote to the Philippians, keep these young believers in mind as they may have been among the ones that Paul was writing to, possibly about ten years after his original visit there.

Consider your church. Do you know its history? What kind of people attend? Is it diverse like the Philippian church or is it homogenous? What kinds of challenges have you personally faced in worshipping alongside others with diverse cultural or socioeconomic backgrounds?

## Part 4 – What’s Happening in Philippi?

We’re going to conclude this lesson by getting to know the situation in Philippi at the time when this letter was written. What were they experiencing? What struggles were they having? How were they doing in their spiritual walk? Some of this we will see more deeply in the lessons to come as we study the chapters in more detail, but let’s see what we can find out from this overview reading.

After beginning in prayer, **read through Philippians** one more time. Our study today has only a few questions so that you can spend time in the letter itself. Don’t rush through your study today simply looking for answers. Instead, soak in the words of this beautiful and timely message. Continue in prayer as you read Philippians today, seeking the understanding that the Holy Spirit will give you about His message both for the church at Philippi and for us today.

As you read this time, highlight references to the *Philippians*. Remember that you do not have to highlight every single instance, only where the text tells you something specific about who they are, what they are experiencing, or any other pertinent information.

At this point, what can you tell about the recipients’ circumstances? Include verse numbers that support your thoughts.

What do you notice about the relationship between the author and recipients?

Let’s look closer at some specific references to the Philippians. What do these verses tell you about the church in Philippi? (*As in Part 2, you may have picked up on some of this in the above questions. If so, you do not have to write it out again. Use this list to pick up on anything that you may have missed previously.*)

1:7

1:27-28

1:29-30

## Deeper into the Word

The city of Philippi has an interesting background. Do some research into the ancient city of Philippi using any Bible dictionaries or commentaries you may have access to. Learn what scholars have discovered about this ancient city. What was it like to live in Philippi in the first century?

2:25-28

4:1-3

4:14-19

In Paul's letter to the Corinthians, he seems to love to brag about this church in Macedonia and use them as an example to follow. How do these verses give us more insight into this young church?

**2 Corinthians 8:1-5**

**2 Corinthians 11:9**

Let's pull this all together. How would you summarize what you have learned about the Philippian church? What are they experiencing? What struggles do they seem to be having? What can you determine about their character? About their relationship with the Lord?

## Part 5 - Wrapping It Up

This week we spent some time overviewing the letter to the Philippians. We learned about Paul, the author of the letter. We took some time to get to know some of the recipients of the letter, both individually in the earliest days of the Philippian church and collectively as the church has grown and matured in the years since Paul's original visit. Review the notes you've taken this week to refresh your memory of all that you studied. Now we will bring all of your observation and interpretation together in a time of application. Prayerfully consider the questions that are being asked and take the time to write out honest answers. Remember that this is simply between you and the Lord; this is a chance for you to record what He is speaking to you as He applies His word to your heart.

### For Small Group Leaders:

Schedule your discussion so you can spend most of your time on these application questions, as well as any application questions that are included in the main portion of the lesson. Application is what distinguishes Bible study from any other intellectual activity; this is where your group will have the opportunity to encounter the Living Word speaking into their lives. Using application questions that your group has already had the opportunity to think and pray through will yield a rich discussion. Spend only as much time discussing the observation and interpretation questions in the lesson as necessary for your group to have a solid foundation for the application that follows.

As a review, how would you characterize Paul's relationship with the Philippians? What do you see in the text of this letter that helps you to understand this?

What do you think it would have been like to be a member of this young church, facing what they were facing? What encouragement would you have gained from reading this letter?



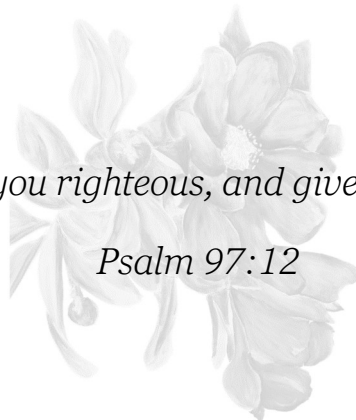
Paul had to change both his plans and his regular way of doing ministry to follow the Lord's leading in Philippi. Rather than Asia, he was to go to Macedonia. Rather than speaking to Jewish men in the synagogue, he found a group of Gentile women having a prayer meeting at the riverside. How would you have responded to the Lord changing your plans like this? What might that look like in your context?

What seems to have been on Paul's heart and mind as he wrote this letter to the Philippians? As you read through this letter, what themes are standing out to you? List these themes in the space below. Why do you believe Paul focuses on these themes? How do these themes speak into your current situation?

Having read through Paul's letter to the people in the church at Philippi multiple times, what might you want to say to the Lord? What have you seen in this letter that causes you to rejoice? What have you seen that causes you concern or confusion? Take a few minutes to write out a prayer, incorporating some of the wording from this letter as you put your thoughts in writing.

*Rejoice in the LORD, O you righteous, and give thanks to his holy name!*

*Psalm 97:12*



## For Further Study

In this lesson, we focused on what Philippians had to say about Paul, but there is so much more to his story than what is found in this letter. Paul is also known by his Hebrew name *Saul*. It was as he began his first missionary journey that brought him outside of Israel that he began to be known more commonly by his Greek name *Paul* (**Acts 13:9**). Let's look at Saul's origins.

We saw a few hints as to Paul's background in our lesson. Now let's go back in Scripture to where we first see Paul.

Saul's story begins in Acts chapter 6, even though he is not mentioned by name until the end of the next chapter. As the early church began to grow, the apostles found it necessary to share the workload of service with others so that they could focus on prayer and teaching the Word. They chose men to be deacons and tasked them with service to the widows. One of these men, named Stephen, was known to be full of the Holy Spirit, a man who both spoke the Word boldly and did great signs and wonders among the people. But not everyone was pleased with Stephen's ministry. A group of men revolted against him and accused him of subverting the law. Stephen was brought before the council where he gave an eloquent discourse on the history of Israel, from its beginnings with Abraham, through the sons of Jacob, the Exodus, and into the days of David and Solomon. Woven into his discourse was his argument that the Jewish people had a history of resisting God and the bold accusation that those who were listening to him had followed the example of their forefathers in executing the prophesied Messiah.

With this background, **read Acts 7:54-8:1**.

What was Saul doing when we first meet him in the Scriptures?

How did he feel about his role in this event?

**Read Acts 8:1-3**

What was happening to the church at that time?

What was Saul's role in this? (v. 3)

Think back to what Paul says about his own background in **Philippians 3:5-6**, particularly his interactions with the church. What can you discern about his character as a young man?

**Read Acts 9:1-9**

In verses 1-2, what was Saul's plan?

What happened to change that plan? Notice the details.

v. 1

v. 2

v. 3

v. 4

v. 5

v. 6

v. 7

v. 8

v. 9

**Read Acts 9:10-17**

How did Ananias feel about this instruction from the Lord? What was his impression of Saul?

If you studied Habakkuk<sup>1</sup> with us, you may remember that we discussed the difference between struggling with the Lord from a place of rebellion as compared to struggling with the Lord from a place of faith. Reread Ananias' interaction with the Lord in these verses. Do you believe his questions indicate a rebellious heart or a heart that is grounded in faith? Why do you believe this? How does this encourage you as you may have questions for the Lord?

How did the Lord respond to Ananias' question?

If you didn't catch it at first, read **Acts 9:16** again. What was part of the Lord's plan for Saul?

**Read Acts 9:17-22**

What difference do you see in Saul after his encounter with Jesus?

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<sup>1</sup> *Yet I Will Rejoice* is a 6-week inductive study through Habakkuk, available on Amazon.com

What was the response of the Church?

Something to consider – who would you say is the most terrifying human enemy of the Church today?

Imagine you had heard that this person was heading to your town. If this person were to show up at your church, invited by your pastor, and given the opportunity to teach on Sunday morning, what would be your response?

How does the story of Saul challenge any limits you may be putting, consciously or subconsciously, on the grace of God?

Almost immediately we see Saul begin to face opposition, opposition that would have felt very familiar to him as it was only days before that he had been on the other side.

**Read Acts 9:23-31**

Who do you see opposing Saul in these verses?

How does this foreshadow the suffering and opposition that God has said Saul would suffer in **Acts 9:16**?

How did the Lord protect Saul at that time?

Saul spent several years in Tarsus, returning when Barnabas sent for him and brought him to Antioch in **Acts 11:25-26**. Saul and Barnabas became paired with each other by the Holy Spirit with the mission to bring the gospel to Asia beginning in **Acts 13**, the first of Paul's missionary journeys. A key moment in Saul's history happens in this chapter.

**Read Acts 13:9.** What does this passage tell us about Saul at this time?

From this point on, Saul will be known as *Paul* in the Scriptures, *Saul* being his Hebrew name and *Paul* being his Roman name. This shift in name indicates that Paul's ministry to the Gentiles had begun in earnest, and the remainder of the book of Acts will primarily focus on the account of Paul's missionary activities and the opposition that he faced.

Let's skip ahead several years and look at Paul's connection with Timothy.

**Read Acts 16:1-3**

Where was Timothy from? (Look it up on a map if you have access to one.)

How is Timothy described?

v. 1

v. 2

Another clue to Timothy's background is found in **2 Timothy 1:5**. Who were Timothy's first mentors in the faith?

Based on what you see in **Acts 16** and **2 Timothy**, what can you infer about Timothy's upbringing? Be careful not to speculate (make a theory or opinion without evidence). Reason through the evidence that is given in the text as you formulate an answer.

This wasn't Paul's first visit to Lystra. Paul had been there sometime between two to five years before, during his first missionary journey through Asia.

**Read Acts 14:8-23**

What happened to Paul during his first visit to Timothy's region?

How would this have affected Timothy's home church, and possibly Timothy himself?

Compare Paul's journey to faith to Timothy's. In what ways were they different? In what ways were they the same?

What about your faith journey? Are you more like Paul, with a dramatic salvation turn-around? Or are you more like Timothy, growing up as a believer, perhaps having come to faith at a young age without the typical before-and-after story? What encouragement is there for you in the testimonies of these men? *(If you are doing this study in a group, perhaps a few group members would be willing to share their testimonies during your group discussion.)*