

Philippians Chapter 1

Philippians 1:1 " Paul and Timothy, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:"

The definite article might imply that these men thought of themselves as Christian workers par excellence, but since the Greek text does not have the definite article (the), it should be rendered "servants (literally "bondservants" or "slaves"), belonging to Christ Jesus.

"Saints": is a technical term referring not to the spiritual elite, but to all Christians. The word means "separated ones". Believers are "separated" in a dual sense:

- (1) They are separated from all that is profane and set apart or reserved for God and His use; and
- (2) Because they are separated from evil, they are morally pure and holy.

Paul has a much more personal approach to this church than to the church in Galatia, Ephesus, or the church at Corinth. For some reason, he felt more at ease and personal with these Christians than with any of the others.

All formality was dropped in this letter. This does not mean that Timothy wrote this letter, but that Timothy was in agreement. One notable variation here is that Paul included Timothy's name because Timothy was an important gospel coworker in and around Philippi and a trusted corroborating witness to the truths Paul expounded.

Notice, they have recognized their position with Jesus Christ as His servants. Paul is saying in this, that he is free of sin, but servant or slave to Christ. This denotes a willing slave who was happily and loyally linked to his master.

1 Corinthians 7:22 "For he that is called in the Lord, [being] a servant, is the Lord's freeman: likewise, also he that is called, [being] free, is Christ's servant."

The letter is written to all saints or believers in Christ at Philippi. It seems that they had set up an order in the church of bishops and deacons at this time. "Bishops" (referred to as overseers), overlooked the spiritual aspect of the church as elders do today, but "deacons" had the job of looking to the financial needs of the church.

An overseer is a term used to emphasize the leadership responsibilities of those who are elders, who are also called pastors and bishops. These are the leaders having the spiritual oversight of a local church. Their duty is to nurture, protect and care for the flock of God.

All three terms are used in the New Testament to describe the same men. Deacons literally mean "those who serve", who are church officials whose responsibilities were mainly administrative in nature.

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

“Grace . . . peace”: Paul’s standard greeting (see note on Rom. 1:7), reminded the believers of their relationship to God.

This benediction that Paul begins with in his letters let us know beyond a shadow of doubt that this is a Pauline letter. Paul’s standard greeting reminded the believers of their relationship to God.

Grace, of course, is unmerited favor. When this grace is applied by God to our lives, it brings perfect peace.

The salvation plan was from the foundation of the earth. The Father, Word, and Holy Ghost were all in on the planning from the beginning. The Word took on the form of flesh and saved us. He tore the veil in the temple from the top to the bottom and opened the way directly to the Father for us.

You might say that Jesus, with His crucified body, and shed blood, reconciled us to the Father. In fact, Jesus paid the price for us to be sons of God.

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

“I thank my God”: Paul’s letters usually included such commendation (see note on Gal. 1:3-5).

Paul is like a loving parent to these people who came to the Lord through his ministry. He is so pleased with the results from this church that every time he thinks about it, is pleasant to him. Paul’s letters usually included such commendation.

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

The Greek word for “prayer” denotes a petition for or a request made on behalf of, someone else. Paul is saying that, it is no chore to pray for them. He has only pleasant thoughts of them. His heart is full of joy when he thinks of their relationship with God.

Philippians 1:5 "For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now;"

Paul is thanking God for their desire to help spread the gospel. It appears that this enthusiasm for the gospel was from the very first. We will see as we go on, that Lydia insisted on Paul using her house as a place of ministry immediately after she first met Paul. At her conversion, she opened her home to Paul and his evangelistic team (Acts 16:14-15), and her home later became a church (Acts 16:40).

It is wonderful to be able to fellowship with Christian friends, but to fellowship in the gospel means that they studied of God when they were together. They shared in the Word of God and in the work of God.

Philippians 1:6 "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform [it] until the day of Jesus Christ:"

This is a reference to salvation itself. When God begins a work of salvation in a person, He finishes and perfects that work. Thus, the verb "will perform (meaning perfect), points to the eternal security of the Christian.

The phrase "day of Jesus Christ" is not to be confused with "Day of the Lord", which describes final divine judgment and wrath. (Isa. 13:9; Joel 1:15; 2:11; 1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Peter 3:10). Day of Christ Jesus" is also called the "day of Christ" (verse 10; 2:16). And the "day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Col. 1:8), which looks to the final salvation, reward, and glorification of believers (1 Col. 3:10-15; 4:5; 2 Col. 5:9-10).

God works through those He has called. God will not call you to do any job that He does not equip you to do. The anointing of God on you to do a specific job is never taken away. God will not leave you half way through the job.

Romans 11:29 "For the gifts and calling of God [are] without repentance."

We see in this, that the call of God never goes away. If He called you to do a job, the call is still there until the day you die. He will stay with you through thick and thin and give you whatever strength you need to complete the job.

God never turns away from us. Sometimes we give up and turn away from Him. The day of Jesus Christ is the day we die, or are carried away into heaven.

We will find all through the years of work for the Lord that all He wants for us is our willingness to use the ability that He gives us to His glory.

Philippians 1:7 "Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace."

The meaning of the word "meet" is right. "In my heart" is a common biblical word used to describe the center of thought and feeling. The words "dense and confirmation are two judicial terms referring either to the first phase of Paul's trial in Rome in which he defended his gospel ministry. Or in a general sense to his continual defense of the faith, which was the heart of his ministry.

Paul loved the church at Philippi. He knew that they believed as he did. He knew that God had given him grace to suffer imprisonment, and to preach the gospel in whatever circumstance he found himself.

Paul also knew that these Philippians were full of that same grace. He had every confidence in them that they would live in the grace of God as he had taught them. It was pleasant for Paul to think of them, because he knew they were sincere in their belief.

He knew that some small problem that might arise would not stop them from following the Lord Jesus. He felt their love for him and for the Lord, even while he was in chains.

Philippians 1:8 "For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ."

Bowels in Greek refers to the nobler human entrails or organs; the heart, liver and lungs. By a figure of speech one word "bowels" is changed for another, love, only remotely connected with it; that is, as a man's entrails are located deep within his body, so his strongest passions (e.g. love), come from deep within.

For Paul to say that he longs for the Philippians with the "bowels of Jesus Christ" is to say that he longs for them with the love of Christ. He is saying that only God knows how much he believes that they will stay with the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Paul wanted them to do as the Scripture says.

Galatians 2:20 "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

To truly be a believer in Christ, then or now, we must let Christ live in us.

Philippians 1:9 "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and [in] all judgment;"

"In knowledge" is from the Greek word that describes genuine, full, or advanced knowledge. Biblical love is not an empty sentimentalism but is anchored deeply in the truth of Scripture and regulated by it.

Judgment here is speaking of discernment. The English word "aesthetic" comes from this Greek word, which speaks of moral perception, insight and the practical application of knowledge. Love is not blind, but perceptive and it carefully scrutinizes to distinguish between right and wrong.

Paul's prayer for them was that the more they learned of Jesus, the more they would love Him. The more any of us learn about the Lord Jesus Christ, the more we love Him. We love Him more, because we understand more and more just exactly what He did for each of us.

If you really want to appreciate the great sacrifice that Jesus made for each of us, study the lessons on the sacrifices in Leviticus.

Philippians 1:10 "That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ;"

“Things that are excellent” means “things that really matter.” This refers to important issues. As the Philippians’ love increases in knowledge and discernment (verse 9), they will be able to accurately distinguish the vital and worthwhile things in life from those that are not.

Contextually, the readers’ love for Paul vexes them as they are anxious over his imprisonment. He wants them to perceive his imprisonment as being among those “things that really matter”, because of the good that God will bring out of it. The purpose for such discrimination is that ye may be sincere or, morally pure, and without offense till the day of Christ.

This of course, is the desire of every Christian. We must conform to God's ways, not God to our ways. The only way that we can do what this Scripture and the one following says, is to stay in the Word of God and find out what the will of God is.

Romans 12:2 "And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what [is] that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."

When we study the Word of God with the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we will know the will of God for our lives. God wants us to have a sincere heart, and He will do the rest.

Philippians 1:11 "Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God."

This verse could be translated, “Filled with the fruit that is righteousness, which comes through Jesus Christ for the purpose of glorifying and praising God.”

The believer who is pure and without offense before God (verse 10), has divinely developed in him a practical “righteousness”, or daily moral life that measures up to God’s standards in character and conduct. The ultimate purpose for this “righteousness”, is to glorify God.

The fruit of righteousness here means that they will strive to live holy lives. The "fruit of righteousness" is what righteousness produces. That would be a holy life, without spot or wrinkle. Our righteousness is a gift from the Lord Jesus Christ. Our own righteousness without Jesus would be as filthy rags.

We must put on the righteousness of Christ to be acceptable before God. The righteousness that we are clothed with is a garment of white linen washed in the blood of Jesus. Our righteousness received from Jesus glorifies the Father.

Look with me, just how this fruit comes. Look with me and see what Jesus says about the fruit.

John 15:2 "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit he taketh away: and every [branch] that beareth fruit, he purgeth it, that it may bring forth more fruit."

The “purgeth it” (in verse 2), is saying that God removes all thing in the believer’s life what would hinder fruit bearing. I.e., He chastises to cut away sin and hindrances that would drain

spiritual life just as the farmer removes anything on the branches that keep them from bearing maximum fruit.

John 15:4-5 "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can ye, except ye abide in me." "I am the vine, ye [are] the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."

John 15:8 "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples."

Philippians 1:12 "But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things [which happened] unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel;"

Paul tells the readers that his imprisonment has occurred for the purpose of furthering or spreading the gospel. The word "rather" suggests that the Philippians were anticipating the reception of bad news as a result of Paul's captivity. He informs them rather to the contrary.

In His wisdom and sovereignty, God has deliberately designed His servant's present circumstances, as undesirable as they may be, for the gospel's benefit. Two positive results of Paul's imprisonment are given (in verses 13 and 14);

(1) Caesar's palace learned the gospel from him (verse 13); and

(2) many Roman Christians were stirred to preach the gospel during his bondage (verse 14).

Paul reminds them here, that they are not to grieve about what happens to him. Everything that happened to him is for a reason. The reason is to further the gospel of Jesus Christ. It really seemed the greater the persecution, the more the church grew.

Paul had chosen to walk this road. The Lord had told Paul that He would show him what great things he would suffer for the gospel. Even today, it seems the church is the strongest where it is forbidden.

Philippians 1:13 "So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other [places];"

This verse is better translated, "So that my imprisonment has been recognized as being because of my commitment to Christ, in all the palace and in all other places." All eventually realized that Paul was no criminal, but an evangelist with a pure and blameless life. They also perceived that his incarceration was caused by no crime on his part, but because he was representing the good news of Christ's death and resurrection.

This palace has been defined as the Praetorian Guard or governor's palace. The Greek word praetorian can denote either a special building (e.g., a commander's headquarters, the emperor's palace), or the group of men in the Imperial Guard.

Because Paul was in a private house in Rome, “Praetorian Guard”, probably refers to the members of the Imperial Guard who guarded Paul day and night. “Others” meaning those in the city of Rome, who met and heard Paul.

Paul was proud to be chained in the palace for Jesus. Many were convinced of the reality of Christ by Paul being so willing to suffer for Him. Many received Christ as their Savior while Paul was under arrest.

Philippians 1:14 "And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear."

Waxing confident means “depending on.” The whole verse could be rendered, “And the majority of the brethren, depending on the Lord, because of my imprisonment have much more courage to speak the word fearlessly.”

The Roman believers were aroused by Paul’s bonds and, relying upon the Lord for enablement, were more courageous than before to spread the gospel in and around Rome. The whole church, thus stirred, did more in spreading the Good News than Paul could have done by himself had he not been in jail.

It seemed that the strength Paul showed in chains gave the other brethren more confidence. They felt if Paul loved the Lord enough to suffer imprisonment for Him, they could too. It was as if he were the example of what all believers should be willing to go through, if necessary for Christ.

Paul’s example of powerful witness to the gospel as a prisoner demonstrated God’s faithfulness to His persecuted children and that their imprisonment would not halt the progress of the gospel. This encouraged others to be bold and not fear imprisonment.

Philippians 1 Questions

1. Who wrote the letter to the Philippians?
2. Approximately when was it written?
3. Where was Paul when he wrote this letter?
4. Where were the first church meetings in Philippi held?
5. Who were the first converts to Christianity in Philippi?
6. Who was the first man converted in Philippi?
7. This was said to be a _____ city in Greece.

8. Why was there not many problems from the Jews here?
9. What were the languages spoken here?
10. What was the only church that Paul would accept help from?
11. Who was with Paul when he wrote this letter?
12. What did Paul call himself in verse 1?
13. Who did he write the letter to?
14. Why was all formality dropped in this letter?
15. What was the responsibility of these bishops?
16. What is the purpose of a deacon?
17. What is the blessing spoken in verse 2?
18. Who were in on the plan of salvation?
19. When was it planned?
20. What reconciled us to the Father?
21. In verse 3, Paul is like a loving _____.
22. What is Paul thanking God for in verse 5?
23. The gifts and calling of God are without _____.
24. Why was it pleasant for Paul to think of them?
25. What was the prayer in verse 9, that Paul prayed for them?
26. What is the "fruit of righteousness"?
27. Did Paul's chains keep him from ministering?
28. What gave the other brethren more confidence?