

Philippians 1 pt. 1 v.1-2

Philippians was authored around the year 62 AD by a man named Paul, or Saul of Tarsus, during what is called his first Roman imprisonment nearly 30 years or so after the resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Also of note is that Paul was well seasoned in his faith by this time. This would have been written a little less than 30 years after his face to face experience with the resurrected Jesus during what is called the Damascus Road experience. (Acts 9)

Paul wrote this letter while under house arrest in Rome for around two years where he is supposed to have also written Philemon, Colossians, and Ephesians -- all of which are carried in our canon of Scripture.

Collectively these letters, along with Philippians, are referred to as the Prison Epistles within the broader collection of Pauline Epistles.

This letter to the Phillipians is considered to be Paul's last letter to a church though not the last of his writings altogether and was

written only 4 or 5 years prior to his second Roman imprisonment and subsequent execution under Caesar Nero.

As we will see from the text, the Phillipian church, that local collection of saints in and around Phillipi, had a special place in Paul's heart.

While we find notes of correction and firm rebuke in Paul's letter to the Corinthians, and we find quite a strong tone toward the Galatians, Paul's letter to the Phillipians has been described by many as a letter full of joy and wonderfully expressed love - even as it is brimming with profound doctrine.

We gather from Paul's letter to the Corinthians, that the Phillipian church along with the other churches in Macedonia, were abundantly supportive of Paul's ministry.

This was a unique characteristic of the Philippians relationship with him because Paul flatly refused to accept financial support from the Corinthians.

Additionally, the Phillipians found great joy in supporting other churches! Namely the church in Jerusalem.

Two portions of 2 Corinthians shed light on this situation:

[2Co 8:1-4 NLT] 1 Now I want you to know, dear brothers and sisters, what God in his kindness has done through the churches in Macedonia. 2 They are being tested by many troubles, and they are very poor. But they are also filled with abundant joy, which has overflowed in rich generosity. 3 For I can testify that they gave not only what they could afford, but far more. And they did it of their own free will. 4 They begged us again and again for the privilege of sharing in the gift for the believers in Jerusalem.

[2Co 11:7-9 NLT] 7 Was I wrong when I humbled myself and honored you by preaching God's Good News to you without expecting anything in return? 8 I "robbed" other churches by accepting their contributions so I could serve you at no cost. 9 And when I was with you and didn't have enough to live on, I did not become a financial burden to anyone. For the brothers who came from Macedonia brought me all that I needed. I have never been a burden to you, and I never will be.

The Phillipian saints loved Paul tremendously, counting it their great joy to share in the ministry that Paul set his hand to by

supporting him spiritually, emotionally, and by providing for his living as well.

Please take note - their financial support of Paul's ministry was born out of a deep personal connection.

We live in an age where it is commonplace for churches to receive request after request for financial support from far flung missionaries and workers who are unknown to us.

The required deliverable for those missions is to produce a newsletter or periodic update to make sure that the people who have committed to care for them don't forget about them!

What a shame that those we profess to love and support can be so easily forgotten!

The relationship between Paul and the Philippians was not the product of an online newsletter but a deep personal fellowship rooted in the person and work of Jesus Christ and the hope of God's word going forth to bring others into the kingdom.

This was a two way relationship marked by Paul caring for the Phillipians and the Philippians caring for him.

This is the fellowship of the saints - caring for one another, supporting one another. It is a great joy to us to be able to care for one another in all realms of life.

“The Philippian church is considered to be the first church Paul established in Europe.” (Halley’s Bible Handbook, p. 811)

It is positioned just about 40 miles or so away from Bulgaria’s southern border.

The first members of this church were a group of devout women including a prominent woman by the name of Lydia probably joined shortly thereafter by a Philippian jailer and his family -- what a church plant!

Ministry in Philippi was wild: a group of women meeting by a riverbank, a demon possessed girl, a riot, a trip to jail, a divine prison break, a suicidal prison guard -- all of that was the beginning of this joyful, helpful, faithful church we know as the Philippian church.

[Act 16:11-15 NLT] 11 We boarded a boat at Troas and sailed straight across to the island of Samothrace, and the next day we landed at Neapolis. 12 From there we reached Philippi, a major city of that district of Macedonia and a Roman colony. And we stayed there several days. 13 On the Sabbath we went a little way outside the city to a riverbank, where we thought people would be meeting for prayer, and we sat down to speak with some women who had gathered there. 14 One of them was Lydia from Thyatira, a merchant of expensive purple cloth, who worshiped God. As she listened to us, the Lord opened her heart, and she accepted what Paul was saying. 15 She was baptized along with other members of her household, and she asked us to be her guests. "If you agree that I am a true believer in the Lord," she said, "come and stay at my home." And she urged us until we agreed.

[Act 16:25-34 NLT] 25 Around midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the other prisoners were listening. 26 Suddenly, there was a massive earthquake, and the prison was shaken to its foundations. All the doors immediately flew open, and the chains of every prisoner fell off! 27 The jailer woke up to see the prison doors wide open. He assumed the prisoners had escaped, so he drew his sword to kill himself. 28

But Paul shouted to him, "Stop! Don't kill yourself! We are all here!" 29 The jailer called for lights and ran to the dungeon and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. 30 Then he brought them out and asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" 31 They replied, "Believe in the Lord Jesus and you will be saved, along with everyone in your household." 32 And they shared the word of the Lord with him and with all who lived in his household. 33 Even at that hour of the night, the jailer cared for them and washed their wounds. Then he and everyone in his household were immediately baptized. 34 He brought them into his house and set a meal before them, and he and his entire household rejoiced because they all believed in God.

Some Bible scholars propose that the gospel writer and Paul's travelling companion "Luke apparently remained behind...The presence of the evangelist during the intervening 5 years may have had much to do with the strength of the Philippian church and its steadfastness in persecution (2Co 8:2; Php 1:29,30)." (International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Philippi)

It is into this context that we begin our study.

V.1 - Paul AND Timothy - Not just Paul. We know from Acts and the other epistles that Paul often journeyed and worked alongside other believers.

Timothy is a prominent saint in the NT literature not least of which because of the two epistles bearing his name (1&2 Timothy) - letters from the Apostle Paul to his protege, a jewish man named Timothy.

We gather from those letters to Timothy that he was a fellow worker with Paul, a pastor.

Some believe that Timothy perhaps served as Paul's scribe or transcriptionist for this letter.

The introduction of this letter finds these men presenting themselves with no pretense or reminder of Apostolic authority as we find in other letters.

Where Paul sometimes introduces himself as, "Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ..." here he identifies himself and his colaborer, Timothy, as slaves.

Bondservants = slaves (δουλος) - pertaining to a state of being completely controlled by someone or something—‘subservient to, controlled by.’ Louw, J. P., & Nida, E. A. (1996). [Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament: based on semantic domains](#) (electronic ed. of the 2nd edition., Vol. 1, p. 471). New York: United Bible Societies.

They are bound to Christ - subject to His will, authority, and purpose.

This is the office of the saints - bondservants, slaves of Christ.
Are we prepared to enter into it?

Does this challenge us? Yes! We would much prefer dignified titles and all of the trappings that come with them.

In our American context the word slave turns our stomachs and yet the term was not too soiled or too low for the Apostles to claim it for themselves.

In fact the mediocre, lukewarm advancement/growth of some christians is exactly because we fail to embrace and enter into the office of the bondservant.

We fail to acknowledge the complete authority and lordship of Jesus over our lives as we seek to set up and advance our own personal kingdoms and so we are left somewhere in between rebelling against our Lord and half-heartedly carrying out His will when it suits us.

What we find in the Scriptures and by the witness of history is that those we consider the most “successful” or committed of saints have embraced the role of the servant of Christ and have embraced the Lordship of Jesus and the advancement of His kingdom - abandoning our own along the way.

Paul addresses this letter to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi. This is about far more than just geography but it speaks to christian identity as the saints are positioned IN Christ.

This also speaks to our shared bond with one another - [Jhn 17:21 NKJV] 21 "that they all may be one, as You, Father, [are] in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.

Paul also sets forth, and acknowledges that the corporate Body of believers, the church is composed of the saints along with distinct members: overseers and deacons.

The term that that NKJV renders as bishops means overseers and comes from the Greek term ἐπισκόπος, episkopos.

This term was used early in the church along with another term πρεσβυτερος, presbyteros, which meant elder.

Often these terms were used interchangeably to denote the overseers, elders, and pastors of the local church.

Interestingly enough we have classified various models of church government along these lines. One is called the Episcopal model. Another is called the Presbyterian model. These two distinct models apply to more than just the denominations that bear their namesake and they differ from each other in regards to church hierarchy, leadership organization.

We learn from Acts 6 that the role of the deacon was also an early responsibility of the saints worshipping together. That role seems to have been focused on the daily practicalities of ministry to

include caring for widows while the Apostles, being overseers of the church in Jerusalem, dedicated themselves to “prayer and the ministry of the word.” (Acts 6:1-4)

We say all that just to point out that the Philippian church was apparently operating some form of organized church governance in the early first century and Paul recognized those offices as valid among the church to include the office of overseers and deacons.

To ignore those offices and their importance in the Body would be irresponsible and unbiblical.

V.2 - What does Paul commend to this beloved body of saints and workers? The grace and peace that come from God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

It is here that we must pause to reflect on both the common greeting that Paul sets forth in nearly all of his letters and the undeniable substance that is held within.

Remember that Paul also ends many of his letters in the same way. He does so with this letter too.

In the final line of this letter Paul writes: [Phl 4:23 NKJV] 23 The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

This is important because we must remember that all of these theologically rich letters we have in our Bible from Paul are nearly always established BETWEEN GRACE - at the beginning and end.

We must behave in kind.

It is not enough for us to spew forth theology, doctrine, and facts. Any academic can do that.

Without the grace and peace that characterize the saints these types of theological assertions come across as woefully dry, detached, insincere, and to the worst degree - hurtful.

BUT, with the grace and peace of God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ these are life changing truths that build up the hearer in grace and peace.

I propose to you then that the framework for our theology and practice IS GRACE AND PEACE -- this is evident to us from the sheer number of mentions within the epistles!

In all 13 of Paul's letters he begins with grace and peace! Oh how our individual and shared ministries should be so marked! Oh, that we would never supplant the grace and peace of God with other things!

It is so important that we grasp this. None of our best efforts at presenting doctrine either to the believer or unbeliever will find purchase in our hearts or their hearts if they are presented outside of grace and peace.

Consider the vast theology that Paul sets forth in all of his letters. Consider the correction. All framed in grace and peace.

In this letter alone we will deal with such deep topics as: prayer, the preaching of the gospel either for good or ill, life and death ("to live is Christ and to die is gain"), suffering, humility, the nature of Jesus Christ making himself a slave, Christ as Lord over all creation, ("every knee shall bow...every tongue confess..."), obedience, counting all things as loss for Christ's sake, imputed

righteousness, perseverance of the saints, a heavenly citizenship, “be anxious for nothing...,” meditate on good things, generosity and giving, and famously... “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me...”

Do you see the rich treasure that is Philippians?! And yet, we start with grace, and we end with grace and we pray that the Lord will give us understanding by His Spirit.

AND in any circumstance we know that the people of God are marked by His characteristics - grace and peace -- not condemnation and chaos.

“Here is the apostolical benediction: *Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ...*the good which is wished is spiritual good, *grace and peace*—the free favour and good-will of God, and all the blessed fruits and effects of it,” Henry, M. (1994). [Matthew Henry’s commentary on the whole Bible: complete and unabridged in one volume](#) (pp. 2320–2321). Peabody: Hendrickson.

Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ - walk in grace loved ones, walk in peace.

Remember it is grace to act favorably towards those that do not deserve. That is what makes it grace. No other peace can we carry than the peace of our Lord Jesus Christ which certainly does exceed our understanding.

[Jhn 14:27 NKJV] 27 "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.

So, as we move forward in this letter together let us prepare our hearts by receiving the grace and peace of our Lord.