

A Greeting of Grace

Philippians 1: 1-2

Today as we begin to move through this precious epistle, verse by verse, I want to remind us of the context in which it was written. Paul is bound in a Roman prison, awaiting trial, facing accusations regarding his faith. He is no longer free to go and come at will. He had been faithful to preach the Gospel, serving the Lord, even at his own peril, and yet this is his reward.

Under such dire circumstances, it would have been easy to have become bitter toward God. Paul could easily have abandoned his faith and likely been spared from his suffering. However, he remained steadfast in the midst of his trials. In fact, he remained joyful and encouraged through it all. In our introduction we discovered Philippians was considered by many to be the epistle of joy. Paul had learned to be content in whatever state he found himself, and to abide in joy, even in adversity.

What created such a positive attitude for Paul, giving him great joy while dealing with bondage? His joy was found in service to the Lord and the church. Paul found great joy in leading others into a deeper faith in Christ. The church at Philippi added greatly to his joy.

Today we will discover the foundation for Paul's joy through his interactions with those in Philippi. I want to examine the [reflections](#) of Paul as we consider: [A Greeting of Grace](#).

I. The Servants of Christ (1a) – [Paul and Timothy, the servants of Jesus Christ](#). Here we find a similar greeting found in many of Paul's epistles, but these few words reveal much. Consider:

A. Their Identification – Paul sent greeting from Rome from himself and his close associate, Timothy, the young preacher. Simply receiving a letter from the apostle himself would have created great joy in the hearts of those in Philippi. Surely it brought back memories to those who were present during Paul's first visit, and the founding of the church. Although Paul was no longer present with them, this assured the church that they were not forgotten. They were still on the apostle's mind and in his prayers.

- They would have been familiar with Timothy also, since he had labored alongside Paul among them. No doubt he had made a significant impact on their lives, and I am sure they rejoiced to know Timothy had remained faithful to the Lord and continued by Paul's side.
- We too find joy in hearing from those we once knew in the Lord. It is good to hear of their continued faithfulness and prosperity in the work of the Lord.

B. Their Occupation (1a) – [Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ](#). Most were likely aware of Paul's commitment to the Lord, but he never missed an opportunity to remind them of his calling. Although he was well known in Christian circles, enjoying great success as an evangelist, pastor, and church planter, Paul continued to consider himself nothing more than a servant of the Lord. He admitted to being a slave or bond-servant of Christ. This was foundational for Paul. He knew ministry was never about him or his recognition. All that he had accomplished, had come by and through the Lord. It was an honor, never a burden, to be a servant of the Lord. He was simply serving the One who had saved him by grace!

- I realize the Lord loves us all the same, and He uses each of us according to His will, but few, if any, have obtained the level of faith and endurance of Paul. His humility and fervency for the Lord stand as a challenge and reminder to every believer. We must never forget to whom we belong and always strive to honor and magnify Him!

C. Their Dedication (1a) – [Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ](#). Paul also never failed to specifically mention his commitment and service to the Lord, Jesus Christ. No doubt it was possible an unbeliever may read this letter, and Paul would not think of failing to identify the object of his devotion and loyalty. His life and ministry were centered in Christ!

- As believers we are aware of that great truth, but it is good to be reminded. In our modern culture of celebrity preachers and “brand” churches, it is easy to lose our focus and place the emphasis on the servant instead of the Savior. We are all bond-servants of the Lord, and blessed beyond measure with such a privilege. We must seek to honor and exalt the Lord in every endeavor. If our efforts fail to point others to Christ, we need to abandon them for those activities that will.

II. The Saints in Christ (1b) – [Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons](#). After a brief introduction, Paul reveals to whom the letter was written. He is writing to the saints, the believers at Philippi. He speaks to:

A. The Laity – Paul refers to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi. He is speaking to the church at large. In essence the epistle is written personally to every believer with the church at Philippi. He is thankful for their unwavering faith in the Lord and continued growth.

- I was reminded of the great blessing to be included in the church, the body of Christ. While we are members of this local body, we are also part of the body of Christ at large. I have fond memories of saints of God who impacted my life. They have gone on to be with the Lord, but I will see them again one day when the church is gathered together with the Lord. There is nothing that compares to the church. It is made up of all the saved, but only the saved. John Phillips said this:

“The title of saint, however, is one of great import. It reminds us of what we are *positionally* through the finished work of Christ, and it reminds us of what God expects us to be *practically* as people set apart for himself.”ⁱ

B. The Leadership (1b) – Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, **with the bishops and deacons**. Paul also addressed the God ordained leadership within the church. He refers to bishops and deacons. In Baptist circles, we don't often use the term “bishop,” but it is biblically accurate in regard to the pastor or elder within the local church. God ordained the bishop, or pastor, to lead the church as the under-shepherd, following the guidance of the Spirit in accordance to the desire of our Great Shepherd. He was thankful for the men God had called to serve the church in Philippi.

- Also Paul addressed those who served as deacons. The deacons were called to serve the church, assisting in the day to day necessities of the church, so the elders could devote themselves to prayer, study, and preaching the Word. [Acts 6:3-4 – Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.](#) ^[4] [But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word.](#)

- I am thankful for the men who serve Fellowship as deacons. I believe they each understand their role and genuinely have a servant's heart. Many churches in America have deacons who possess a distorted view of their role and expectations. Deacons were never ordained to lord over the church and dictate the affairs of the church. They were called to serve the membership in an effort to aid the pastor, or pastors. While I am here, let me say, God never intended for pastors to lord over the church either. He is called to be an under-shepherd. As long as we follow the leadership of the Spirit, and allow Christ His rightful position, the church will operate as it should. Trouble comes when pastors and deacons assume they are the final authority in all church related matters.

III. The Salutation in Christ (2) – [Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.](#) Prior to getting into the heart of his letter, Paul offers a warm salutation. Notice:

A. The Sentiment – [Grace and peace be unto you.](#) Paul revealed his desire for grace and peace for the church at Philippi. Although this was his usual greeting, it was not insincere. Paul genuinely desired them to experience grace and peace. He reminded them of the wondrous grace they had received in Christ, the unmerited favor offered from the Lord. Having received such grace, they should be compelled to live in grace, enjoying its fullness and bestowing such grace to others.

- He longed for them to experience peace as well. Peace offered comfort in the midst of adversity and consoled them in times of grief. No doubt Paul desired peace among the church as well. Hearing of a disagreement, such disputes would disappear where peace abounds.

- We have received much in Christ, but none are greater than His grace and peace. I am convinced we need both daily to function as the Lord would have us too. We need His continued grace in our lives, and we must be willing to offer such grace to others. We desperately need peace in our lives as well. We are facing great uncertainty and division in America. We need peace to reign in our hearts to provide the strength to continue for the Lord and calm the many needs so prevalent in our day.

B. The Sovereign (2) – *Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.* Lest they should forget, Paul reminds them of their association with the Father, the Sovereign of heaven. He was the source of the grace and peace they enjoyed. In fact, He was the source for life itself and every blessing they received. They were known and loved of the Father.

- I am aware of that truth, but it still amazes me. The eternal God of the universe, the true and living God is mindful of us and active in our lives. He daily loads us with His many benefits.

C. The Savior (2) – *Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.* Again Paul emphasized the significance of the Lord Jesus Christ. Their grace and peace were from Him as well, and dependent upon the Lord. They must never forget the object of their faith and the source of their blessings. All they possessed, and all they ever hoped to attain, were bound in the Lord and His good grace. They were what they were because of Christ!

- I know that is simple theology, but it is foundational, and must never be overlooked or forgotten. We could never be thankful enough or guilty of making too much of Jesus. He is the source of our salvation, our life, our joy, hope, and peace. I never want to be guilty of neglecting to exalt and praise the Lord for His grace in our lives. I once heard of a church member who invited his pastor to go on a fishing trip. When they got out on the boat, the member confidently said, “I would like to discuss your preaching as of late. It seems as if every sermon you preach is centered on Jesus. Some of us think you need to preach more on the family, current needs, and other relevant topics, and less about Jesus.” Sadly many have the same point view. We must realize that Jesus must be the center of our lives. Without Him, we are all hopeless!

Conclusion: Paul’s joy is immediately evident in the Philippian letter. I trust you have great joy in Christ. If not, He is more than able to supply. Bring your burdens and cares before Him. I rejoice for all that I have in Christ! I can’t imagine life without Him, and I certainly wouldn’t want to live without Him. If you are unsaved, come by faith to Christ and experience the joy, grace, and peace He gives!

ⁱ John Phillips Commentary Series, The - The John Phillips Commentary Series – Exploring Philippians: An Expository Commentary.