

Philippians 1:1-2

Preached by Greg Lundstedt at Vancouver Bible Fellowship Church on 4/22/2007

What we really need: Lessons from a greeting

Prayer

Father, what a great privilege it is to come before You, to boldly come before your throne and receive mercy and find grace in time of need. And Father we need you all the time, and Father as we come to Your Word, we pray that You would open our hearts and minds to understand. And Father that we wouldn't forget what we've heard when we leave, that we wouldn't forget what Your Word reveals we are. That we would not just be hearers but by Your strength and power we would be doers of what You've said. Father, we ask You to bless Your Word as it goes out, we ask You to convict us, to reprove us, correct us, and to train us in righteousness, that we would be adequate, equipped for every good work that You have pre-ordained before the foundation of the world. We pray that in all things today, Your Son Jesus would be glorified, and it is in His name we pray. Amen.

Sermon

Well it's interesting as we enter days after this situation that happened at Virginia Tech that people are pretty much in agreement that what happened was terribly evil. That someone who hates so much would actually take that out and kill is very, very evil. But often we do not see the evil that is hidden and disguised, the evil that is more dangerous to the body of Christ, than that which is outwardly manifested. In 2 Corinthians 11, the apostle Paul shares that Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. Therefore, it's no wonder that his servants disguise themselves as workers of righteousness. In the book of James, James talks about the wisdom that comes from above, which is pure and peaceable. And those other wonderful truths, and he talks about the wisdom which is from below, which is from mankind, which is earthly, natural, and demonic. And so often we're willing to identify wickedness when it's plain and simple, but we're unwilling to identify wickedness as God identifies it in His Word, which is earthly wisdom, which is just as dangerous on the spiritual and eternal level.

Unfortunately, there's been a great paradigm shift in many churches in the last twenty years, this shift is so extensive that the term "evangelical" these days doesn't mean what it used to mean. Twenty years ago if you heard the term evangelical, you thought of born again believer, trusting in Christ, who has repented of their sins and now, we see that evangelicals are a group of people seeking to fill the felt needs of one another in their congregations. Now unfortunately, all of this is built on a worldly mindset, rather than on what the Word of God has to say.

Now today in Philippians we're going to start our series in the book of Philippians, and we're going to see in this first introduction today, I believe, what we need. There are many people telling people Sunday after Sunday, and on radio, or whatever it might be, what you think you need, but scripture reveals what we really need. So would you turn in your Bibles with me, and we're going to see, and I hope, and gather some lessons from a greeting in Philippians 1.

And as you're turning there, we're going to be looking at the book of Philippians, so I'm going to give a little more context today concerning this book. And it behooves us to understand the context

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surrounding the book of Philippians. As we see in the first verse, the apostle Paul is the author. And it's clear that the apostle Paul is writing to believers in Philippi, while he is imprisoned. In the first chapter he mentions his imprisonment three times alone. And now there are different theories as to where Paul was imprisoned during this time, but the standard understanding from history is that he was imprisoned in Rome at this time, and indeed the evidence within this letter confirms that.

We see in chapter 4:22, that the greeting from Caesar's household, well that was in Rome. And we see in Philippians 1:12-13, and I'll read that for you, and you can scan down to that, verse 12 in chapter 1,

¹² Now I want you to know, brethren, that my circumstances have turned out for the greater progress of the gospel, ¹³ so that my imprisonment in the cause of Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else...[Philippians 1:12-13]

Just a basic understanding of the praetorian guard, which we'll look at later when we get into that, is the guard that guard's Caesar, a special guard. And therefore, Paul is speaking from Rome I believe, he's imprisoned in Rome under house arrest.

Now Acts 28 reveals Paul was under house arrest for two years in Rome. Most likely from 60 to 61 A.D. until 63 A.D. Somewhere around that time. And Paul was chained 24/7 to a Roman guard. And we'll see, later on, the impact that the gospel had by having Paul chained to a Roman guard, where in our own wisdom we think "Oh Paul can't be out ministering", but in God's wisdom as Paul is chained, he says the gospel has advanced, what a wonderful truth that is beyond our understanding as we will see in scripture.

Now this epistle is one of four prison epistles, Colossians, Philippians, Ephesians, and Philemon, and I believe they're all written around 62 A.D. And in Acts 16 we have the description of the founding of the church of Philippi ten years earlier in 52 A.D. And remember at that time, that was only twenty years after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ and Pentecost. So the church was twenty years old, and then the church in Philippi was founded as we'll see in Acts 16 in 52 A.D. and Paul is now writing this letter in 62 A.D. And we see in Acts 16, if you're familiar with the book of Acts, the apostle Paul, Silas, Timothy and Luke were on what we call Paul's 2nd missionary journey. Having come from the east, they were going to go south to Asia, but they were not allowed, and the scripture says "having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit, to speak a word in Asia". And they were not allowed to go north to Turkey, we see also that scripture says "they were trying to go to Bithynea, and Spirit of Jesus did not permit them". And God ultimately lead them west as Paul was passing through Mysia, and then to Troas, Paul received a vision of a man saying come help us. Then Paul would go on in obedience to the Lord, crossing the Aegean sea unto Philippi. And we see the record of the first converts in Europe in Philippi in Acts 16.

So if you keep your fingers in Philippians and turn with me also back to Acts 16, we're going to see how this church began. Now in the scripture we see in the book of Acts that churches began because the gospel was brought out, and the Word increased rather than men trying to figure out ways to plant

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churches and make them happen. People were saved, and they grew in the knowledge of Christ and from that the church was born and built up as the Lord directed it. Now we see the first European converts in Acts 16:12,

¹² And from there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia, a Roman colony; and we were staying in this city for some days. ¹³ And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate to a riverside, where we were supposing that there would be a place of prayer; and we sat down and began speaking to the women who had assembled. ¹⁴ And a certain woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul. [Acts 16:12-14]

You have a lady named Lydia who is down by the river, a place of prayer for those who were attempting to seek the living God in a Jewish fashion, and Paul came down and he preached and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul.

¹⁵ And when she and her household had been baptized, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us. [Acts 16:15]

Evidently the apostle Paul shared the gospel to her household and they were saved also. And we have the beginning of the Philippian church, a lady named Lydia and her family. And then we have next that Paul casts out some demons from a slave girl and is thrown into a Philippian jail. Let's read about that down in Acts 16:16,

¹⁶ And it happened that as we were going to the place of prayer, a certain slave-girl having a spirit of divination met us, who was bringing her masters much profit by fortunetelling. ¹⁷ Following after Paul and us, she kept crying out, saying, "These men are bond-servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation." (Now that doesn't sound to wrong, that statement, but it's coming from a demonically possessed woman, and we see here Paul's reaction to this) ¹⁸ And she continued doing this for many days. But Paul was greatly annoyed, and turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her!" And it came out at that very moment. ¹⁹ But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, (so she was making profit off of the demonic possession in her) they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the market place before the authorities, ²⁰ and when they had brought them to the chief magistrates, they said, "These men are throwing our city into confusion, being Jews, ²¹ and are proclaiming customs which it is not lawful for us to accept or to observe, being Romans. " ²² And the crowd rose up together against them, and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them, and proceeded to order them to be beaten with rods. ²³ And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, (the apostle Paul and his companions

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are beaten with rods, inflicted many blows, they're thrown into prison) **commanding the jailer to guard them securely;**²⁴ **and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison (that's tightest security), and fastened their feet in the stocks.**²⁵ **But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, (what a wonderful, wonderful truth, they're sore and bruised and bloody and they're singing hymns and praise to God, wonderful, wonderful truth) and the prisoners were listening to them;**²⁶ **and suddenly there came a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's chains were unfastened.**²⁷ **And when the jailer had been roused out of sleep and had seen the prison doors opened, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped.**²⁸ **But Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Do yourself no harm, for we are all here!"**²⁹ **And he called for lights and rushed in and, trembling with fear, he fell down before Paul and Silas,**³⁰ **and after he brought them out, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"**³¹ **And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household."**³² **And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house.**³³ **And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household.**³⁴ **And he brought them into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household. [Acts 16:16-34]**

We have the beginning of a church, this is the way the Lord planted a church in Philippi, by having Paul share the gospel to a lady down at the river, by having Paul sent to jail after being beaten and praising God and the manifestation of Christ in them as God brought about an earthquake they recognized that God was at work in them, and they asked what must I do to be saved, and Paul shared the Word with them. And we have the beginning of the Philippian church.

Now as we see in scripture, Paul was very close to the Philippians. They had alone supported him when he was in Thessalonica. They had taken care of his needs, they had sent gifts to Paul, at least on four occasions, and perhaps no other church had given him such loving care, Paul was very close to this church, we need to understand it as we look at the book of Philippians. Now as I mentioned, Paul was writing this book around 62 A.D. , possibly 63 A.D. , he was in a Roman prison basically for two years, and Timothy evidently was with him. And from our book we need to surmise, what is the occasion now for the book of Philippians, can we see anything in the text to get an idea of why Paul wrote the book.

Well certainly in chapter 4 we see that Paul was so thankful for the gracious gifts that they had given to him. But also this letter in Philippians addresses some other issues. We see certainly there was a disagreement between two women who had served well before, Euodia and Syntyche in chapter 4. And this disagreement was of such a magnitude that the news had travelled through Epaphroditus to Paul over a large period of time, and there was still a disagreement. And as with the church today, in chapter 3 we see that Paul needed to remind them and warn them of the threats to the gospel. Beware of the

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dogs, beware of the evil-workers, beware of the false circumcision. And also, as within every church, there were threats to the unity that is in Christ, and we see that those needed to be dealt with.

But within all this, in Philippians, we see that the book of Philippians is an encouraging letter, it is a letter that deals with the true context of how we walk with the Lord Jesus Christ. And although there are many trials and indeed we will be persecuted, we are to rejoice in the Lord. And Paul would say, again I say rejoice. Harry Ironside, a great preacher from the early 20th century, breaks this book down in a way which I think is very helpful. He says,

The theme of the whole might be placed into three words, Christ Is All... It occupies us with himself, and in each separate division we see Him in some different way. And we see the subjective result of why (how?) the believer should function when he is occupied with Christ... Christ is set forth in chapter 1 as our life. In chapter 2, He is set forth as our example. In chapter 3, Christ is our object. And in the last chapter, we see that Christ is set forth as our strength and supply. Christ is all. As with all scripture, the book of Philippians is about the Lord Jesus Christ.

So with this in mind, we begin our study of Philippians, and I would encourage you this week to sit down and just read through the book, it will take you about twenty minutes. It's a wonderful, wonderful blessing, and as you read through it you will be stunned by how much wonderful truth. And then read it through the next day, read it through every day this week and you'll see how the Lord will change your life through this book. So now as we look at the book of Philippians, what do we really need, what is it that we as believers really need? I believe we're going to see first of all that we need to understand our great privilege, that we are bond-servants of Christ. A great privilege and responsibility.

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¹ Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons. [Philippians 1:1]

Initially we see the senders of this letter are Paul and Timothy, but we need to be careful not to ascribe the writing of this book to Timothy. Timothy is simply sending his greeting with Paul. From verse 3 and on Paul shares everything in the first person, it is Paul writing. And later on we see chapter 2 that Paul speaks about sending Timothy, it is Paul writing this book. But in the beginning it is Paul and Timothy sending their greetings to this Philippian church.

Now just a little about Timothy, we're going to look at him more in depth in chapter 2. But Timothy was a native of Derbe and Lystra, his mother was Jew by the name of Eunice, his father was a Greek. He had not been circumcised before he journeyed with Paul. In 2 Timothy 3 it reveals that his grandmother and his mother shared the sacred scriptures which are able to bring about life. And we don't know when he was converted to Christianity, but we know when he met Paul in Acts 16, he had already become a disciple. And he was such of a proven young character in Christ that Paul wanted to take him with him.

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And now we don't really understand, I believe, how extensively Timothy was a part of Paul's life. Paul calls him his son in the Lord, a son in the faith, his true child, he calls him his brother, a co-worker, fellow servant, fellow slave. He was with Paul in Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Corinth, Ephesus, and he was with Paul in Rome right now during his imprisonment. He is associated in the writing of some of these epistles, such as 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 2 Corinthians, Colossians, and Philippians, and when Paul wrote Romans, Timothy was there as well. And of course we have the letters of Paul to Timothy in 1 and 2 Timothy. Timothy was of great use to the apostle Paul and ultimately a great use to the Lord.

And how is it now that they identify themselves in this letter? Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus. Well what can we observe from this introduction? What can we observe from this? Simply I think, first of all, that Paul's authority as an apostle was not in question in Philippi. Paul does not say "Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus", as he does in other letters. He says, Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus. It's evident that the Philippian church and Paul, they had a good relationship together and that his authority was not in question.

Now they call themselves bond-servants. What is a bond-servant? The Greek word is *doulos*, and it is a servile term used to describe a slave who is completely surrendered to the will of his master and the authority of his master. Paul and Timothy are bond-servants of their master Christ Jesus. Paul and Timothy recognized that when they came into a relationship with Christ, they were bought with a price. 1 Corinthians 6:19,

¹⁹ Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own? ²⁰ For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body. [1 Corinthians 6:19-20]

1 Peter 1:17,

¹⁷ And if you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each man's work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay upon earth; ¹⁸ knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, ¹⁹ but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ. ²⁰ For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you. [1 Peter 1:17-20]

Concerning this term *doulos*, this term bond-servant, one pastor writes (Greg Herrick),

In the Greco-Roman context referred to a class of people who were at the bottom of the social order. They became slaves, for example, through war, debt, capital convictions, and simply being born from a slave mother. In any case there were slave dealers who acquired them and sold them as property. Slaves had no rights, privileges, or freedoms in any sphere of society outside the family to which they belonged, though some of them, including doctors and accountants, were more educated than their owners. With

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this background in mind, Paul's use of the term in Phil 1:1 could indicate that he and Timothy are servants of Christ Jesus in the sense that both he and Timothy are owned by Christ and have been bound over to him to do his will—and his will only.

Paul and Timothy recognized the truth that they were bond-servants of the Lord. And Paul and Timothy understood that we will be somebody's slave. We will either be a slave to self or a slave to God. Everybody is a bondsman, everybody is a doulos to something or somebody. You will either align your will and serve God, a good and gracious God who bought you with a great price, the precious blood of His Son, or you will serve the cruel task master of selfishness and sin.

Paul shares this exact truth in the book of Romans 6. He says in verse 16

¹⁶ Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? ¹⁷ But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed... (down in verse 22 of chapter 6) ²² But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life. ²³ For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. [Romans 6:16-17, 22-23]

Folks, it's impossible to follow Christ if you don't realize you are His bond-servant, that you have been bought with a price. If you don't realize that your will is no longer relevant, that you assume the will of your master in heaven which is revealed in His Word. And He is a good master and a gracious master and a wonderful master and we are, if you have placed your faith in Jesus Christ, His bond-servants. And I want to ask you, have you been bought with a price? Now concerning this idea of bond-servant, Paul shares and calls Epaphras a bond-servant twice in Colossians 4. And Wayne Barber writes concerning this, and I believe it's a good explanation of what a bond-servant is like,

Epaphras was a man who was not at his own disposal, but was His master's purchased property. Bought to serve His master's needs, to be at His beck and call every moment, the slave's sole business is to do as he is told. Christian service therefore means, first and foremost, living out a slave relationship to one's Savior.

That's what bond-servants are, and Paul and Timothy identify themselves right away as bond-servants of Christ Jesus. And all throughout scripture we see that true believers are called servants of the living God. Throughout Deuteronomy, Deuteronomy 10:12, I'll read this for you,

And now, Israel, what does the LORD your God require from you, but to fear the LORD your God, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul... [Deuteronomy 10:12]

That's a bondservant, all your heart and all your soul, your will is not yours, it is His will alone.

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Deuteronomy 10:20,

²⁰ You shall fear the LORD your God; you shall serve Him and cling to Him, and you shall swear by His name. ²¹ "He is your praise and He is your God, who has done these great and awesome things for you which your eyes have seen. [Deuteronomy 10:20-21]

Deuteronomy 11: 13,

And it shall come about, if you listen obediently to my commandments which I am commanding you today, to love the LORD your God and to serve Him with all your heart and all your soul,... (It talks about, He will bring about this physical prosperity for Jerusalem (Israel?), but ultimately we see for the believer it is spiritual prosperity)... ¹⁶ Beware, lest your hearts be deceived and you turn away and serve other gods and worship them. [Deuteronomy 11:13,16]

Joshua 24:14,

Now, therefore, fear the LORD and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. ¹⁵ "And if it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: (if you don't want to give your will over totally to the Lord, than make the choice, choose this day whom you will serve, but Joshua, praise God, he says) whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD". [Joshua 24:14-15]

The Lord used that verse greatly in my life as I was disobedient and he disciplined me severely, and in the midst of that discipline, that passage came to my heart, choose this day whom you will serve. It's simply about who do I serve, do I serve myself, my own desires, my own interests, do I get up in the morning thinking about myself and my life, or do I get up in the morning praising my God and Savior, ready to serve Him in whatever way He desires that day. Am I aligning my will to His will as revealed in the Word, or am I aligning my will to the will of the world, and ultimately to those things that are evil and demonic? Choose this day whom you will serve.

And we have a grand purpose when you have truly come into a relationship with Jesus Christ, you have been bought with a price, the precious blood of the Lord, and we are to serve Him, we are bond-slaves of the Lord Jesus, and if we don't get that, forget the rest. So we see first of all, Paul and Timothy understood their great and ultimate purpose which was to serve the living God, to be His bond-slaves for His glory. And I think secondly through this greeting we will see that we need to understand and remember our position in Christ.

Again, verse 1, ***Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons.*** At this point we see who Paul is writing to, to all the

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saints who are in Christ Jesus, who are in Philippi. Now the world is divided into two groups, the saints and the 'aints, the righteous and the wicked. There's no in-between, there are those who are holy, and there are those who are not, and we'll talk about that. And Paul is writing to all the saints who are in Philippi. And this word saints, *hagios*, simply means to be set apart, to be holy, to be sanctified. And in context it means to be set apart to or by God. Now the question to who the saints are has been obscured by man-made religion of the Catholic church. And we are not to get our definition of who saints are through the so called Holy Fathers, we are to get our definition through the scripture. Take for instance in 1 Corinthians 1:1, Paul writes,

Paul, called as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother,² To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who have been sanctified in Christ Jesus, saints by calling, with all who in every place call on the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, their Lord and ours. [1 Corinthians 1:1-2]

Did you notice what he said? He's writing to the church of God in Corinth, and He calls them saints by calling, the church are the saints. And in the middle of that, he uses the phrase to those who have been sanctified, and it's the same word in a different form, by Christ Jesus.

And now he address in Philippi, to all the saints in Christ Jesus. And now certainly, believers are not called saints because of their behavior, certainly 1 Corinthians is a testimony, to that, they had been sinning greatly, and some had sinned to the point that God had taken their lives in discipline in chapter 11. But Paul calls them saints. And certainly in Philippi he says all the saints there, and he's addressing Euodia and Syntyche, and they have a spat which is not Godly. And there are those who are those who are anxious in Philippi, and that is not Godly, but yet, he calls them saints. We are not called saints because of our behavior, we are called saints because we are set apart in Christ Jesus.

This little phrase, in Christ, describes what it means to be saved. When you repent of your sin, and place your faith in Jesus Christ, you are delivered from the domain of darkness, into the kingdom of His beloved Son. You are redeemed; you are bought with a price, the payment for your sin has been put on Jesus and it has been applied to you. You have been baptized, placed into, identified with the body of Christ, you have been united to the life of Christ. You are set apart in Him, you are sanctified in Christ. The Holy Spirit comes to dwell in you. Once separated by sin, you are now alive together with Him. Once your own lord, now you are His possession, bought with a great price, the precious blood of a lamb. You are set apart, or sanctified from sin and self, unto God. And you are united to the very life of Christ, you are in Christ, and He is holy, and thus we are holy. To all the saints who are in Christ Jesus.

You see, if you're not in Christ, God sees you in your sins. He talks about not being deceived, that idolaters and fornicators and swindlers and drunkards, you know if you're into drugs and drinking, you're not going to enter the kingdom of God. If God identifies you by your sin, that's who you are. But when Jesus Christ pays the price for your sins, and you are united to Him, you are identified by His righteousness. And we are saints, identified with the sinless Savior Jesus Christ, wonderful, wonderful truth.

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Paul writes to the Corinthians, reminding them of this truth, 1 Corinthians 6:9,

⁹ Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? (Don't be deceived, those who are unrighteous aren't going to inherit this) Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, ¹⁰ nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹ And such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and in the Spirit of our God. [1 Corinthians 6:9-10]

What wonderful truth. 2 Corinthians 5:21,

²¹ He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. [2 Corinthians 5:21]

We are not saints because of what we do, we are saints because we are in Christ, and He is holy. And therefore, if that is true about us, there is going to be a difference, ultimately in our behavior. I want to ask you, are you a saint? Have you been set apart in Christ, have you repented of your sin and trusted in Jesus Christ as Lord. Do you possess the righteousness of Christ? Or are you striving to attain your relationship with God through your own righteousness, which is as filthy rags. Are you a saint? We need to understand that we are bond-servants of the living God, we are bought to be given over to His will and His will alone, we need to understand our great and high position in Christ, that we are in Christ, we are saints. Do you see yourself set apart for His holy purposes and glory? What a tremendous, tremendous calling. It affects every aspect of our lives, for mothers, it affects every aspect of your raising of children, your preparing meals, whatever it is, it is unto the living God, it is a wonderful, wonderful thing that you are able and given to do. For fathers, working, whatever it might be, God has ordained that we serve Him through those things for His glory. Set apart for His purposes and glory. And that's the way Paul and Timothy saw things because God had illumined their hearts to understand this truth.

Now in our text, as we continue, we see that in all of the greeting, he includes overseers and deacons. And this gives us a light into the structure and functioning of the church. He says, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including overseers and deacons. And now what can we learn from this just briefly, we're not going to go through this in this passage, later on in other passages we will. But what can we learn specifically about this? That the church has overseers, plural, and it has deacons, plural. And first, this term overseer means to care for, *episkopos*, to care for, to watch over, to see to, to look after. And it's interesting in scripture, the term overseer and elder and shepherd are interchangeable. You see it interchanged in Titus 1:5-7. Paul uses elder and overseers synonymously.

1 Peter 5 and Acts 20, you see all three terms, shepherd, elder, overseer, used synonymously, and this is good evidence that the shepherd, the elder, the overseer were all the same thing. So what is overseeing? And we don't have time to go through it, but look at Acts 20 and you'll get a good picture. 1 Peter 5, you'll get a good picture, look at certain verses in Hebrews 13 and you'll get a good picture.

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Look at 1 Timothy 3, and Titus 1, and you'll get a good picture. Obviously it has the idea of having oversight, watching out for the spiritual condition of the flock. Looking after, guarding, feeding, and leading the sheep to the Word of God in an unadulterated fashion. It is watching out for the flock, it is protecting them from the threats to the Word from within and without. That's in a nutshell what overseers do. 1 Timothy 3, Titus 1, give those qualifications, which by the way aren't how long you've been at the church, by the way or not, you know, are you good at leading people, they are character qualifications. These men need to exhibit the qualities of a Christ like servant.

And notice here the plurality, he doesn't say including the senior pastor, he says including the overseers and deacons, plural. Now again, with deacons, we don't have enough time to sufficiently cover the subject, so I'm going to summarize this also. The word deacon, simply means servant, it's a simple word, it just means servant. And here he is speaking of recognized servants in the church. And now, unfortunately, some Baptist churches have confused the issue of what a deacon is, by calling their elders deacons, and therefore putting the qualifications on their deacons that elders should have, rather than what the Bible says deacons should have. There are elders and there are deacons. And 1 Timothy 3 we see the qualifications for deacons, and I'm going to read that.

1 Timothy 3:8,

⁸ Deacons likewise must be men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain, ⁹ but holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. ¹⁰ And let these also first be tested; then let them serve as (servants, or serve as) deacons if they are beyond reproach. ¹¹ Women must likewise (speaking of women deacons I believe, they're not in leadership, they're not exercising authority, their servants) **be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things. ¹² Let deacons be husbands of only one wife,** (or a one woman man, it's not talking about whether your spouse died and you remarried, or if a deserted spouse left you, it's talking about them having the character qualities of being a one woman man, devoted to their spouses, he says) **and good managers of their children and their own households. ¹³ For those who have served well as deacons** (or literally, for those who have 'deaconed' as deacons in the Greek) **obtain for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus. [1 Timothy 3:8-13]**

And deacons are not leadership, therefore women can be in that. We see in Romans 16, Paul commends Phoebe who is a deacon of the church. Romans 16:1,

¹ I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a servant (the word is deacon, exact same word) of the church which is at Cenchrea; (she was a deacon, recognized there) ² that you receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and that you help her in whatever matter she may have need of you; for she herself has also been a helper of many, and of myself as well. [Romans 16:1-2]

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Deacons are helpers, taking care of physical needs, and if you look at Tychicus, just do a search on his name, it calls him a minister in scripture, but it's the same word, deacon. And Paul says I sent Tychicus here, I've sent Tychicus there, Tychicus is just helping and serving, and we see what a deacon is really about. And notice there are a plurality of deacons, there's not THE deacon. A small glimpse into how the church functions.

Paul addresses the saints, including the elders and the deacons. He understood he was a bond-slave of Christ, that they were set apart unto Christ, covered by His righteousness. And next we see that Paul desired in this little greeting for them to recognize His provision, the provision of grace. Verse 1,

¹ Paul and Timothy, bond-servants (doulos) of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons: ² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. [Philippians 1:1-2]

It's a very simple salutation; it is the common greeting of Paul, in which he begins every epistle except 1 and 2 Timothy. Grace to you, and peace. In the Greek it's the same structure in every single greeting, grace to you and peace. Now there are some who look at this from an external standpoint and say, now that's just simply the way Greeks said it, they would say grace to you, and Hebrews would say peace, shalom. Well that's true, but is that totally what Paul is saying? Does Paul say words in an empty fashion for an empty greeting? I believe not, I believe there is more to it when Paul says grace to you, and peace, because he says, it is from God our Father and our Lord Jesus Christ. It's not merely just a greeting that people give in rote.

So what does he mean by this? I believe first of all that Paul desired, as God does, for them to live in the context of grace, grace to you.

We see grace was at the heart of Paul's gospel, for grace was a primary motivator towards a holy life for Paul, and grace is God's unmerited favor in the person of Christ. Titus 2:11, For the grace of God has appeared. It is God's unmerited favor in the person of Christ bringing salvation to all men as God would say through Paul in Titus 2:11. And it is that same grace that instructs us to deny ungodliness, to live righteously and uprightly in this present age, and God desires us to live by that. Grace to you. It was the grace of God that turned Paul from the greatest legalist of his day to the greatest exponent of love, mercy, and truth. Paul desires these Philippians, and God desires them, everyone, all the saints including the overseers and deacons to walk in the provision of His grace, to live in the context of His grace. Grace is God's unmerited favor manifest in the person of Christ. And God's grace in Christ is sufficient. Wonderful, marvelous, matchless grace, the wonderful songs we sing, grace grace, grace greater than our sin. Amazing grace, the wonderful truths. But sometimes we separate the word grace from Christ, it is God's unmerited favor in the person of Christ. And Paul says, grace to you, that's the desire, grace to you.

Now notice he says, grace to you and peace. I think we're going to see in the grammar that peace is the result of an encounter with the grace of God. And I need to point out if you have any NIV Bibles, they say grace and peace to you, and that's not how it is in the Greek. It is grace to you, and peace. Grace to you,

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and peace. And in that Greek structure it seems to indicate that the grace is the initial affect and the peace is the result, not grace and peace as a package, but grace to you with the result which is peace. I believe that's what Paul is saying in this greeting. Grace to you, and it comes from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Folks, peace never comes before grace, true peace is a result of an encounter with the grace of God. It is a result of an encounter with the grace of God and the person of Christ. Our initial peace we have with God is the result of an encounter with the grace of God and the person of Christ through salvation.

Romans 5:1,

¹ Therefore having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ... [Romans 5:1]

Therefore having been justified by faith we have peace. Colossians 1:19,

¹⁹ For it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fulness to dwell in Him, ²⁰ and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross... [Colossians 1:19-20]

If you do not have this initial peace, this relational peace with the living God, you are at enmity with Him. It is only through Christ, bearing your sins in His body on the cross, you believing that He died for your sins and rose from the dead, trusting in Him, calling out to Christ the Lord to save you, that you will receive peace because you will no longer be at enmity, because your sins have been taken care of because of Christ. And you will be at peace between you and the living God.

Now we have positional peace with God when we come into a relationship with Him, but we often lose our experiential peace, right? We often get anxious, we often get worried, and we often get concerned. And we choose to allow sin to control us, letting worry or anxiety or fear to control us rather than God's grace in Christ. Do you need peace? You need an encounter with the grace of God, and the person of Christ. Later on in Philippians 4, very familiar passage, the command, verse 6, "Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, shall guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus." The wonderful, wonderful truth. I want to ask you, do you need peace? You need to walk in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. You're trying on your own, you're trusting in your own efforts, you need to rest in the grace of God manifest in Christ.

You need to abide in Christ, and His Word in you, and you will have peace. Jesus says, John 14:27,

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, nor let it be fearful. [John 14:27]

I want to ask you, do you have peace? Now remember this grace, and the result peace does not come from experience, it doesn't come from worship, it doesn't come from going to church, it doesn't come from service, it doesn't come from a book. What does scripture say? Grace to you, and peace from God

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our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Again, true peace is a result, and encounter with the grace of God. It is impossible to live in the context of God's grace unless we recognize our true state, which is total inadequacy. God does not work with our strengths, He works with our weaknesses. Remember Paul's petition for the removal of the thorn in the flesh that God had given to discipline him, to keep him from sinning, God does discipline us in advance of sinning sometimes, to keep him from sinning, from exalting himself. And Paul petitioned Him. What was God's response to him? And He said, My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.

We have the ultimate provision for life, the grace of God in the person of Jesus Christ. As we yield ourselves as bond-servants in a right relationship to Him, and we walk in the provision of God's grace. This is God's desire for you if you're a believer, grace to you, and peace. I began talking about the paradigm shift in the evangelical church, a wicked focus from Christ to self, to serving self rather than serving the Lord. Or serving the Lord maybe but through my own ways and means, rather than through what He has revealed in His Word. We've seen, I believe, in this first introduction to the book what we really need. We need to understand that we are bond-servants of Christ, that we are all saints, if you are in Christ. And that we are covered by the righteousness of Christ, that we have the provision for life, the grace of God in the person of Jesus Christ, resulting in His wonderful peace, letting the peace rule our hearts and the Word dwell richly.

For those of you who are not saved, God reveals in His Word, as we've seen, there are the righteous and the wicked. There are the saints and there are those who are identified by their sin. If your sin is not covered, God sees you through your sin and that is how He identifies you. When you lie, you are a liar, when you lust, you're an adulterer, a fornicator, when you covet you're a coveter, and God sees you through that and none of you will enter the kingdom of God. But God is a gracious God, and He has given the provision of His Son Jesus Christ, He who knew no sin became sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of God in Christ. You can become a saint today, you can receive as a free gift the righteousness of Christ, the only righteousness that God accepts. God does not accept your deeds, God does not accept what you do, He accepts what Christ did, and if you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ you'll be united to His life, and you will be seen in Christ and you'll be set apart, you'll be a saint. Choose this day whom you'll serve. You're going to serve somebody, you can't serve two masters. And you know in your heart who you serve when you get up in the morning. You know who you serve when you make decisions; you know who you serve when trouble comes in your life. Choose this day.

Then for those of us who name the name of Christ, who claim to be His bond-servants, are you truly sold over to do His will as revealed in scripture? Or are you serving self? Choose this day whom you'll serve. The test starts the minute you get up, the minute you walk out, the test starts as God allows life to come upon you. Who are you serving? Are you yielded? Not my will but thy will be done in everything, that's a bond-servant of Christ. That's a true believer. We have the grand purpose of being His bond-slaves, to a good and wonderful master, rather than the cruel, evil task-master of sin and selfishness ultimately in the domain of darkness. We have a glorious position in Christ, set apart as holy. And we have the provision for life which is God's grace manifest in the person of Christ, day in and day out as we trust

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Him, as He lives His life through us, as we do not deserve it. We are servants and saints who are amply supplied for everything that God calls us to do.

Prayer

Father, thank You for Your Word, and as we just begin to scratch the surface of this wonderful letter, I pray that You'd be preparing our hearts, that You'd be preparing our hearts to receive what You've said. That You'd be convicting us Lord God of the things that do not line up with what You've said. That Your Word would not dwell poorly in us, but that it would dwell richly. That we would be so desirous to know Your will, our hearts would be absorbed in Your Word. And when You allow things to come upon us to test us, that we would by Your strength and power choose to yield to Your will rather than our own. I pray for those in here who may not be believers but think they are, I pray You'd convict them on who they're truly serving, and I pray they would choose this day to serve Your Son Jesus Christ, that they would repent and believe in Him, call out to Him as a Savior. And Father for those of us who know You, I just pray that we would see ourselves as Paul and Timothy did as bond-servants of Your Son Jesus. Sold over in every way, shape or form to do His will. Convict us if we're not Lord God, and help us to confess that to You, to be restored and forgiven and step forward Lord God. We praise You for Your grace and mercy in the person of Christ. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

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