When God created us, he made kids, not a choir; family members, not church members. He's into love, not liturgy.
Dutch Sheets

Prayer Study #469

PHILIPPINES 1

First Love Ministries, Inc., of Perry, Georgia USA

Introduction to Paul's Ministry at the City of Philippi

Philippi is the place where Paul first preached the Gospel in Europe. In Acts 16 we learn of Paul's first visit to Philippi. Paul had been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the Word in Asia (Acts 16:6). While at Troas, Paul had a vision in the night. He saw a man from Macedonia in his vision, urging him to come to Macedonia. The next day Paul left Troas and headed for Macedonia. The chief city, in the part of Macedonia they were in, was Philippi. On the Sabbath Paul and his companions (Silas and Timothy and most probably Luke) went to the river to a prayer gathering since there was no synagogue in the city. Lydia, a prominent merchant from Thyatira, was there, and she accepted Christ and was baptized (Acts 16:14-15).

Things went downhill for Paul and his company after this. A girl with a spirit of divination or python spirit started following Paul around, crying out that Paul and his company were servants of the most high God. This was most distracting, and Paul finally had enough and cast the demon out of the girl. This angered her owners, who made a lot of money from her soothsaying, and they had Paul and Silas thrown in jail because Paul had done something that cut off their revenue. They were first stripped, then beaten and thrown in jail. At midnight in jail with their feet in stocks, Paul and Silas prayed and sang praises to the Lord. There was an earthquake, and they were set free and led the jailer to Christ. The next day the city leaders told the jailer to let Paul and Silas go, but Paul sent word back to the magistrates that he was a Roman citizen, and thus unlawfully beaten and therefore would not leave until the magistrates themselves came. They went out of prison,

stopped by Lydia's house to tell the believers "good-by" and then departed out of the city and went to Thessalonica.

A strong bond, however, developed between Paul and the Philippian converts there. This letter is Paul's most warmly personal letter. He is writing this letter from prison in Rome. He is writing to thank the church there. They had sent money to him and a trusted servant Epaphroditus to care for Paul. He also wrote the letter to explain his circumstances in Rome. Epaphroditus almost died of an illness while with Paul. He recovered, and Paul sent this letter with Epaphroditus back to the Philippians. The letter was written in A.D. 62.

The letter to the Philippians covers several different themes. He exhorts the church to unity (1:27-2:18). He warns the believers there to be aware of the Judaizers and their legalism. He writes of salvation, which was provided by Christ in His death (2:6-8). He writes of the importance of stewardship and the rewards of giving. And finally, he gives Christian models, primarily Jesus Christ, that we are to imitate and pattern our life after.

King Philip of Macedonia, the father of Alexander the Great, established Philippi in 356 B.C. The Romans captured it in 168 B.C. Brutus and Cassius' forces were defeated outside of this city in 42 B.C., allowing Mark Anthony and Octavius, who later became Caesar Augustus, to assume power in Rome. The city was a military outpost and not a commercial city. Paul first visited Philippians during his second missionary journey in A.D. 51 and returned again during his third missionary journey.

The key verse in Philippians is found in Philippians 1:21 (*For me to live is Christ and to die is gain.*), although several life verses are found in this epistle. The book is referred to as "the epistle of joy and encouragement in the midst of adverse circumstances." The book is broken down as follows:

Chapter 1: Paul's Account of his Circumstances
Chapter 2: The Mind of Christ
Chapter 3: The Knowledge of Christ
Chapter 4: The Peace of Christ

Philippians 1 Amplified Bible (AMP)

A Letter to Paul's Friends

1 *Paul and Timothy, bond servants of Christ Jesus (the Messiah), to all the saints (God's consecrated people) in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the bishops (overseers) and deacons (assistants):*
2 *Grace (favor and blessing) to you and [heart] peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ (the Messiah).*
3 *I thank my God in all my remembrance of you.*

What a beautiful picture Paul is giving us here. He is clearly writing to people for whom he has a great love. They are his friends. In every other of Paul's letters except Thessalonians and Philemon, Paul begins his letters with a statement establishing his right as an apostle to be listened to and as a leader of the new religion of Christianity to be followed. Here there is no need of that because he know the Philippian church will listen. They are his friends, and he knows that they love him, and he loves them. They loved him so much that, even in their poverty, they sent gifts to him. Paul prided himself in the fact that he never received gifts from other churches and earned his own living by tent making. Only from Philippi had gifts come. When he was in Thessalonica, they sent him a present (4:16), and they were the ones who sent him another love offering when he arrived in Corinth. There is no doubt that he was closest to the Philippians out of all the churches where he ministered. In Chapter 4, verse one, he writes: *Therefore, my beloved and longed-for brethren, my joy and crown, so stand fast*

in the Lord, beloved."

Paul is in prison, but his beloved spiritual son Timothy was with him. They were both bond slaves of Christ. We know from previous studies that the word *doulos* translated *servants* here, actually means *slaves,* and slaves who had absolutely no rights and were to serve the master in complete obedience. This means that Paul and Timothy are saying that they are the possessions of Christ, bought with a price, and can never belong to anyone else, and that they have no will of their own but completely follow the master's will. But this is a completely different kind of bond slave. As the Latin saying puts it, "To be His slave is to be a king."

Paul is writing to all the saints *in* Christ Jesus who are at Philippi. The word used for saints means those who are different from other people and whose lives are consecrated to God because of their special relationship to Jesus. Marvin R. Vincent says that when Paul spoke of the Christian being in Christ, he means that a Christian is in Christ like a bird is in air, a fish is in water, a tree roots are in the soil. The Christian is always and everywhere conscious of the encircling presence of Christ.

When Paul uses the phrase *grace and peace,* he is combining the normal greeting of two different nations. *Charis,* translated *grace* here, is the greeting that all Greek letters always began with, and its basic ideas are joy and pleasure, brightness and beauty, charm. *Shalom,* from the Hebrew, is *peace*, and to this day is used by the Hebrews to greet each other. It means much more than freedom from trouble. It means total wellbeing and wish for a person's highest good and is always connected to

personal relationships.

Paul ends this first section thanking God for these people who have touched him so deeply with their love and concern for him.

Marks of the Christian life

4 *In every prayer of mine I always make my entreaty and petition for you all with joy (delight).*
5 *[I thank my God] for your fellowship (your [sympathetic cooperation and contributions and partnership) in advancing the good news (the Gospel) from the first day [you heard it] until now.*
6 *And I am convinced and sure of this very thing, that He Who began a good work in you will continue until the day of Jesus Christ [right up to the time of His return], developing [that good work] and perfecting and bringing it to full completion in you.*
7 *It is right and appropriate for me to have this confidence and feel this way about you all, because you have me in your heart and I hold you in my heart as partakers and sharers, one and all with me, of grace (God's unmerited favor and spiritual blessing). [This is true] both when I am shut up in prison and when I am out in the defense and confirmation of the good news (the Gospel).*
8 *For God is my witness how I long for and pursue you all with love, in the tender mercy of Christ Jesus [Himself]!*
9 *And this I pray: that your love may abound yet more and more and extend to its fullest development in knowledge and all keen insight [that your love may display itself in greater depth of acquaintance*

and more comprehensive discernment],
10 *So that you may surely learn to sense what is vital, and approve and prize what is excellent and of real value [recognizing the highest and the best, and distinguishing the moral differences], and that you may be untainted and pure and unerring and blameless [so that with hearts sincere and certain and unsullied, you may approach] the day of Christ [not stumbling nor causing others to stumble].*
11 *May you abound in and be filled with the fruits of righteousness (of right standing with God and right doing) which come through Jesus Christ (the Anointed One), to the honor and praise of God [that His glory may be both manifested and recognized].*

Paul next gives the Philippians the marks or characteristics of the Christian life. There is Christian joy. Someone once said that the most infallible sign of somebody being a Christian was the joy in their life. Demos Shakarian, the late founder of the Full Gospel Business Men's Fellowship International, wrote a book whose theme was Christians should be the happiest people on the face of the earth. Joy is going to be very important in the days ahead, and remember that it is one of the fruit of the Spirit.

There is joy throughout this epistle. There is joy of Christian prayer (1:4); joy that Jesus Christ is preached (1:18); joy of faith (1:25); joy of seeing Christians in fellowship together (2:2); joy in suffering for Christ (2:17); joy in getting news from loved ones (2:28); joy of Christian hospitality (2:29); joy from being in Christ (3:1, 4:1); joy in winning other souls for Christ (4:1); joy in receiving a gift (4:10).

The next mark that Paul looks at is Christian

sacrifice. The well-known verse in Philippians 1:6 reads *"Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ."* According to William Barclay, this verse paints a picture that is impossible to reproduce in English. The terms for *to begin* and for *to complete* are technical terms which have to do with the beginning and the ending of a sacrifice. Barclay writes, "Paul is seeing the life of every Christian as a sacrifice ready to be offered to Jesus Christ. It is the same picture as the one that he draws in Romans when he urges Christians to present their bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God (Romans 12:10….The only gift Jesus Christ desires from us is ourselves. So, our supreme task is to make our lives fit to offer to him. Only the grace of God can enable us to do that."

Another mark of the Christian life is Christian partnership. We must partner with each other in grace and to do the work of the Gospel. We are partner in the suffering for the Gospel. We are partners in Christ. When we partner with Christ, then we will be able to love as Jesus loves.

Finally, Paul goes on to show that love is perhaps the greatest characteristic of the Christian life, and Paul prays that that love will grow greater every day and will grow more and more in knowledge so that the Christian can distinguish more and more between right and wrong. Thus love causes us to walk more and more in purity and never cause another to stumble.

All of these characteristics lead to a life that gives praise and glory to God and is a witness for Jesus, not by our own effort but by the grace of God.

Paul's Afflictions Promote the Gospel

12 Now I want you to know and continue to rest assured, brethren, that what [has happened] to me [this imprisonment] has actually only served to advance and give a renewed impetus to the [spreading of the] good news (the Gospel).
13 So much is this a fact that throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest [here] my imprisonment has become generally known to be in Christ [that I am a prisoner in His service and for Him].
14 And [also] most of the brethren have derived fresh confidence in the Lord because of my chains and are much more bold to speak and publish fearlessly the Word of God [acting with more freedom and indifference to the consequences].
15 Some, it is true, [actually] preach Christ (the Messiah) [for no better reason than] out of envy and rivalry (party spirit), but others are doing so out of a loyal spirit and goodwill.
16 The latter [proclaim Christ] out of love, because they recognize and know that I am [providentially] put here for the defense of the good news (the Gospel).
17 But the former preach Christ out of a party spirit, insincerely [out of no pure motive, but thinking to annoy me], supposing they are making my bondage more bitter and my chains more galling.
18 But what does it matter, so long as either way, whether in pretense [for personal ends] or in all honesty [for the furtherance of the Truth], Christ is being proclaimed? And in that I [now] rejoice, yes, and I shall rejoice [hereafter] also.

Paul truly believed and walked out his words from Romans 8:28: *And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.* Here he is a prisoner in Rome. He has arrived in Rome and turned over to "the captain of the guard." Nevertheless, he was allowed to live by himself under the care of a soldier, and he later was allowed to have his own rented lodging (Acts 28:30) and to receive any visitors. He most likely was chained to a Roman soldier at all times, although the soldiers rotated in and out and so Paul had an opportunity to share Christ with Roman soldiers. Thus, he could say that his imprisonment had been for the furtherance of the Gospel.

Many were emboldened to preach Christ because they loved Paul and knew he was imprisoned. Some preached for wrong motives, but Paul was not a jealous or resentful person and was glad that the Gospel was going forth, even if some preached out of wrong motives.

Paul's Afflictions Exalt the Lord

19 *For I am well assured and indeed know that through your prayers and a bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ (the Messiah) this will turn out for my preservation (for the spiritual health and welfare of my own soul) and avail toward the saving work of the Gospel.*

20 *This is in keeping with my own eager desire and persistent expectation and hope, that I shall not disgrace myself nor be put to shame in anything; but that with the utmost freedom of speech and unfailing*

courage, now as always heretofore, Christ (the Messiah) will be magnified and get glory and praise in this body of mine and be boldly exalted in my person, whether through (by) life or through (by) death.
21 *For me to live is Christ [His life in me], and to die is gain [the gain of the glory of eternity].*
22 *If, however, it is to be life in the flesh and I am to live on here, that means fruitful service for me; so I can say nothing as to my personal preference [I cannot choose],*
23 *But I am hard pressed between the two. My yearning desire is to depart (to be free of this world, to set forth) and be with Christ, for that is far, far better;*
24 *But to remain in my body is more needful and essential for your sake.*
25 *Since I am convinced of this, I know that I shall remain and stay by you all, to promote your progress and joy in believing,*
26 *So that in me you may have abundant cause for exultation and glorying in Christ Jesus, through my coming to you again.*

Paul had a deep conviction that God allowed him to be put in this situation for Paul's own good both in his presence and in eternity. He also draws great comfort in the belief that his friends were praying for him and the Holy Spirit's presence in his life. He never thought he was too good for the prayers of others and frequently requested prayer. His hope is that he will never be shamed into silence, either because he is afraid or because he feels ineffective. He wants to turn from everything else to fix his eyes

on Jesus. He believes that Christ will be glorified in his life, in spite of how things go with him or whether he lives or dies.

For Paul Christ was his life. He had truly been born again on the Damascus Road and started living real life. If Christ were taken out of his life, there would be nothing left for Paul. Death was gain only because it was entrance into Christ's nearer presence. For himself, he wanted to depart to be with Christ. For the sake of his friends, he wanted to stay in this life to minister to them and lead them into a closer relationship with Jesus.

Paul's Exhortation to the Afflicted

27 *Only be sure as citizens so to conduct yourselves [that] your manner of life [will be] worthy of the good news (the Gospel) of Christ, so that whether I [do] come and see you or am absent, I may hear this of you: that you are standing firm in united spirit and purpose, striving side by side and contending with a single mind for the faith of the glad tidings (the Gospel).*

28 *And do not [for a moment] be frightened or intimidated in anything by your opponents and adversaries, for such [constancy and fearlessness] will be a clear sign (proof and seal) to them of [their impending] destruction, but [a sure token and evidence] of your deliverance and salvation, and that from God.*

29 *For you have been granted [the privilege] for Christ's sake not only to believe in (adhere to, rely on, and trust in) Him, but also to suffer in His behalf.*

30 *So you are engaged in the same conflict which you saw me [wage] and which you now hear to be mine*

[still].

No matter what happens to Paul, whether he lives or dies, he encourages the Philippians to live a life worthy of their faith in Christ. He exhorts them to stand together in unity, to walk in faith and not fear, to remember that they are called not only to believe in Christ but also to suffer for Him, and to engage in spiritual warfare.

JESUS CARES ABOUT YOU!

Holy Highway

There's a road called the holy highway that once was a desert land.
Very soon you'll hear the sound of a holy marching band.
Everlasting joy upon them, there's a remnant strong and true.
We bring the song back to Zion; we bring the praise back to you.

Chorus:
We exalt You, God Almighty, You are worthy to be praised.
Let all nations bow before You, Holy Ancient of all days.

There's a road called the holy highway, where the people dance and shout.
For the enemy is running with confusion all about.
Raise our banners in the victory; raise them high His word is true.
We bring our song back to Zion, we bring the praise back to you.

Repeat Chorus:

Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty.
Holy, holy, holy is the Lord.
Hallelujah, hallelujah, hallelujah.
We bring the song back to Zion
We bring the praise back to You.

There's a road called the holy highway that once was a desert land.
Very soon you'll hear the sound of a holy marching band.
Everlasting joy upon them, there's a remnant strong and true.
We bring the song back to Zion; we bring the praise back to you.