

# The Book of Philippians

Notes: Doug Hamilton

## A Powerful and Revealing Greeting

Philippians 1:1-2 Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons: <sup>2</sup> Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

As Christians, we are expected to "*greet one another*" (1 Cor 16:20; 2 Cor 13:12; 1 Thess 5:26; 1 Pet 5:14; Acts 23:26; James 1:1; 2 John 10). It can be with a holy kiss, a handshake, a wave and even a written notice such as this. A greeting will set the tone of the encounter and communicate a number of messages which could be received well by the recipient. Paul's greeting to the Philippians is powerful and reveals some interesting thoughts.

1. His greeting communicates inclusiveness.
  - a. Paul includes Timothy in the greeting.
    - i. Timothy was there in the beginning in the infancy of the church in Philippi.
    - ii. Paul reminds the Philippians that Timothy was his most trusted coworker, saying "I have no one else like him," (2:20) and "you know of his proven worth" 2:22).
    - iii. The Philippians knew this from already having a personal relationship with him. For Paul to not include Timothy in the greeting of the letter would be outright rude, especially since he is likely next to him during the composition.
  - b. Paul includes the whole church.
    - i. There were many members of the congregation in Philippi, including Lydia, the jailer and the their households, Epaphroditus, Eurodia, Syntyche, Clement and the "*rest of my fellow workers*" (4:3). We know there were also elders and deacons, as well as their wives and families.
    - ii. How much more enjoyable would congregations around the world be if we placed this principle on the front burner?
2. His greeting communicates humility.
  - a. The word for "bond-servants" is *doulos*. This is not a hired worker, but a willing slave that has sold himself to the greatest Master revealed to mankind.
  - b. As humans we tend to not like to view ourselves as slaves to nobody. To surrender our freedoms to another is always the greatest demonstration of humility. Paul will emphasize this later in chapter 2.
3. His greeting communicates maturity.
  - a. He extends the greeting to "*the elders and the deacons*". It had only been about a dozen years since Paul first brought the gospel to the

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city and they already had developed church leaders. This reveals that they were serious about their faith and had been living as such.

- b. There are congregations of the Lord's church that have been around for nearly a century, yet to bring forth an eldership. It is not because they have not had the numbers or a thriving location, but the inability to empower leadership. When a congregation is carrying out God's plan, they will bring for the necessary leadership.

## 4. The greeting communicates warmth.

- a. He wishes them grace.
  - i. When the ancients wrote letters, they typically began it by putting their name first, followed by the name of the recipient and the common salutation *charein* ("Greetings!"). Paul followed this pattern for the most part, but modified it from *charein* to *charis*, the Greek word for "grace".
  - ii. To wish someone *grace* is to express that the favor of God be carried out in their lives, something everyone would like to have.
- b. He wishes them peace.
  - i. Peace comes from the Hebrew word *shalom* and refers to an overwhelming calm that only God can give you. To wish this upon another Christian is one of the greatest intentions we could have for another.
  - ii. Paul will later explain how we can have the "*peace of God which surpasses all comprehension*" (Phil 4:7).

The quality of the greeting of a people says much concerning their relationship and the value of it thereof. A simple overview of Paul's greeting tells us of his deep love and respect for the Philippian church family. As we will see by the end of the letter, their love is mutual as indicated by the support of Paul throughout the ministry.

## A Prayer of Thanks

Philippians 1:3-9 I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, <sup>4</sup> always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, <sup>5</sup> in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now. <sup>6</sup> For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus. <sup>7</sup> For it is only right for me to feel this way about you all, because I have you in my heart, since both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers of grace with me. <sup>8</sup> For God is my witness, how I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. <sup>9</sup> And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment, <sup>10</sup> so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ; <sup>11</sup> having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

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He prayed thanks to God for the great memories concerning the Philippian church family.

## 1. These prayers generated continual joy in the PRESENT.

- a. Joy is one of the themes of the letter to the Philippians. *Joy* is the sense of calm delight which Christians thrive on. It is that emotion within us that silently reinforces that EVERYTHING IS GOING TO BE JUST FINE! There is no greater feeling in the world.
  - i. This emotion is what Jesus wants in the heart of all His followers (John 15:11; 16:24; 17:13). He wants our "joy to be full".
  - ii. This emotion is what John the baptist had within him when he said "He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:29-30).
  - iii. This emotion is what the apostle John wanted us to be filled with in 1 John 1:4 and 2 John 12.
  - iv. This emotion is what we are to have in our tribulations of this life (James 1:2).
  - v. Joy is what Paul and the Philippians mutually shared together (2:17, 4:4).
  - vi. When you have this sense that EVERYTHING IS GOING TO BE ALRIGHT and meditate upon this, we call it REJOICING, for we are re-living the joy over again and again. This is the relationship Paul had with the Philippians and for this he was thankful.
- b. This is also the same relationship that we can have together in the church family today. We need to strive in such a way that "our joy be made full". God never intended us to be cruising around in our daily lives on fumes of joy. He does not desire us to put \$5 worth of joy in our tank and attempt to make it through the week, but to fill it and keep drive strong in walk with Jesus. Striving in such a way will also result in great thanks to God.

## 2. These prayers were in view of their participation in the gospel in the PAST.

- a. The gospel is yet another theme of the letter to the Philippians. It was a partnership that Paul had with the Philippians from the beginning and on into the presence.
  - i. At the very beginning, Lydia, the first convert, opened her home up for the missionaries to lodge (Acts 16:15).
  - ii. When Paul headed out on the Egnatian highway toward Thessalonica, the Philippians provided him with the necessary funds for his work there (Phil 4:15).
  - iii. They generously supported his Jerusalem Relief Fund in the Third Missionary Journey (2 Corinthians 8:1-5).

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- iv. They sent money, supplies, encouragement and joy to him while in a Roman prison facing an uncertain outcome (Phil 2:25; 4:18). They were partakers of Paul in his "Imprisonment and cause for the gospel (1:7).
- b. They were in every sense of the phrase, "partners in the gospel" and were also the partakers of the same grace. We would do well to follow their example in sharing the work of the gospel.

Special Note: Evangelism is always a group effort. Too many times people tend to credit the evangelist for the conversions of souls. Behind every faithful and lasting conversion is a loving congregation filled with passion, giving, sharing and commitment. Homes are opened for Bible studies and fellowship, encouragement is offered to the down-trodden, opportunities to carry-out meaningful ministries. The list goes on and on. Without your participation in the gospel there would be very little ever accomplished in our church family for the souls of the lost.

3. These prayers gave Paul confidence that Christ would finish the job for them in the FUTURE.
  - a. Just the thought of their willing hearts lets Paul know that Christ can and will work with them. Step by step they were conforming to the image of Christ.
  - b. As an evangelist there is only one thing that I love as much as the conversion of a soul and that is the maturing of the same. The Great Commission boils down to 1) becoming a Christian (baptism) and 2) growing as a Christian (teaching them to observe) as Matthew 28:19-20 states. Without both there cannot be a true discipleship.
  - c. He looked forward to their growth in "*real knowledge and all discernment*". When they have such then...
    - i. They will be able to better discern their decisions.
      - Hebrews 5:14 "solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil."
    - ii. They will be filled with the "fruit of righteousness".
      - James 4:17-18 But the wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy. 18 And the seed whose fruit is righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.
  - d. This was something that Paul was really thankful for in the lives of the Philippians.

Conclusion: No matter how Paul prayed, in the present, for the past or in the future, he was filled with thanks to God for the Philippians!

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## Two Things to Apply This Week

### 1) Be an Effective Greeter

- Make a point to go up to that brother or sister in Christ that you have not gotten to know yet. GREET THEM!
- If there is a new visitor to the congregation, GREET THEM!
- If there is a person in your life that has rubbed you the wrong way and you just cannot stand the sight of them, GREET THEM!
- Go out of your way, get out of your comfort zone and be the greeting Christian that God has called us to be. Let your clique-group know that you're going to be busy making others feel welcome.

### 2) Communicate Your Thankfulness

- Spend a large part of your prayer this week thanking God for your fellow saints in the church family. Be specific in your prayer, confirming their qualities and uniqueness. Thank God for His wonderful mercies that He has bestowed on that individual.
- Just go up to the brother or sister and let them personally know why you are thankful for them.
- Perhaps write out your prayer for a brother and sister in Christ, then send it to them. Be prepared you and them to be filled with joy.