

Philippians 1:1-11

Intro:

- 1) The establishment of this church is found in **Acts 16**.
- 2) Paul is writing from a Roman prison about 10 years after the founding of the church. It is possible he visited twice since then (**2 Cor. 1:16; 2:13; 7:5**).
- 3) The occasion of this letter is because Epaphroditus arrives (having traveled about 800 miles) with a gift from the church (**2:25+30; 4:10+18**) and news about the body. He then takes back the letter.

Verses 1-2:

--**(1)** In the fashion of the day, Paul begins his letter by introducing himself and Timothy. Timothy had been with Paul when they first came to Philippi (**Acts 16:1-3**) and had been sent back into Macedonia after Paul left (**Acts 19:22**). It seems he may have also accompanied Epaphroditus on his way back with this letter (**2:19-22**).

--Paul has no need to defend his apostleship with this body of believers as is also the case with the Thessalonians and Philemon. Instead, Paul calls himself and Timothy **bondservants of Jesus Christ**.

--This was a term Paul didn't often use as a title. He does so in **Romans 1:1** but must also add in with them that he is an apostle. He is stressing that they are servants of the Lord. *Servant-leadership is fading in comparison with Celebrity-leadership today.*

--He is writing **to all the saints in Christ Jesus**—all of God's holy people made so by Christ—who were currently living **in Philippi**. No doubt, Paul is thinking of so many other cities without a single saint! He is overjoyed there is a living body of believers in Philippi.

--Paul also adds a greeting to **the bishops and deacons**. Why them specifically? Probably to make sure to remember personally, recognize them as part of the church, and let all the saints know they are to properly respond to what he writes—especially them as leaders.

--**Bishops** is the Greek word *episkopos* and is used interchangeably with pastor, elder, or overseer as each word give a sense of the functional work of maturity, oversight, or shepherding (For the interchangeable description of the office see: **Acts 20:17+28; 1 Tim. 3:2; 5:17; Titus 1:5-7; 1 Peter 5:1-2**).

--Elders and deacons—not priests!—were established early in the church directly from the apostles—the foundation of the church (**Acts 11:30; 15:6+23; 20:7; 21:18; 1 Thess. 5:12-13; 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9**).

Acts 14:23: So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

--The Greek word for **deacons** (*diakonos*) is used much more and widely in the NT and is usually translated *minister* or *servant*. The deacons were servants in the church—not pastors or teachers.

--These two offices are the only two Biblical church offices in the NT and are clearly outlined with qualifications in **1 Timothy 3**. All other church offices are man-made positions and a world of trouble, hurt, false teaching, stumbling blocks, and bad testimony have been endured by the saints because these two offices have been added to, subtracted, or their qualifications have been ignored and unfit and unsaved people have tragically taken on their roles.

--**(2)** Here is where the common Greco-Roman letter style (writer/addressee/greeting) becomes uniquely Christian. Paul greets with grace and peace from ***God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ***.

--The two and unique but one.

John 10:30: *I and My Father are one.*

Colossians 2:9: *For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.*

Verse 3-4:

--**(3)** This was the genuine expression of Paul's heart. He was so thankful for the work of God in the lives of the church in Philippi. This welcome is so very different than what Paul had to say to the Galatians!

Galatians 1:6: *I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel...*

--**(4)** Whenever he thinks of them Paul gives God thanks in prayer, and then joyfully requests other blessings on their behalf. This joy is woven through the epistle: **1:18, 25; 2:2, 17-18, 28-29; 3:1; 4:1, 4, 10.**

--Is this how we think of, and pray for, others? Is this how others think of and pray for us? Remember, Paul is in prison and he still has a thankful and joyful heart.

--We find Paul rarely thanking God for things but often thanking Him for people.

Verse 5:

--What is Paul most thankful for? ***Your fellowship in the gospel.***

--The Greek word for ***fellowship*** is *koinonia* and means more than we would commonly use the English word *fellowship* for. Our fellowship is having a coffee together or going to a baseball game. But *koinonia* really has the idea of *partnership* as in **Lk. 5:10 + 2 Cor. 8:23**.

Carson (Basics for Believers): *"The heart of true fellowship is self-sacrificing conformity to a shared vision. Both John and Harry put their savings into the fishing boat. Now they share the vision that will put the fledgling company on its feet. Christian fellowship, then, is self-sacrificing conformity to the gospel. There may be overtones of warmth and intimacy, but the heart of the matter is this shared vision that calls forth our commitment."*

--Paul was so thankful to have a fellowship of believers committed to the gospel alongside him. From the very first day when Lydia invited them into her home (**Acts 16:14-15+40**), the constant material support for his ministry and Jerusalem (**2 Cor. 8:5; 11:9; Phil. 4:10+16**), their prayers, willingness to suffer for the gospel, and thoughtful care for him, etc.

--Do we know true Christian fellowship in the gospel, or only social Christian society? The two are very different.

--Do we have true fellowship with Jesus Christ? Are we partners with Him in His calling?

Hebrews 3:1: *Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling!*

Verse 6:

--Paul was confident the work God started in them as individuals and collectively would be totally fulfilled. **God has a wonderful plan for us—not simply an experiment!**

--This is progress that ends in perfection. God will see His purposes realized in our lives.

Proverbs 4:18: *But the path of the just is like the shining sun, that shines every brighter unto the perfect day.*

--Our Perfect Husbandman will not plant a tender shoot and then forget to tend it to fruitful maturity. God is so wonderfully patient with us! Have confidence He will finish what He started in us.

Verses 7-8:

--**(7)** Paul had these believers on his *heart*—not just his mind, lips, or last nerve!

--Paul had confidence that they were *partakers* of the same grace that kept him in the fight. Just as God worked out the concerns they had for Paul and his persecutions, finances, and difficulties, so they would find the same grace in their own lives.

--Are we, as a local fellowship, *partners in the gospel* and *partakers of God's grace*? Is that what binds us together in love and purpose at CCPHilly? Or is it politics, life experience, career, age, kids, school, youth sports, social friendships, etc.

--All of those things—good on some level—will ultimately fail. What else but God and His grace could hold together such a diverse group?

--Paul was at home among this particular group of believers because they too were ready to share chains and defend the gospel with their very lives—**2:29-30**. They were his type of people.

--**(8)** Paul testifies before God, because he knew it was Christ's affection in him. Outside of Christ, he hated Christians! **Paul's love to them was only a stream connected to the larger fountainhead of God's love.**

Verses 9-11:

--**(9)** Here Paul shares the content of his prayers for the fellowship. The Holy Spirit gives us the content of these prayers *because* they are good for every age of Christians.

--First, Paul prays *that your love would abound still more and more*. . . all of us need to grow in love—to have our love be deeper and wider—expanding its boundaries. Paul's familiarity with God is what makes him so such that what he has is never enough—there is always more in Him!

--Paul also prays that their love would be more than sentiment or emotion but also abound **in knowledge and all discernment**. There are many in the Body of Christ that love God but are immature in their understanding of who God is and what loving Him means. *Catholic and Protestant!*

--The Greek word for **knowledge** means a *true personal knowledge*.

--The Greek word of **discernment** (*aisthesis*) is used only here in the NT and has the idea of *perception or sense*.

Hebrews 5:14: But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their sense exercised to discern both good and evil.

--Obviously, Paul understands we cannot increase in loving knowledge and discernment of God without increasing in love to others, in Christ-likeness, as well as faith and obedience.

--Paul also knew that loving someone the wrong way is actually harmful.

--**(10)** Paul prays that this knowing and discerning love would allow them to **approve the things that are excellent**.

--To **approve** the right things is to choose between things that differ. Not just good and evil, but what is good and what is best. *Making proper assessments in light of the fellowship of the gospel, suffering in God's grace, the Great Commission, spiritual warfare, heavenly treasure, our place in the Body of Christ, etc.*

1 Thessalonians 5:21: Test all things; hold fast what is good.

--Paul doesn't want these believers to settle for less or fall asleep in the status quo. He wants them to press on into the best of all they can have in God. He wants them to **approve the things that are excellent** in personal experience and not just intellectual assent.

Romans 12:2: And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

--Why? **that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ**.

--Paul wants them to continue on in sincerity—reality and truth Vs. sin and self-deception. To be sincere is to be pure, genuine, without mixture. It is to be in appearance what you are in reality. *That is why we don't use the word much in our cultivated online culture!*

--A sincere person is not afraid to be brought into the light and tested. Sincerity concerns itself with the inside as well as the outside—it wants to be pure and genuine all the way through.

--Of course, sincerity is a part of being **without offense till the day of Christ**.

--We know that this was Paul's testimony before earthly kings.

Acts 24:16: I myself always strive to have a conscience without offense toward God and men.

--We know this is what he exhorted the church to live like.

1 Corinthians 10:32: Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks or to the church of God.

--This is in all non-sinful and non-compromising things—as Paul offended others when needed.

--If we walk in the light and live out the truth now, we will stand much better on that day. Who we really are is determined at ***the day of Christ***.

*Famous sermon on four men:

- 1) The man the world sees
- 2) The man friends see
- 3) The man we ourselves see
- 4) The man God sees*

--What a blessing to know a man like Paul was praying this for them! Let us do the same!

*King (Joy Way): *"It is so easy for us to become unmindful of others and of our influence for good or ill upon them. Happy is the Christian who neither by demeanor nor behavior gives anyone the reason, or the excuse, to think wrongly of the faith or to act wrongly regarding the Master."**

--**(11) Being filled** here is passive—which means it is not accomplished by them but to them.

This filling is happening now as we walk in the fellowship of the gospel and the grace of God.

--If the right elements are in a Christian life—like the right elements in the life of a plant (water, sun, soil, etc.) both will become fruitful.

--Righteous fruit must come from a righteous root—regeneration before righteous acts.

--The Christian isn't supposed to be like the fig tree Jesus cursed but like a full-grown, fruitful tree. All we need to do is abide in Him and let Him do the work of growing us and filling us out!

John 15:2+8: Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit. . . By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, so you will be My disciples.

--In these verses we see fruit, more fruit, and much fruit. We are to be ***filled*** with fruit! How? Body, mind, and soul—Home, Church, Work—Early, Middle, Later life—every way, place, and season. Where doesn't God want to produce fruit in our lives?

--We also see that a fruitful life glorifies God and proves us His disciples!

--We become Pharisees if we bear fruit for our own reputation or glory or draw attention to ourselves.

Matthew 5:16: Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.