

“To the Saints, Pastors, and Deacons”
Philippians 1:1
(Preached at Trinity, May 29, 2016)

I'm supplying these notes for the benefit of busy pastors who may be engaged in bi-vocational work, feeling the pressure of preparing to preach twice on the Lord's Day while trying to balance full-time secular work as well as caring for their families. While the notes of another man are no substitute for personal study, I pray that these may aid in the process of preparing to preach.

Disclaimer: These are the actual notes I bring with me to the pulpit, which I follow loosely. They are not designed for publication. While I try to make every effort to give proper credit to my sources from the pulpit, adequate citations will sometimes be absent from my notes. If anyone feels their intellectual material has been used without adequate citation, please contact me and I'll make immediate correction giving credit.

1. As we saw last time, Paul wrote his letter to the Philippians around A.D. 62. Along with Colossians, Philemon, and Ephesians, Philippians is one of the four “Prison Epistles” written during his first imprisonment in Rome. Epaphroditus had arrived carrying a generous gift from Philippi as well as a report on their condition. Paul's letter to Philippi has several purposes:
 - Paul is writing acknowledging the gift and expressing gratitude for their generosity.
 - Second, Paul is writing to provide guidance to this young church.
 - Third, to calm their thoughts regarding Paul's imprisonment. He wanted them to recognize the excellence of God's providence in his imprisonment
Philippians 1:13-14 NAU - "so that my imprisonment in *the cause of* Christ has become well known throughout the whole praetorian guard and to everyone else, ¹⁴ and that most of the brethren, trusting in the Lord because of my imprisonment, have far more courage to speak the word of God without fear."
2. Paul begins with his salutation, typical of first century letters and typical of Paul's letters, but as I pointed out, we must not see it as words lacking significance. While Paul uses the general 1st century format he uses a particularly Christian tone and brings out a particularly Christian emphasis. We should pay close attention to Paul's salutation. First, Paul identifies himself as the author of the letter. Of all the titles he could have used he refers to himself chiefly as a servant—literally a slave. He was always mindful of the example he displayed before the church. Now he says in essence, I'm a servant. You be one likewise.
3. After identifying himself and Timothy he states the recipients of his letter. He writes first of all to the congregation, and then signifies the officers. Stressing the distinctiveness of his salutation we should give notice to the description of Paul's recipients:
Philippians 1:1 NAU - "To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons"
This is the only NT Epistle where Paul uses this formula.

- I. The congregation of this local church has the priority –
 "To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi"
- A. The church is the congregation, the body.
1. Paul is writing to a particular local church – the church which is at Philippi. It is false to assume as some today, that references to these early churches speak of disconnected Christians meeting in homes. This was a particular local church of Christians joined together in unity. They were accountable to one another and labored together as one.
 2. Paul refers to them as saints – ἅγιος – holy or set apart.- translated “holy” 161 times, “saint” 61
 3. The great duty of the believer is to be holy and the great duty of the church is build up one another in holiness.
1 Peter 1:16 NAU – “because it is written, "You shall be holy, for I am holy."
 4. The surprising thing is the nature of the Church of Philippi. It was largely a Gentile church. The Gentiles were aliens and strangers to the covenants of God. And yet, Paul refers to these Gentile Christians in Christ as God’s holy people.
- B. This holiness is the result of our union with Christ. We are saints “in Christ Jesus.”
1. His life has become our life. His righteousness has become our righteousness.
 2. As a congregation our great passion is to know Christ more, to grow in our relationship with Him and to increase in holiness and serve Him with joy. We must live and breathe Christ in everything.
 3. Notice also Paul addresses “all the saints.” All are uniquely important. We must guard against segregation; against what we call “cliques.” Paul is writing to the whole church. His great interest was building up the entire body of Christ. Some are stronger than others but all are important.
- C. After addressing the congregation in general Paul addresses the Pastors and Deacons within the congregation.
1. Paul addresses the congregation first and then the officers. The officers exist for the good of the church. Their focus is must be to build up the church. Not the other way around. Pastors and deacons should not see the church as a means of building up themselves—their reputation, or their career.
 2. Faithful leaders are essential to the vitality and well-being of a healthy congregation. Paul writes to the congregation but recognizes the office-bearers within the congregation.
 - a. Precisely why Paul chose to single them out separately is unknown. It could be because they were instrumental in taking the initiative in collecting the offering for him.
 - b. Or he might have singled them out because he had an expectation that the instructions contained in this letter would be carried out. He is addressing the officers of the church.

- c. Some hold that Paul is making special mention of these men as an endorsement of their authority in light of the false teachers who were troubling the church.
Philippians 3:2 NAU - "Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision"
Philippians 3:18 NAU - "For many walk, of whom I often told you, and now tell you even weeping, that they are enemies of the cross of Christ,"
3. Or it could be that Paul is addressing each group reminding them of their particular place of responsibility.
- a. To the congregation he is reminding them that God has provided them with a network of overseers to watch over them and correct them when they stray. The tendency is always to resist authority. Paul writes later:
1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 NAU - "But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, ¹³ and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another."
- b. He is reminding the congregation to honor the service of the deacons giving honor to whom honor is due. Paul would write regarding the deacons:
1 Timothy 3:13 NAU - "For those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a high standing and great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus."
- c. But to those in leadership Paul reminds them that they are but servants set apart to lead the church. He refers to himself and Timothy as slaves. The elders of the church must not seek to lord over the congregation. The tendency is to seek power and control. The tendency is to desire to be served rather than serve.

I want to speak briefly on these two offices. But you ask, why? What does this have to do with me? There are several reasons why I must touch on these offices:

- One, because Paul singles them out as distinct from the rest of the congregation of which they were a part. We have to remember that this is the Word of God. Much space is given in Scripture to describe church leaders. The church needs to have a good understanding of those God has given to oversee the church.
- Because we need to understand how essential these offices are for the health of the congregation. Christ tells us they are God's gift to the church. We need to continually pray that God will raise up men for these offices and men should be sensitive to God's call upon their lives.
- These are the very sermons God often uses to clarify His call upon the lives of men seeking one of these offices.
- Biblical teaching on church offices also speak to the ladies of the church. Although these offices are restricted to men, when God calls a man to a church office He also stirs the heart of his wife. A man may feel he is called to this office and yet be disqualified by his wife.
- No one in the church can presume that such doctrinal details have nothing to do with them.

II. “With the overseers”

- A. The word “overseer” is from the Greek word, *ἐπίσκοπος*
1. This is the word used in Paul’s qualifications for pastor in 1 Tim.3
It is a compound word from *ἐπί* - “On or upon, or above or over”
σκοπός, σκοπέω – “look” It means to “look over” or “watch over.”
The KJV translates it “bishop”
 2. The word is synonymous with the words Pastor, Elder, Bishop
Acts 20:17 NAS - "And from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the elders of the church."
Acts 20:28 NAS - "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood."
1 Peter 5:1-2 NAS - "Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as your fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, ² shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness;"
 3. Notice the words “overseers” and “deacons” are both in the plural. The ideal is for a church to have a plurality of both pastors and deacons although there may be times when a church has none.
- B. Pastors are not some unusual class of Christian. They are simply those that God has set apart to lead the church—but their qualifications should be the goal of every Christian. **1 Tim 3:1-7**
- C. What do pastors do?
1. They are mature leaders charged with teaching. One of the qualifications is that he be gifted and skilled in teaching. They are charged with teaching and building up the church so that the church might be equipped to build up itself.
Ephesians 4:15-16 NAU - "but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love."
 2. They must be skilled with the Word – at times they will be called upon to rebuke those who mishandle the Word of God.
Titus 1:9 NAS - " holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict."
Titus 1:13 NAU - "This testimony is true. For this reason reprove them severely so that they may be sound in the faith,"

3. They are entrusted with governing the church
1 Timothy 5:17 NAS - "Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching."
Hebrews 13:17 KJV - "Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you."
4. They are charged with raising up other leaders
2 Timothy 2:2 NAU - "The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."

III. "and deacons"

- A. The deacons were raised up with a particular function
 1. There had arisen tension between the Grecian and Hebrew widows regarding the daily distribution of food. It was consuming time from the work of the apostles. The solution was the deacons.
 2. The deacons had two primary functions
 - a. They labored over the practical matters of the church. Their first task was serving food at the widows' tables.
 There are many of such labors in the church, particularly as the church began to acquire buildings.
 This primary function was to free up the apostles for the ministry of the Word and prayer. Every hour spent in practical and administrative duties is an hour taken away from the study of the Word of God.
 - b. The second function was putting to rest dissention within the congregation. This requires men of particular wisdom and care. The first seven deacons quickly put to rest the division between the two groups of widows. There are endless causes of unrest within a congregation that can distract the work of the ministry. Deacons are invaluable in helping to retain peace.
- B. What are the qualifications for one to hold this office?
 1. They must be men filled with the Holy Spirit and wisdom
Acts 6:3 NAU - "Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task."
 - a. They must be spiritual men to carry on this spiritual work. It takes great wisdom to interact with God's people.
 - b. It also demands practical wisdom to administer many of the practical affairs of the church.
 2. There are other qualifications - See **1 Timothy 3:8-12**
 3. Both pastors and deacons must be excellent family men. They set forth an example that mirrors their leadership in the home. Both pastors and deacons must have obedient children.

- C. There is another important consideration of pastors and deacons
 Their wives model faithfulness and godliness
1 Timothy 3:11 NAU - "Women must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things."
1. This word *γυνή* translated "women" in the NASB would be better translated in the context, "wives."
 2. The wives of pastors and deacons must be of a high character.
 3. Why is it there are such high qualifications for the wives of church officers.
 - a. Because they reflect the ministries of their husband. Their words must never undermine the ministry of their husband. They have to be guarded in their interaction with other church members. They must be careful not to show favoritism. It will result in one member feeling a sense of empowerment while the rest feel slighted.
 - b. I'll never forget the words of our former pastor who for 10 years served as my mentor. When asked about the role of his wife in his ministry his reply was always, "Silent support."
 - c. I've often said that a pastor's wife will be his greatest asset or his worst curse.

Conclusion:

1. Thus you have the make-up of the congregation of a local church. It is a gathering of church members, saints in Jesus Christ. The pastors and deacons also make up this number.
2. The church body has authority over two important areas. They have authority over the reception and dismissal of members. And they have authority over the selection of those who rule over them.
3. But from within the congregation God raises up certain men to serve leaders. The government of the church is vested in the elders. The practical oversight of the church is given to the deacons who serve under the oversight of the elders.
4. God raises up these men as gifts to the church.
Ephesians 4:8 NAS - "When He ascended on high, He led captive a host of captives, And He gave gifts to men."
Ephesians 4:11 NAS - "And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers"
5. We must beseech Him for His gracious gifts. We need God to continue to raise up elders. And we are in great need for deacons in our church. Commit yourselves to prayer pleading with God to bless our church. We must comprehend how important it is for a church to have strong leaders.