

Philippians 1:1-6 – Introduction (Biblical citations taken from the NKJV)

Quick Overview of the Book by chapter (4 chapters in Philippians)

1. Paul's thankful prayers for the Philippians and his joy that Christ is being preached
2. A call to imitate Christ's humility and to shine as lights in a crooked and perverse generation
3. The surpassing excellence of knowing Christ in comparison to all other things
4. Rejoice always, pray instead of worrying, and what to meditate on: what is true, noble, just, pure, lovely, of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy (Philippians 4:8).

How was this church born?

Acts 16:6-15 Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. [7] After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them. [8] So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. [9] And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." [10] Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them. [11] Therefore, sailing from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and the next day came to Neapolis, [12] and from there to Philippi, which is the foremost city of that part of Macedonia, a colony. And we were staying in that city for some days. [13] And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there. [14] Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul. [15] And when she and her household were baptized, she begged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." So she persuaded us.

Then (Acts 16:16-24) – the slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination is delivered – her masters then stir up the multitudes who rise up against them – the magistrates beat them with rods and throw them in jail.

Then (Acts 16:25-34) – the Philippian jailer is saved

And so a new church is born – amid opposition and violence. The church at Philippi. From there, Paul, Silas, and Timothy move on to Thessalonica and found a church there in Acts 17.

Where was Paul when he wrote this? It is made clear that Paul was in prison. NT historians and scholars offer various theories as what city Paul was imprisoned in when he penned this, but most think it is Rome.

Reasons we know Paul was in prison:

Philip. 1:7 just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both **in my chains** and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace.

Reasons written from Rome:

Philip. 1:13 so that it has become evident **to the whole palace guard** (the praetorian), and to all the rest, that **my chains** are in Christ;

Philip. 4:22 All the saints greet you, but especially **those who are of Caesar's household**.

Why was Philippians written?

1. Epaphroditus, Paul's fellow worker, had fallen ill and the Philippians had heard about this. Paul is letting them know Epaphroditus is ok and commends them to receive him "in the Lord with gladness... because for the work of Christ he came close to death..." (Philippians 2:25-30).

2. To thank them for sending him generous support (Philippians 4:14-18).
3. To update them on his own condition – his hope of being released from prison (1:19-26 – especially v25:

Philip. 1:25 And being confident of this, I know **that I shall remain and continue with you all** for your progress and joy of faith,

4. False teaching.

Philip. 3:2-4 Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation!

5. Persecutors.

Philip. 1:28 and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that from God.

6. Disunity in the congregation.

Philip. 1:27 Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ, ... , that you stand fast in **one** spirit, with **one mind** striving together for the faith of the gospel,

Philip. 4:2 I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to **be of the same mind** in the Lord.

And interwoven through the book is profound and majestic theology about God’s sovereignty in salvation, the incarnation, humiliation, and exaltation of Christ (the “Carmen Christi” – meaning “hymn of Christ” – Philippians 2:5-11), justification by the righteousness of Christ alone, having the mind of Christ, and a call to contentment, strength, and joy in Christ which every true believer may have apart from circumstances.

It is also highly practical – It speaks to us about living in humility in following Christ and challenges us to be content in all circumstances. And there is an unmistakable mood of thanksgiving and joy (even as it is being written from a prison cell).

- 1) Greeting and joyful thanksgiving – v1-4; 2) Ongoing fellowship in the gospel – v5; 3) Confidence God will finish what He started – v6

1) Greeting and joyful thanksgiving – v1-4

Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: [2] Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. [3] I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, [4] always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy,

V1 - Point: The early church even after the apostles died followed the example of the apostles who regularly wrote letters to be read at individual churches. There was always a sense of connection between Christian people and churches.

V2 - Point: Grace and peace always go together in nearly all of Paul’s greetings. Peace is the byproduct of Grace. But the peace of which Paul speaks is not so much a feeling of peace or inner tranquility as it is what the Hebrew term (*shalom*) means: “wholeness, completeness, a state of well-being.” Paul uses the term “peace” – Greek: *eirene* this way:

Col. 1:19-20 For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, [20] and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, **having made peace through the blood of His cross**.

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

Application: And so when Paul extends “grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ,” this is a special peace which no unbeliever knows. It is peace from God and it is peace with God.

Question: Why is this concept of “peace with God” so important?

Application 2: Our Westminster Confession of faith describes the Triune God who lives as (2.1) "... most just, and terrible in His judgments, hating all sin, and who will by no means clear the guilty."

Psalm 143:2 ... in Your sight no one living is righteous.

Application 3: This is what Martin Luther saw and knew so very clearly – If God is God, if God is truly holy, then I am lost.

Illustration: Martin Luther understood this well – that the God who exists – the Triune God of Scripture – is *utterly relentless and uncompromising in His holiness and in the application of justice to those who break His law*. Like Isaiah in chapter 6 of his prophecy, Luther understood that if this God truly is, then "woe is me, I am undone!"

Luther said: "Do you not know that God dwells in light inaccessible? We weak and ignorant creatures want to prove and understand the incomprehensible majesty of the unfathomable light of the wonder of God. We approach; we prepare ourselves to approach. What wonder then that his majesty overpowers us and shatters!"

After a long and bitter struggle with guilt and studying Scripture, Luther finally grasped the gospel which alone could give him peace with God. He wrote:

"Night and day I pondered until I saw the connection between the justice of God and the statement that 'the just shall live by faith.' Then I grasped that the justice of God is that righteousness by which through grace and sheer mercy God justifies us through faith. Thereupon I felt myself to be reborn and to have gone through open doors to paradise. ... If you have a true faith that Christ is your Savior, then at once you have a gracious God, for faith leads you in and opens up God's heart and will, that you should see pure grace and overflowing love."

Application 4: This is why Paul speaks of Christ making "peace through the blood of His cross." That blood Jesus shed as the whips were brought down hard upon His back, as He was beaten, and as He was nailed to the cross and hung there in agony – by those stripes and by that shed blood, the wrath of God was satisfied **and true shalom, true peace with God** was accomplished in behalf of Jesus' people.

2) Ongoing fellowship in the gospel – v5

[5] for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now,

Point: True believers have "fellowship in the gospel" with one another. It is the tie that binds us across anything that might divide us: educational levels, income brackets, skin color, nationality, or personality type.

Application: All of us who are truly Christians have certain things we will always hold in common:

- 1) We all know we are sinful and helpless before God, utterly unable to do anything to change our status before God.
- 2) We all know that it is Jesus Christ alone – His righteousness and His satisfaction of justice at the cross – that is the foundation of our justified status before our Almighty Judge.
- 3) We are members one of another, and are part of the same body. None of us are independent islands to ourselves. We all **need** one another – we all need this church.

1 Cor. 12:12-18 For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. [13] For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body-- whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free--and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. [14] For in fact the body is not one member but many. [15] If the foot should say, "Because I am not a hand, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? [16] And if the ear should say, "Because I am not an eye, I am not of the body," is it therefore not of the body? [17] If the whole body were an eye, where would be the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where would be the smelling? [18] But now God has set the members, each one of them, in the body just as He pleased. ... [26] And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or if one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.

Application 2: All true believers are part of the body of Christ – and all have need of one another. You and I are all part of the body of Christ – none of us are the body of Christ. A human hand is worthless if

it is severed from the body, so is an eye, or an ear. The parts themselves only work when the body is present **and the parts are connected to one another**.

Application 3: This “fellowship in the gospel” implies a commitment one to another among the Christian people of this church at Philippi – and the church was probably relatively small at this point: the demon-possessed girl, Lydia and her household, and the Philippian jailor and his household... and then we read in **Acts 16:40**, “So they went out of the prison and entered the house of Lydia; and when they had seen the brethren, they encouraged them and departed.”

Point 2: Notice that Paul thanked God for their fellowship in the gospel “from the first day until now.”

Question: Who was to be thanked that the Philippians persevered “from the first day until now?” God.

Question 2: If we have persevered in our faith in Christ from the first day we believed many years ago until now, who is to be praised and thanked? God and God alone.

3) Confidence God will finish what He started – v6

[6] 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;

Point: Any person who experiences the regenerating power of the Holy Spirit in their life – i.e. any person in whom God begins the good work of salvation – *God will continue that work until the day of Jesus Christ.*

Illustration: Recall to mind these marvelous words of Jesus at the synagogue in Capernaum:

John 6:37-39 All that the Father gives Me will come to Me, and the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out. [38] For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me. [39] This is the will of the Father who sent Me, that of all He has given Me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up at the last day.

Point 2: Paul is quite emphatic – “this very thing” – “That He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.”

Application: In how many ways is the work of grace the sovereign God works upon us “good”?

1. We who were formerly slaves of sin have now become slaves of righteousness. Paul proclaimed to the church at Rome:

Romans 6:5-6 For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, [6] knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin.

Is this not a “good” work of God?

2. Titus 3:3 gives us a list of what we who have been redeemed by Christ once were:

Titus 3:3 For we ourselves were also once 1) foolish, 2) disobedient, 3) deceived, 4) serving various lusts and pleasures, 5) living in malice and envy, 6) hateful and hating one another.

⇒ While we are often so quick to complain about life circumstances we do not like, how can we fail to recognize just how **good** the work of God has been in our lives?

⇒ Yes, we war against sin – we struggle with being down, we struggle with physical pain, we are burdened by many things... But always remember, you who truly believe in the Lord Jesus:

“He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.”

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Jude 1:24-25 Now to Him who is able to keep you from stumbling, And to present you faultless Before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, [25] To God our Savior, Who alone is wise, Be glory and majesty, Dominion and power, Both now and forever. Amen.