

Philippians Chapter 1

Introduction - Philippians 1:1-2

A. The Author - 1:1a

Philippians 1:1 Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ...

The author of this book is Paul. Although at first glance it would appear that Timothy was the co-author, we know from a reading of this book that Paul uses the first personal pronoun many times. He never says “we” but always “I.”

Timothy would be well-known to the Philippians as he was Paul’s “right hand man.” From a study of 1 and 2 Timothy we find that Timothy was Paul’s chosen successor. In chapter two of this book, Paul says that Timothy was his personal messenger, one who was like-minded and cared about the same things as Paul.

Paul identifies both himself and Timothy as “servants.” This is the common word *doulos* which refers to a slave, one who is under compulsion from his master and one who has no freedom of his own. However, far from being a demeaning word for Paul and Timothy, it was an exalted word. To be a slave of Jesus Christ was an honor unsurpassed in the world.

To Whom Are You a Slave?

In Romans 6 we find that all men are slaves to one of two masters, sin unto death or obedience unto righteousness. Many people fancy themselves to be free to do as they please, only to miss the realization that they are slaves to sin. Christ redeems us from this slavery to sin so that we may serve him out of love and obedience. This is not a demeaning slavery, as the fruit of such service is everlasting life.

B. The Audience - 1:1b

...to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:

The recipients of this letter are the saints in Philippi. “Saints” is a word used in the New Testament many times to refer to believers. Anyone who is redeemed is a saint in the sense that they have been set apart from sin to God. Even the Corinthians believers, the lowest of the low, were called saints (1 Corinthians 1:2).

Along with the saints, Paul addressed the bishops and deacons. These were the two offices we find in the New Testament church. The bishop, *episkopos*, were the shepherds or pastors of the church. Deacons, *diakonia*, were those that ministered in the church mainly in the areas of service.

One of the main arguments against this book is that Paul uses these two terms which many say did not come into vogue until much later. However, this is nonsense as we see the institution of the office of the deacon in Acts 7, and read of the elders of the church in Acts 20 (Acts 20:17-38). Paul’s use of this term is

not anachronistic. Only four or five years after writing this book Paul sits down and writes 1 Timothy in which he outlines these offices in great detail.

C. The Greeting - 1:2

Philippians 1:2 Grace be unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ.

We find in this verse Paul's common greeting. Nearly all of his letters has this phrase, "grace and peace." Grace refers to the unmerited favor of God whereby He redeems the sinner and gives them all things that pertain to life and godliness. Peace refers to the peace of God which is a product of the Holy Spirit in the life of the Christian (Galatians 5:22-23), and peace with God now that the war with God is over (Romans 5:1).

Reasons For Joy - Philippians 1:3-7

In this first section of his letter Paul lists several reasons for joy when he thought of the Philippians. His bond with the Philippians believers was great, much greater than that of many other churches. Nowhere in the book does it show more clearly than in these few verses.

Paul's Closeness With the Philippians

- 1. Epaphroditus was sent by the Philippians to assist Paul - 2:25ff.**
- 2. The Philippians labored with Paul, not Paul for them - 4:2-3**
- 3. The Philippian church deeply cared for Paul - 4:10**
- 4. Only the Philippians financially supported Paul - 4:15-16**

A. The Joy of Remembrance - 1:3-4

Philippians 1:3-4 I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy,

Paul's first reason for joy was his remembrance of the Philippians. Obviously the bond between Paul and this church was such that the mere thought of them brought joy to his heart.

This joy resulted in prayer for the Philippian church. The word for prayer, *deesis*, and the word for request, *deesin*, come from the same root. These words both refer to the need of prayer. Paul's prayers for the churches did not consist of frivolous requests for those things that were of no value, but of fervent requests for those things which had to do with spiritual needs. A brief look at the prayers of Paul for the churches will amply bear this out (Colossians 1:9-11, Ephesians 3:14ff).

B. The Joy of Fellowship - 1:5

Philippians 1:5 For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now;

Paul's second cause for joy was the sharing in the gospel that he had with the Philippians believers. The word for fellowship, *koinonia*, is a word which mainly has to do with sharing at a basic level. Fellowship is not stale cookies and coffee served in the "fellowship hall", but a communal sharing of burdens and joys with other believers. It can only be found when believers are willing to become transparent and share their lives with others. This was the pattern of the early church (Acts 2:42-47).

This sharing was centered in, and founded in, the gospel. Often when someone mentions the word "gospel", we think of the four spiritual laws, or 1 Corinthians 15:3-4. However, the term "gospel" is a general word in the New Testament which is used to refer to "good news." It may refer to the gospel message, but most often refers to the whole of New Testament truth. For example, the first four books of the New Testament are called "gospels" because in them we find the good news about Jesus Christ. Undoubtedly Paul is looking back at the many hours he shared the truths of God's word with this fledgling church in the home of Lydia. There is a joy that comes from God when we sit down with other believers and share the great truths of the good news about Jesus Christ with one another. One of the greatest joys for a preacher and teacher of the Word is to share the truths of the Bible with others.

C. The Joy of Confidence in God's Perfecting Work - 1:6

Philippians 1:6 Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ:

Paul's third reason for joy was the confidence that he had in God's perfecting work. One of the greatest truths about salvation is that God does not merely redeem, then leave us to make it on our own, but actually changes our nature and brings us into conformity with Jesus Christ. In other words, God does not do a half-rate job when He regenerates a soul.

One of the great heresies being taught in the Church today is that it is possible to be a believer and yet exhibit no fruit and no change in life. In other words, it is possible to split apart justification and sanctification. One can be forensically declared righteous, yet continue to live in a pattern of unbroken sin and bondage to the flesh. This is just plain not taught in the New Testament.

One of the great verses on this issue is found right here. God has begun a new work in us when we became believers. However, He then takes us on to maturity and growth in godliness. Ephesians 2:8-9 says that we are "saved by grace through faith", but then in Ephesians 2:10 we find that "we are his workmanship created in Christ Jesus unto good works." If we have come to faith in Christ, then we have been created unto good works. We cannot say that we will become a believer, then live any way we want. 2 Corinthians 5:17 says that the one who comes to Christ "is a new creation." That which God begins, God finishes.

The phrase "day of Jesus Christ" is interesting, as it occurs only four times in the New Testament, three times in Philippians and once in 2 Thessalonians (1:6, 1:10, 2:16, and 2 Thessalonians 2:2). By looking at all four references, we are led to the conclusion that this phrase refers to that time when we as believers are gathered up together to be with Christ (raptured). At this time several things will happen:

- We will be “perfected” instantaneously as we will be “like Christ” (Philippians 3:20-21).
- We will be rewarded in light of our faithfulness while in the flesh (Philippians 2:16, 1:10, 1 Corinthians 3).
- We will receive our glorified bodies that will never decay or grow old (Romans 8:23-25).
- We will be “with Christ”, never again to be separated (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

The Day of the Lord vs. the Day of Christ

Some believe that the Day of the Lord and the Day of Christ are the same. The use of the word “day” refers to a time in which God deals directly with man. Thus the idea of the Day of the Lord would be that this is a time in which God deals with men in some way. Comparing its use throughout the Old Testament and New Testament one finds that the Day of the Lord is a time of judgment upon the wicked just prior to Christ’s second coming (Joel, Zephaniah, Zechariah) (although there have been historical Days of the Lord cf. Isaiah 13-14). The Day of Christ, then, would refer to a time in which Christ deals with men in some way. Comparing the use of this phrase leads us to believe that the Day of Christ is that time in which Christ judges us at the *bema* seat as to our eternal reward (Philippians 2:16, 1:10, 1 Corinthians 3).

D. The Joy of Participation - 1:7

Philippians 1:7 Even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defence and confirmation of the gospel, ye all are partakers of my grace.

Paul’s fourth reason for joy is the participation of the Philippian believers in his ministry. Paul says that he has them “in his heart.” I take this to refer to the fact that the Philippian believers shared in Paul’s ministry in the sense that they constantly remembered Paul in their prayers and were intimately interested in and concerned with the ministry he had. This is borne out by the fact that they sent Epaphroditus, one of their own, to Paul in order to see how he was doing and make sure that Paul’s needs were met. This was a church who had a deep and intimate interest in Paul and his ministry. They not only said that they prayed for Paul, they actually did it.

This concern on the part of the Philippians for Paul made them partakers of Paul’s grace. The word “grace” as used here refers to the grace of ministry. One of God’s “gifts” to us is our spiritual gift and the ability to minister for him in some capacity. Paul’s “grace” was the office of Apostle which was given to him by Jesus Christ on the Damascus road (Romans 1:7). Because the Philippian believers had Paul on their minds and remembered Paul in their prayers, they were partakers of Paul’s ministry. It was no doubt comforting to Paul that he knew that no matter what happened, whether in his bonds or in his proclamation of the gospel, the Philippian believers were there with him in their prayers and support of him. One of the ways in which Satan destroys the effectiveness of ministry is to get those who are ministering to think that no one cares about them and that no one is praying for them. The knowledge that there are those who support us in prayer gives us the strength to carry on many times in our ministry.

What Is “Grace” In the New Testament?

1. **A quality or attribute of God in which God exhibits compassion towards man’s lost condition - 2 Corinthians 8:9.**
2. **The unmerited and unearned favor God bestows on the repentant sinner which results in that sinner’s regeneration - Ephesians 2:8-9.**
3. **The state of salvation which encompasses all of the many privileges we have in Christ - Romans 5:2.**
4. **A “gift” from God which may be a spiritual gift (*charismaton* in 1 Corinthians 12, *charis* in Ephesians 4:7), the Gospel (Colossians 1:6), or an office (Romans 1:7).**

E. The Joy of Affection - 1:8

Philippians 1:8 For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.

Paul’s final source of joy is the deep and intimate affection he had for the Philippian believers. The term “bowels” *splagchois* is a descriptive term which refers to the intestinal area where deep emotions are felt. Paul’s feelings for this church went far beyond an intellectual affection and reached to the very depths of his emotional being. Not only does he have these feelings, he even calls on God to be his witness to them.

The bond between Paul and the Philippian church was a deep one indeed!

An Apostolic Prayer For Growth - Philippians 1:9-11

Paul now gives the content of his prayer for the Philippian believers. It is interesting to compare his prayer as given in this passage with the ones found in Colossians 1:9-11 and the other prison epistles. Many similarities are evident.

A simple outline for this section is:

Paul’s request for the abundance of love in the lives of the Philippians which is evidenced by:

A deep knowledge of Christ

A discerning wisdom about reality and one’s speech

which then results in

An ability to discern the really important things of life

Sincerity of life

Holiness

Boldness in the Day of Christ

A. In Love - 1:9a

Philippians 1:9a And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more...

Love (*agapa*) most probably refers to the whole sphere of relationships for the believer, man to man, and man to God. Some narrow its meaning here to that of the Philippian believers to one another (due to the nature and content of the book itself.) However, the qualifying terms which follow most naturally lend themselves to the interpretation that this is love in general. Additionally, love as used in this verse has no object. Paul is not telling the believers to love one another only, or to love God only, but to love period.

What is New Testament Love?

Its source is Divine - Romans 5:5, Galatians 5:22-23

It is a part of all true believers - 1 John 3:14-15, John 13:34-35

It is a decision which is:

- **a choice**
- **not by impulse**
- **active (1 Corinthians 13)**
- **not based on emotion**
- **inclusive of all men**
- **centered on others**
- **and involves sacrifice for others (Ephesians 4:32-5:2).**

It is growing - Philippians 1:9

It is discerning - Philippians 1:9

B. In Knowledge - 1:9b

Philippians 1:9b ...in knowledge...

Knowledge (*epignosis*) refers to the deep intimate knowledge of spiritual truth as embodied in the person and work of Jesus Christ. It is not merely a head knowledge of facts, but a deep understanding of facts that result in a changed life. (See also Ephesians 1:17, Colossians 1:9-10, and Philemon 6).

C. In Wisdom - 1:9c

Philippians 1:9c ...and in all judgment;

Wisdom (*aisthesis*) is an *hapax legomena*. From references in the LXX we understand its meaning to be that of a practical wisdom which is keenly aware of the circumstances of an action, manifesting itself particularly in discretion of speech (Proverbs 5:2, 14:7, 15:7). A good one-word definition is tact.

D. In Excellent Choices - 1:10a

Philippians 1:10 That ye may approve things that are excellent...

Approve (*dokimazo*) has the idea of critically examining and approving something. It is not a slipshod or haphazard judgment, but a choice made after seriously and carefully examining all the facts. The things that the Philippians were to approve were the excellent (*diapheronta*) things. This word was used outside of the New Testament to refer to those things which were vital or essential.¹

A good question, then, is what are these things that are vital. Are they facts, truth, people, teachings, or something else? Although we cannot be certain, it may be that the things that are vital are those things that are non-negotiables when it comes to our dealings with others. That would certainly fit the context of this prayer, and that of the book in general. Many things that people say and do may rub us the wrong way, but those things are hardly essential areas in which to differ and cause division. We need to be able to discern the really important issues, and let the preferential things go. We need to avoid being sucked in to the world.

Six Easy Steps To Get Engulfed By The World

- 1. Accommodation - we lose the shock.**
- 2. Legitimization - that's the way things are.**
- 3. Assimilation - cooperate with the world, don't think about it.**
- 4. Participation - we become personally involved.**
- 5. Amalgamation - the world's values become mixed with ours.**
- 6. Identification - we become like the world.**

E. In Sincerity of Life (Personal Integrity) - 1:10b

Philippians 1:10 ...that ye may be sincere...

Note that the love, which is evidenced in knowledge, wisdom, and approval of those things that are vital, has as its result sincerity and purity of life. A person who lacks sincerity and purity of life quite possibly lacks love and the other things as well.

Sincere (*heilikrineis*) means “sun judged” and refers to the process of judging something in full light. The Latin word, *sincera*, means to “be without wax” and refers to a fine piece of porcelain which, when held up to the sunlight, did not contain a coat of wax to hide its cracks and deformities. Christians are to be without hidden cracks. Their lives are to be models so that the love that is in them may work its way out to sincerity of life. There should be no glaring flaws that are evident to those who observe their lives.²

F. In Purity of Life (Relational Integrity) - 1:10c

Philippians 1:10 ...and without offence till the day of Christ;

Without offence (*aproskopos*) can be understood as “not causing others to stumble” or “not stumbling oneself.” In context, it is probable that the second

¹ John F. MacArthur, *Joy and Godliness*, (Panorama City: Grace to You, 1990), p. 88.

² *Joy and Godliness*, p.91.

meaning is in view here. One of the results of our love is that we would not stumble in our Christian life.

Note that this lack of stumbling is until the day of Christ. As noted above in verse 6, the day of Christ refers to that time when believers stand before Christ to be judged for their conduct. We see here a powerful incentive to have our love abound more and more in knowledge and tact. It is so that we can stand before Christ and not be ashamed of the way we have conducted ourselves in this life.

G. In Fruitfulness of Life - 1:11

Philippians 1:11 Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, unto the glory and praise of God.

Commentators are divided on the meaning of the term “fruits of righteousness.” Fruit (*karpon*) can be taken as plural or singular. “Of righteousness” can be interpreted as a genitive of apposition (which would be translated “fruit which is righteousness”) or as a genitive of origin (which would be translated “fruit which is the result of righteousness.”)³

Although both are valid interpretations, it appears that the second may be what the Apostle Paul had in mind. A sincere and blameless life, which is of necessity a holy life, produces fruit. This fruit is the result of the righteous life. In Galatians 5:22-23 we read of what some of this fruit may be, love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and self-control.

Note that fruit is the result of a righteous life. Christians do not have to conjure up fruit on their own, it is produced as a result of abiding in the vine (John 15). Outside of the vine, no fruit is possible.

This is further supported by the statement, “which are by Jesus Christ.” The fruit, which is the result of righteousness, is also a result of our abiding in the vine. Christ is the ultimate source of all fruit in the life of the believer.

³ Peter T. O'Brien, *The Epistle to the Philippians*, (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1991), pp. 80-81.

Paul's View of His Imprisonment - Philippians 1:12-20

- A. Paul's imprisonment did not impede his ministry - 1:12-13

Philippians 1:12 But I would ye should understand, brethren, that the things which happened unto me have fallen out rather unto the furtherance of the gospel; So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other places;

Paul had a very mature view of life and circumstances. When things did not go his way, his first reaction was not to freak out and wonder what happened to God. Rather, it was a firm and settled conviction that all things that happened to him were happening according to God's sovereign plan and purpose.

Paul's View of Ministry

It is interesting to look at Paul's view of the ministry. He was one of the most single-minded men of all time. His primary focus was the spread of the Gospel, everything else came second in life. For example:

- **Paul never complained about the circumstances he found himself in (Philippians 4:11-12).**
- **Paul saw every trial as an opportunity to spread the Gospel (Acts 16).**
- **Paul did not have to be the center of attention but was willing to take a back seat to others as long as the Gospel was preached (Philippians 1:13-18).**
- **Paul's greatest concern was personal holiness so as to avoid being disqualified from the ministry (1 Corinthians 9:27).**
- **Paul gladly bore suffering in the name of Christ (Colossians 1:24-25).**
- **Paul saw himself under a divine mandate to preach the Gospel (1 Corinthians 9:16).**
- **Paul preached not himself, but Christ (2 Corinthians 4:5).**
- **Paul sacrificed all personal comfort for the sake of the ministry (2 Corinthians 4:8-10).**
- **Paul did not count his life dear but gladly risked it for the cause of the ministry (Acts 20:24).**

Paul opens this section of the letter by using the phrase "But I would ye should understand." This was a common way in Paul's time to change the subject. We would probably write, "now listen to this" or "on the other hand." However, Paul's meaning goes a bit further than just merely changing the subject, he wants to make the point that his imprisonment in no way hindered the spread of the Gospel or his ministry. No doubt some of the Philippian believers were thinking that since Paul was in prison, his ministry had been severely curtailed. Not so!

God has a way of overruling the apparent setbacks in life to further His plans. As an example, I remember the story that Milas Solc told us

about life in Czechoslovakia under communist domination. The imprisonment of believers was common, and in one case a Christian who had been arrested was put into a common cell with twenty-five other prisoners. He promptly began sharing the gospel with these men which ultimately incensed the prison guards. In anger, they removed him from this cell and put him into another cell with twenty-five fresh evangelistic contacts. Milas Solc made the comment that whenever a believer is arrested in Czechoslovakia, they look forward with anticipation to the ministry they will have in the prisons they may find themselves in.

In spite of Paul's imprisonment, he states that his present circumstances have actually furthered the spread of the Gospel. What may have been seen by the world as a significant setback was in actuality an advance. In fact, Paul states that his imprisonment advanced the Gospel two ways:

1. The Gospel reached to the Praetorian guard.

In verse 13, Paul states that his bonds (*desmous*) have been manifest in all of the palace (*praitorio*). *Praitorio* can mean one of four things, 1) the emperor's palace (as translated in the KJV), 2) the barracks of the guard which was attached to the emperor's palace, 3) the large, permanent camp of the Praetorian guard, or 4) the body of the Praetorian guard itself.⁴ Most commentators and scholars agree that the last meaning is best. This is determined by the following:

- We know from Acts 28 that Paul was under house arrest at his first imprisonment. While under house arrest, Paul had a measure of freedom as he was allowed visitors and was given limited ministry opportunities.
- Since Paul was still a "prisoner," it was necessary for him to be guarded by the Roman Praetorian. This meant that during a twenty-four hour period, Paul would have at least four pairs of soldiers chained to each of his arms.
- It is a certainty that Paul would witness to these guards. Also, the guards would be witness to the visitors that came and went and the attitude Paul exhibited regarding his imprisonment.
- Finally, it is highly reasonable to assume that the soldiers who were chained to Paul would take the message of the Gospel back to the Praetorian, and as a result the message of the Gospel would spread throughout Caesar's court.
- We know from Philippians 4:22 that many in Caesar's household believed. No doubt they were exposed to the Gospel while Paul was under house arrest.

2. The Gospel was manifest in all other places.

Not only was the Gospel spread to Caesar's household and the Praetorian guard, but it was manifest throughout the city as well. The news of Paul's imprisonment and impending trial no doubt spread throughout the city and even to the rest of the Roman empire.

⁴ O'Brien, pp. 92-94.

B. Paul's imprisonment did not hinder the preaching of the Gospel - 1:14-18

1. Positively - 1:14, 17

Philippians 1:14 And many of the brethren in the Lord, waxing confident by my bonds, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

Philippians 1:17 But the other of love, knowing that I am set for the defence of the gospel.

A second positive result of Paul's imprisonment was that the word was being proclaimed with boldness by many other believers. In verses 14-17 we have an example of a chiasmic statement which is used to emphatically contrast two things. (A chiasmic literary construct is composed of two contrasts: A is contrasted with B, then B is contrasted with A). Paul uses this literary device to contrast the preaching of the gospel by those who do it from right motives with the preaching of the gospel by those who do it with wrong motives.

Positively, Paul states that some are preaching the gospel boldly with the right motives. Some think that this boldness was derived from the anticipation of Paul's acquittal and release. This may be part of the reason, but it is better to understand this boldness as coming from the understanding that one's lot has been chosen, one's choice has been made, and one's course of action is clear. To claim to be a soldier, yet refuse to join the battle, brands one as a coward. Verse 17 supports this by stating that these brethren are preaching the word out of love. Probably they have observed Paul in his imprisonment and became ashamed of their weak proclamation of the truth. Paul's example spurred them on to preaching the word much more vocally than before. The knowledge that Paul himself was being called into judgment by Rome made them confident to preach and made them proud to be identified with Paul. To watch Paul stand up and boldly defend Christ while they themselves hid made many count the cost and throw their lot in with Paul.

Paul states that many (*pleionas*) of the brethren in the Lord are growing in their confidence to preach the word. "Many" is best understood as "majority." This majority is opposed to the minority in the following verse who preach the word as an attempt to bring more grief to Paul. The message that these brethren are preaching is "the word", a clear reference to the Gospel and all that accompanies it (2 Timothy 4:1-2, Acts 20:32, 1 Thessalonians 2:13 to name a few passages).

2. Negatively - 1:15-16

Philippians 1:15 Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and strife; and some also of good will:

Philippians 1:16 The one preach Christ of contention, not sincerely, supposing to add affliction to my bonds:

Trust and Ministry

One of the hardest things to deal with is the false accusations of others. This is no more evident than in the ministry. A pastor's entire ministry is based on the trust and confidence that other's have in his character. When that character is attacked and maligned by others, the very basis of his ministry is damaged.

When a pastor loses his reputation through false accusations, the damage can be fatal to his ministry.

The second group of people are not preaching with the right motives, but with the wrong motives. Paul identifies five of these wrong motives for us in these two verses; envy, strife, contention, insincerity, and spite.

Criticizing Other Ministries and Ministers

Many would have us avoid speaking against the ministries of others who call themselves preachers of the gospel. They would contend that it is wrong, and even sinful, to speak against the theology and ministry of others. What does the Bible say about this?

- 1. The Bible says that we are to evaluate the message we hear with the Scriptures. Note the positive example of the Bereans in Acts 17:10-14.**
- 2. The Bible commands us to avoid false teachers - 1 Timothy 6:3-5, Matthew 23, Matthew 7:13-20.**
- 3. The Bible commands the prophets (proclaimers of truth) to be subject to other prophets - 1 Corinthians 14:32.**
- 4. Paul warned against the false teachings and ministries of others - 2 Timothy 2:17-18.**
- 5. Christ cursed the false teachers who caused his saints to sin - Revelation 2:14-15, 20.**
- 6. Christ commends the Ephesian church who searched out and exposed false teachers and prophets - Revelation 2:2.**
- 7. One of the duties of the shepherd is to warn the flock of false teachers - Acts 20:28-32.**
- 8. Some of the most scathing rebuke found in the Bible is reserved for false teachers and prophets - Jude, 2 Peter 2, 2 Timothy 2, Matthew 13.**

What Does This Verse Mean?

Touch not the Lord's anointed and do my prophets no harm

Many use the above verse to deflect criticism from their ministries. They would call down the curse of God on anyone who subjects their teachings to the scrutiny of the Word of God.

The problem with this verse is that it is not talking about criticizing the ministries of others. It is a quote from 1 Chronicles 16:22 and Psalm 105:15. "Touch" refers to physical harm and "anointed" refers to the king. The verse is saying, "Don't kill the king." (see 1 Samuel 24:6, 10; 26:9, 11, 23; 2 Samuel 1:14, 16 and 2 Samuel 19:21 to see that "anointed" refers to the king.)

Hence, it is invalid to quote this verse and claim it as some kind of shield against criticism. The men who claim this are not the Lord's anointed.

a. Envy (*phthonon*)

No doubt some of the brethren were jealous of Paul's popularity. It angered them that he was so popular while they occupied a much less prominent position. Paul's imprisonment made them happy in that a major competitor had been seemingly sidelined from the game. As a result, they proclaimed the word more vocally than ever. Most likely, they hoped to increase their popularity with others and enhance their position in the church.

b. Strife (*erin*)

Closely coupled with envy is strife. Whereas envy refers to the inward attitude, strife refers to its outward workings. This is the desire to demean and slander others for one's own benefit.

What Was Being Said About Paul

He had some sin in his life, and as a result God had to remove him from ministry.

He did not have enough faith. If he did, he would pray and be delivered from his chains.

He was too timid about his faith. If he was more bold, he would proclaim the Gospel with such force that he would be killed.

He was of another era. His methods were outdated, and as a result God was replacing him with someone better and more able to communicate the word.

c. Contention (*erithia*)

Erithia is an interesting word. It has the idea that some of the brethren used Paul's imprisonment as a stepping-stone to greater prominence.⁵ *Erithia* was first used to speak of someone who worked for a living, but later came to mean someone who was always looking for what was in it for them. It was the label given to the upwardly-mobile person who used people and positions as opportunities to greater and greater fame and fortune. It was also used to speak of those who attained public office using underhanded methods.

d. Insincerity (*ouk hagnos*)

Ouk hagnos refers to the preaching of the word with ulterior motives. This is in contrast to the love with which the many preached the word sincerely in verse 17.

e. Spite (*thlipsis egeirein*)

The real reason some preached the gospel was to add affliction to Paul. It was their hope that their preaching would in some way bring more persecution and distress to Paul. Maybe their hope was that their preaching would cause such a stir among the Romans that they would be moved to put Paul in prison permanently or even kill him.

3. Paul's joy in the proclamation of Christ - 1:18

Philippians 1:18 *What then? notwithstanding, every way, whether in pretence, or in truth, Christ is preached; and I therein do rejoice, yea, and will rejoice.*

The upshot of Paul's whole discussion of those who preached with right motives and those who preached with wrong motives was "Who gives a rip? Christ is being preached and that is all that matters."

Paul was singly devoted to the preaching of the Gospel. He did not care who did it, nor did he care about their motives. All he cared about was that the good news was being proclaimed.

Can You Play Second Fiddle?

Someone once asked a great composer of music what was the hardest instrument in an orchestra to play. After a couple moments of thought, he replied, "second fiddle."

No one likes to play second fiddle. No one wants to be the backup quarterback in the NFL even though they may make a million dollars a year walking the sidelines. Everyone wants to be number one, the person in the spotlight.

It is challenging to see that Paul did not care about the position he played, all he cared about was the game. It did not matter to him whether he played quarterback, halfback, running back, wideout, or kicker. All he cared about was that his team was

⁵ O'Brien, pp. 101-102.

winning, and if it was his job to fill the Gatorade cups, he was content.

Vance Havner once said that some bigshots turn out to be buckshot once you get to know them a little better.

- C. Paul's imprisonment was used by God to display His glory and power - 1:19-20

Thirdly, Paul viewed his imprisonment as a means whereby God could be glorified and his name exalted. It mattered little to Paul about his own circumstances. All that mattered was that God be glorified in his life. If that meant that he lived, fine, if that meant that he died, great! Paul did not get wrapped up in his circumstances, but rather ignored them and concentrated on the real reason for his life, the proclamation of the word and the glorification of God's name.

Paul voices his confidence in the fact that all things that are happening to him, specifically in regards to his imprisonment, are happening according to God's plan and purpose.

1. Paul had confidence in God's deliverance - Philippians 1:19a

Philippians 1:19a For I know that this shall turn to my salvation...

First, Paul knew (*oida*) that he would be delivered (*soteria*) from his present circumstances. Paul's knowledge was a deep-settled conviction that he would be saved from his current imprisonment.

Some commentators think that this is because Paul had some prior knowledge of his soon release and that he had already been acquitted of any crime. However, this is probably not what Paul means since he then goes on to say "whether by life or death" in verse 20. It is probably best to understand this statement in the sense that whether he is delivered by death, or by life, he will still be delivered from his present circumstances. It is comforting to know that adverse circumstances are never final for a believer, for deliverance is coming.

2. Paul had confidence in the prayers of the saints - Philippians 1:19b

Philippians 1:19b ... through your prayer...

Paul's second confidence is founded in the prayers of the saints. Prayer is one of the means whereby God works his will in the world. Although God is sovereign, he has commissioned the prayers of the saints as an avenue whereby his sovereign purposes are effected in the world. It is not proper to say that since God is sovereign and he is going to do his will no matter what I do, that therefore I need not pray.

A good example of the way in which God uses prayer to effect his will can be found in Acts 12:5. In this short verse we find eight truths regarding corporate prayer on the behalf of others.

- a. The Predicament - Acts 12:1-5a

Acts 12:1-5a Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword. And because he saw it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to take Peter also. (Then were the days of unleavened

bread.) And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people. Peter therefore was kept in prison:

First, we see the predicament. Herod, in order to ingratiate the Jews, put forth his hand and killed the Apostle James. Since this pleased the Jews, he decided to do the same to another Apostle, Peter. As a result, he had Peter arrested and put into prison planning on bringing him out and killing him after the Passover.

b. The Prayer - Acts 12:5b

Acts 12:1-5b ...but prayer was made...

The Jerusalem church, no doubt mourning the loss of James, begins to pray for the deliverance of Peter from the clutches of Herod. The word for prayer, *proseucha*, refers to the petition one makes of someone who has the power to grant the petition. The church knew that the only way Peter would be delivered is through the power of God.

c. The Perseverance- Acts 12:5c

Acts 12:1-5c ...without ceasing...

However, the church did not just pray, but it prayed without ceasing. This prayer was not a once-for-all petition offered during the Sunday service, but was in fact a consuming desire that found its expression in the continual prayers of the church. No doubt the Jerusalem church had a prayer meeting every night in order to address this significant need.

d. The People - Acts 12:5d

Acts 12:1-5d ...of the church...

The petitioners of this prayer were the members of the church. This prayer was not offered by the pastors only, or by the leadership only, but by each and every member of the church.

e. The Potentate - Acts 12:5e

Acts 12:1-5e ...unto God...

This prayer was directed to God since it was God who alone had the power and ability to deliver Peter from the hands of Herod. In all of our prayers, we must realize that it is only God who can answer and deliver. We sometimes do not have a good understanding of the desire and ability of God to answer our prayers.

f. The Petition - Acts 12:5f

Acts 12:1-5f ...for him...

The petition of this prayer was Peter. Many times prayers delivered in the church are unfocused. They are the "Lord, bless xxxx" kind with no real object. Not this prayer! The church prayed that God would specifically deliver Peter from death.

g. The Peace - Acts 12:6

Acts 12:1-6 And when Herod would have brought him forth, the same night Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains: and the keepers before the door kept the prison.

What were the results of this prayer? First we see the peace of prayer in verse 6. It was the night before his execution, and instead of Peter freaking out wondering where God was in his hour of need, he was sound asleep! Peter knew that God was in charge of his circumstances, and if God wanted to deliver him, he would, otherwise Peter was content to lay down his life for his Lord. In any way, there was no use fretting about things, so Peter decided to be well rested for whatever lay in store.

h. The Power - Acts 12:7-17

The second result of this prayer was that an angel of the Lord came down and delivered Peter from the prison. In the Old Testament we read that one angel slew 186,000 men, so it is no big deal for an angel to deliver someone who is imprisoned behind two locked gates and bound in chains.

After being delivered, Peter went to the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, where the church had assembled to pray for him. It is interesting to note the reaction of the church as their prayer is answered right in the middle of their prayer meeting. In spite of their apparent lack of confidence in God delivering Peter, God answered their prayer. It is comforting to know that even weak faith is better than no faith at all.

3. Paul had confidence in the provision of the Spirit - Philippians 1:19c

Philippians 1:19c ...and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ...

Thirdly, Paul had confidence in the ability of the Holy Spirit to provide whatever he needed. The word “supply” (*epichoregia*), means “bountiful,” “need,” or “full resources.” The Holy Spirit does not provide just enough to let us squeak through our trial, but provides abundantly above all that we could ask or think. There is no excuse for a believer to think that God is not able to deal with the circumstances of life, since his Spirit is ever there to give us all that we require.

Ephesians 3:20 Now unto him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us,

4. Paul had confidence in the promise of heaven - Philippians 1:20a

Philippians 1:20a ...According to my earnest expectation and my hope, that in nothing I shall be ashamed,

Fourthly, Paul had great confidence in the promise of heaven. In fact, it is the promise of heaven that enable Paul to endure the many trials and persecutions he faced (1 Corinthians 15). Paul knew that death was not the end of everything, but only the beginning for the believer.

The word “earnest expectation” is *apokaradokia* which pictures someone craning the neck to look ahead for something greatly desired. The object to which Paul refers is the promise of heaven. This promise and hope is something that will not shame, or better translated disappoint, the one who is seeking it. Hope, as in the rest of the New Testament, refers to a firm and settled conviction about that which is a certainty in the future.

5. Paul had confidence in the plan of God - Philippians 1:20b

Philippians 1:20b but that with all boldness, as always so now also Christ shall be magnified in my body, whether it be by life, or by death.

Finally, Paul had confidence in the plans and purposes of God. As we have noted earlier, it mattered little to Paul about what happened to him, as long as Christ was exalted. If that meant Paul would live, then fine, if it meant he was to die, that was fine as well. All that mattered was that Christ be glorified.

Paul’s Ambivalence About Life and Death - Philippians 1:21-26

In these six verses we find Paul’s ambivalence regarding life and death. Although it is certain Paul was in no hurry to die, he nevertheless did not fear death as he saw it as the beginning of his time with the Lord. On the other hand, he did see death as the end of his ability to minister to others. So Paul was between to great desires, the first to be with Christ, the second to continue his ministry to others.

A. Paul viewed death as his great reward - 1:21

Philippians 1:21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

The phrase “For me to live” refers to Paul’s assertion that life, to him, is meaningless apart from Christ. It is Christ, and Christ alone, that brings true meaning and purpose to our existence. A good passage to see this asserted even more forcefully is 1 Corinthians 15:16-19:

1 Corinthians 15:16-19 For if the dead rise not, then is not Christ raised: And if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain; ye are yet in your sins. Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, we are of all men most miserable.

He also asserts this in Philippians 3:8 where he writes that he considers all things but loss for the excellency of knowing Christ. Paul’s entire life was consumed by the desire to know Christ and to do his will no matter what the cost.

As great as this life was (the life with Christ), Paul viewed death as his great reward. Too often, we as believers view death with a sense of dread as we see it the end to this life. We observe its finality, and think of it as the end of all of our plans and dreams. This was not so with Paul. He knew that when he died, he would be with Christ which is far better.

B. Paul viewed life as his opportunity to labor for Christ - 1:22a

Philippians 1:22 But if I live in the flesh, this is the fruit of my labour:

This is a difficult verse to understand in the KJV text due, in part, to the disjointed nature of what Paul is trying to say. We have here a man who is caught between two things, the desire to stay and minister to others, and the desire to depart and be with Christ. This ambivalence shows itself most clearly here.

The best understanding of this passage is found in the NASB text, which reads:

If I am to live in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me.

In other words, Paul is saying that if he lives, and he might, this will only afford him more opportunities to minister for Christ. Paul did not see his escape from death as a means whereby he can do more things for himself, but that he can do more things for Christ. Too often our view of life is that of pleasure. We hate death because it means we can no longer do those things that we would like to do, like trips to Hawaii, or that next big vacation, or even marriage. None of these things moved Paul. His desire to continue living was so that he could touch more lives with the power of Christ.

C. Paul viewed death as his doorway to the presence of Christ - 1:22b-23

Philippians 1:22b-23 ...yet what I shall choose I wot not. For I am in a strait betwixt two, having a desire to depart, and to be with Christ; which is far better:

Paul’s ambivalence is seen clearly here. He basically asks, “I am not sure what I really want to choose, death or life.” Life is an opportunity to minister to others, death is the doorway to heaven. It is like a small child given the choice between ice-cream and chocolate cake. The difference here is that Paul saw death as the more desirable option, since to be with Christ is far better. We are reminded of

Christ's high-priestly prayer in John 17, where we almost sense an attitude of relief and anticipation on Christ's part. He is relieved over the fact that his sojourn here on earth is near an end and that he has finished the task that the Father gave him to do. On the other hand, he anticipated reunion with the Father and the reinstatement of the glory he had before the world began.

- D. Paul viewed life as an opportunity to serve the Philippian believers - 1:24-26

Philippians 1:24-26 Nevertheless to abide in the flesh is more needful for you. And having this confidence, I know that I shall abide and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith; That your rejoicing may be more abundant in Jesus Christ for me by my coming to you again.

Finally, with almost a sense of disappointment, Paul returns to reality and says that it is more needful for him to abide in the flesh a little longer so as to minister to the Philippians as well as others. Note the following points about this fact:

1. Paul knew he would remain a little while longer.

Paul states in verse 25 that he knew he would remain in the flesh a little longer. It seems as though when Paul wrote this letter, he had some knowledge that there was a high degree of probability that he would be released. Although it was possible to go the other way, it was almost certain that he would be released.

2. Paul's continuance in the flesh was to benefit others.

In verses 25-26 Paul states that his release would further the faith and joy of the Philippians believers. No doubt the Philippian believers were praying for Paul's release and safety, and the fact that he would be released would increase their faith due to answered prayer and their joy over seeing Paul again.

Paul's Exhortation to the Philippians - Philippians 1:27-30

In these four verses we find Paul's plea to the Philippians regarding their worthy walk. To Paul, Christianity was never something intellectual and dry, but alive and practical. Godly living is the result of godly doctrine, and godly doctrine produces godly living. It is not possible to separate the two. Often we come into contact with Christians that know all of the answers, but whose lives do not reflect their high calling as God's children.

Paul begins his plea with a word picture most familiar with the Philippians believers. The word "conversation" (*politeuo*), refers to the conduct and privileges of citizens of a Roman city-state. As noted in the last chapter, those who were citizens of Roman city-states had many privileges. These elevated privileges made the citizens of such cities proud of their community and encouraged them to be good citizens. Paul is saying that our conduct as believers is modeled along the same lines. Instead of some geopolitical city, we are citizens of heaven, and as such have tremendous privileges and responsibilities. In fact, later on in verse 20 of chapter 3, Paul tells us our citizenship is in heaven. We are not citizens of this world trying to make it through this world, we are citizens of heaven who are strangers, exiles, and aliens in this world.

Why Be Godly?

Today we are told by many counselors that it is important to meet our felt-needs. We are told that it is the job of the "Christian counselor" to help

people find these needs and meet them in a beneficial way. What does the Bible say about this?

- 1. Nowhere does the Bible talk about felt needs. It says that man's basic need is to be delivered from sin, not some internal void or shortcoming.**
- 2. Nowhere does the Bible tell us to be concerned about ourselves. We are commanded to set our affections on things above (Colossians 3:1--4), and on other people (Philippians 2:1-4).**
- 3. When people concentrate on their needs, the primary role of God becomes one of a celestial "need meeter." Additionally, other people are valued as to their ability to meet our needs. Many times this leads to divorce and broken relationships when someone comes along who can meet our needs a little better than the person we are with.**
- 4. The true motive for godly living is not found within ourselves, but without, as we see ourselves as representatives of God on this world. When we see ourselves as mini-reflections of God's character, we long to reflect God's image as best we can. We find that we do not sin because we do not want it to reflect badly on Christ.**

Not only did Paul want the Philippians believers to live godly lives because of their heavenly citizenship, but also so that Paul would be encouraged by their high standard of conduct. Paul wanted this conduct to be such that whether he was present or absent, it would not change. Often people straighten up and act differently around the "reverend," but when the Pastor leaves, conduct returns to a lower level. Men and women of integrity live godly lives regardless of the audience.

How do we live as citizens of heaven? Pauls lists four ways.

- A. The exhortation to stand fast - 1:27b

Philippians 1:27 ...that ye stand fast...

The word "stand" is *steko*, and was used to refer to a soldier who stayed at his assigned post and was determined not to budge from it. One of the marks of a citizen of heaven is that they are not swayed from the truth regardless of what wind of doctrine blows across the landscape. Paul, in writing to the churches in Galatia, was astounded that they had so easily been moved away from the truth (Galatians 1:6-7). Citizens of heaven have a single-minded tenacity to hang on to the truth at all costs.

Not only are we to stand firm in doctrine, but also in conduct. The Christian life is one of resolute determination to live in accordance with conduct worthy of a citizen of heaven. Those who find themselves fortunate to be born into wealthy or royal families often refrain from certain things not because they cannot do them, but because of who they are. The same goes for the believer. We who have an eternal home and reward in heaven need to refrain from being caught up in the affairs and materialism of this life. We have a far better future in heaven.

- B. The exhortation to unity - Philippians 1:27c

Philippians 1:27 ...in one spirit, with one mind...

Secondly, a citizen of heaven remembers who the real enemy is, and stays focused on the battle. One of the most successful strategies of Satan is to divide

the body of Christ and pick off believers one at a time. One of the best ways to unity is to have a common enemy. Soldiers may squabble and fight in the rear ranks, but when they find themselves on the front line all such pettiness ceases.

How Can We Have Unity?

- 1. Avoid the need to be number one.**
- 2. Allow others to win an argument, even if you are right.**
- 3. Stay focused on the real enemy.**
- 4. Remember that God hates those who sow discord (Proverbs 6:16-19).**
- 5. Prefer others over yourself.**
- 6. Walk in the Spirit.**

- C. The exhortation to singleness of purpose - 1:27d

Philippians 1:27 ...striving together for the faith of the gospel;

Thirdly, a citizen of heaven strives for the faith of the gospel. The words “strive together” come from the Greek word *sunathleo*. This word means “to struggle together for a common goal.” A good example of this kind of behavior is a sports team, in which all members must work together in unison in order to achieve victory. A person may be the best basketball player in the world, but if he is unable to play on the team, the team will go down in defeat. Citizens of heaven work together in order to reach the world for Christ and to exhibit conduct worthy of their high calling.

How To Be A Team Player

- 1. Know your place on the team.**
Not everyone can be the quarterback, someone needs to play on the offensive line.
- 2. Play your position.**
Do not play someone else’s position or your man may be the one who hits the three-point basket.
- 3. Seek the good of the team, not personal glory and fame.**
Do not try to be a “hot dog.” It is more important for the team to win than for your name to be in the paper.
- 4. Encourage the other members of the team.**
When a player makes a good play, encourage them, when they make a bad one, support them. Your turn for a bad play will come before you know it.
- 5. Stay focused on the goal and refrain from bickering with other team members.**

Don't rag on the other players. Teamwork requires team spirit. When a team is divided, defeat is the most probable outcome.

6. Listen to the coach.

The coach is the one with the global perspective. It is his job to orchestrate the entire team. When his instructions are ignored, the unity of the team is lost.

D. The exhortation to fearless living - 1:28-30

Philippians 1:28 And in nothing terrified by your adversaries: which is to them an evident token of perdition, but to you of salvation, and that of God. For unto you it is given in the behalf of Christ, not only to believe on him, but also to suffer for his sake; Having the same conflict which ye saw in me, and now hear to be in me.

The fourth characteristic of the citizen of heaven is that they are not terrified of their enemies nor are they reluctant to suffer on the behalf of their king. We are reminded in John 15:18-21 that suffering is part and parcel of the Christian life. In fact, suffering is the norm, lack of suffering is the exception. Too often we think that suffering is the exception.

Why should we live fearlessly in order that our adversaries may see that we live for a higher kingdom. When we live in constant fear of what others may do, we exhibit a lack of faith and trust in God who is our king. When we are persecuted for being citizens of heaven, we can gain assurance of our true citizenship. Those who persecute us evidence their loyalty to the kingdom of darkness, we evidence our loyalty to the kingdom of light.