

Philippians 1

Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: 2Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

3I thank my God every time I remember you, 4constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, 5because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. 6I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.

7It is right for me to think this way about all of you, because you hold me in your heart, for all of you share in God's grace with me, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. 8For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus.

9And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight 10to help you to determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, 11having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

12I want you to know, beloved that what has happened to me has actually helped to spread the gospel, 13so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to everyone else that my imprisonment is for Christ; 14and most of the brothers and sisters, having been made confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, dare to speak the word with greater boldness and without fear. 15Some proclaim Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from goodwill. 16These proclaim Christ out of love, knowing that I have been put here for the defense of the gospel; 17the others proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely but intending to increase my suffering in my imprisonment. 18What does it matter? Just this, that Christ is proclaimed in every way, whether out of false motives or true; and in that I rejoice. Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, 19for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance. 20It is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be put to shame in any way, but that by my speaking with all boldness, Christ will be exalted now as always in my body, whether by life or by death.

21For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain. 22If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which I prefer. 23I am hard pressed between the two: my desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better; 24but to remain in the flesh is more necessary for you. 25Since I am convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with all of you for your progress and joy in faith, 26so that I may share abundantly in your boasting in Christ Jesus when I come to you again.

27Only, live your life in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that, whether I come and see you or am absent and hear about you, I will know that you are standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel, 28and are in no way intimidated by your opponents. For them this is evidence of their destruction, but of your salvation. And this is God's doing. 29For he has graciously granted you the privilege not only of believing in Christ, but of suffering for him as well—30since you are having the same struggle that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

Introduction

The Apostle Paul wrote a number of letters to the churches of the first century, addressing various circumstances and concerns. Though some letters attributed to Paul have received considerable scrutiny, this is one of the uncontested pieces of New Testament writing. Likely written around 61-63 CE, the letter to the Philippians is one of those written by Paul from prison. Traditional scholarship has placed the apostle in Rome; however, more recent scholarship has suggested this could be the imprisonment at Caesarea from Acts 24-26.

Philippi was a large city of Macedonia, the westernmost of all the churches connected to the ministry of Paul at the time. This letter's addresses the sending of the Epaphroditus to the Philippian church, along with the hope that Timothy may also join them in ministry. Like many letters, the epistle addresses the subject at hand while also expanding upon broader themes, including attempts at making meaning of the Philippian church's struggles and suffering.

Chapter 1 – Greetings, Thanksgivings, and Paul's Present Context

Like any letter, this epistle opens with a greeting to the people, referred to as the 'saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi'.

The thanksgivings which follow the initial greeting are common to the Pauline letters as are some of the reasons for which he offers gratitude. 'Sharing' and 'partnership' (v.5) are central to the apostle's understanding of Christian community. N.T. Wright reminds us of the implications of this word – "in Paul's world it was the normal word for a business partnership, in which all those involved would share in doing the work on the one hand and in the financial responsibilities on the other." We are bound up in this relationship of love and ministry, Paul reminds the Philippian Christians, so that their love for one another, "may overflow more and more..." (v.9).

After completing introductory comments, Paul moves toward an explanation of his present circumstances – he is in prison. Wright offers insight into the frustration the apostle must have felt – "For a traveling apostle to be put in prison must have seemed like a concert pianist having his hands tied behind his back." Yet, this is not Paul's only concern – the Gospel is being corrupted in its proclamation (v.15-17). The true gospel of Jesus Christ, Paul reminds his readers, flows forth from love and goodwill rather than selfish ambition, envy or rivalry.

In the midst of these circumstances, Paul possesses a remarkable hope – "For to me, living is Christ and dying is gain." (v.21).