

Philippians: Gospel Partnership

Intro We see in the animal kingdom that many animals live in groups.
Benefits of group

① protection from predators - confusion, vigilance, foraging, locomotion, environment, communication

Do we recognize the benefits of partnership??

Animals - instinct DNA

Christians: spiritual instinct + DNA
- but society, culture, + sin
all fight against this + evil

Philippians 1:1-2 ESV

[1] Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus,

To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi,
with the overseers and deacons:

[2] Grace to you and peace from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul's letter to the Philippians is a reminder + an exhortation about their partnership in the Gospel.

Initial Thoughts on Opening -

Greeting: "Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

Pattern of Greco-Roman letters - 1) name of sender; 2) recipient of letter; 3) salutation/greeting; and 4) prayer.

- salutation/
greeting

Grace and peace

- Greek = charis = greetings; sounds like charis = grace
- Jewish = salom = peace
- Combining Greek and Jewish greetings with a distinctive Christian meaning → pointing towards a "partnership"
- Grace, in Paul, is a shorthand for all God has done for his people in Christ
- Peace is more than no hostility, it means wholeness and completeness
- Grace and peace entails the whole and complete work of God through Christ Jesus! To you!

Opening: [1] Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons: [2] Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

One purpose of opening is to identify the identities of the sender and recipient

The opening speaks to the identity of the writers, and the identity of the recipients. In doing so, it also speaks to our identity in Christ

Matthew Harmon (Mentor): *Commentary on Philippians*

- servants of Christ Jesus
- the saints
- grace + peace from God our Father
- Lord Jesus Christ

Consider how much these 2 verses indicate to us about who we are!

The question of identity is as old as human history. It is vital that we know who we are. Philippians 1:1-2 provides us with at least a partial answer. As believers we are servants of Jesus Christ, meaning that we belong to Him and we are at His disposal. We are saints, meaning that we are set apart for God's special purposes in this world. We are in Christ Jesus which means that we are now under His control and authority ^{and} are recipients of God's matchless grace, meaning that we possess that which we do not deserve. We are recipients of God's peace, meaning that we are no longer under His wrath and condemnation but rather in a right relationship with Him. We are sons and daughters of God, meaning that we are part of a new spiritual family that transcends even the bonds of our earthly families.

So much in this opening introduces us to & reminds us of our identity in Christ

Christians: Gospel partnership will require a firm grasp of your identity... Is this how you view yourself? Is this how you view fellow believers?

Non-Christian: Gospel partnership has one over-riding qualification...you must be in Christ. Your identity must be as Christ's servant, set aside for God's purposes, submitted to Christ, having received God's saving grace and therefore at peace with God and part of God's family. Is that you? **GOSPEL!**

Gospel partnership is for those who have received the GOSPEL

Author – [1] Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus,

Chronology

- Paul first came to Philippi on his second missionary journey – Acts 16:12
- 3 significant events: 1) evangelism and salvation of Lydia and her family, 2) the exorcism of an evil spirit from a young girl, and 3) the miraculous account of Paul and Silas in prison where an earthquake freed them and salvation came to the jailor and his family.

Circumstances

- Paul is writing while in chains; he is imprisoned – *→ not very specific*
~~Graham~~ *sushi restaurant*
- There are three possible imprisonments; Ephesus, Caesarea, or Rome
- Writing from house arrest in Rome puts the letters approximately 10 years after the birth of the church in Philippi (AD 60-62)

Co-author

- Timothy was with Paul while under house arrest
- Timothy may have had input into the letter, precursor to Paul sending Timothy
- Partnership between the father and son

Recipients – [1] ... To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons:

Philippi – “at Philippi”

- Roman colony as opposed to a Roman province – maybe 10,000-15,000 people
- A Roman colony was more closely and directly connected to Rome
- A province, like Judea, was less connected to Rome politically, economically, and culturally
- Coke and Sprite vs. Coke and Cherry Coke
- Theology Professor (Covenant): “In spite of its distant location, it is virtually Rome.”
- There was no synagogue, with a meagre Jewish population

Philippians – “all the saints”

- The Gospel had penetrated into Philippi through salvation; Lydia and her family, the jailor and his family ~~but~~ it is likely that the church was predominantly Gentile
- The church is organized (overseers and deacons – 1:1), has partnered with Paul in the gospel (on more than one occasion – (1:5, 2:25-30, 4:10-20), were notably generous (an example to the Corinthians – 2 Cor. 8:1-5), a source of joy and encouragement (1:3-8), individuals had served alongside Paul (Euodia, Syntyche, Clement, and the true companion – 4:2-3), and risked their lives for Paul (Epaphroditus – 2:25-30)
- Church was not perfect – internal conflict (Euodia and Syntyche, calls for unity – 1:27 + 2:1-4 + 3:15 + 4:2-9), external ~~conflict~~ *external pressures* (persecution – 1:27-30, false teachers – 3:2-7, enemies of the cross – 3:18-19) They were both “in Christ Jesus” and “in Philippi!”
- Generally healthy church, loved and appreciated by Paul

Similarities

- ↳ we are a church formed by evangelism + salvation
- ↳ we are organized, generous, served alongside one another
- ↳ we are not perfect → internal struggles
- ↳ external struggles - sexuality, sanctity of life, religious freedom
- ↳ we are in Christ + in London **HEALTHY**

It's look ahead to what is in ~~the~~ this book letter so we can determine why Paul sent it.

Themes

Triune God with Christ as the Central Figure

God

- **Gordon Fee:** "...one does not long do theology in Paul without taking seriously that the living God, indeed the Trinity, is the heart and soul of everything..."
- In terms of salvation, God initiates it (1:6; cf. 3:9, 14), God makes it work in the present (2:13) and God will bring it to completion (1:6). God has saved his people through Christ (2:9-11; 4:18, 20). God's people are "called" by him (3:14); their salvation and righteousness come from him (1:28; 3:9); they are named "God's children" (2:15), and he is present among his them (4:9), so that his peace may "rule" in both their individual and corporate lives (4:7).

The Holy Spirit

- Worship by the Spirit contrasts true believers from false (3:3). The Spirit will be the key to Paul's magnifying Christ at his upcoming trial (1:19); and the Spirit is the key to the Philippians' standing firm as a united people on behalf of the gospel (1:27; 2:1). Again, there is nothing unique here: this is the recurring explicit and implicit theology of the apostle.

Jesus Christ

- **Matthew Harmon:** "What is true of the Bible as a whole is true of Philippians in particular: Jesus Christ is the central figure."
- Paul's goal is to magnify Christ (1:20). If he lives, the result will be further experience of Christ (1:21, 3:7-10, 12-14) and fruitful labor for Christ (1:22-26). If he dies, that is even better; he will be with Christ (1:21, 23), his life will have been a drink offering to Christ (2:17). For believers Christ is the object of their faith (3:9), joy (3:1; 4:4, 10), boasting (2:6; 3:3), and hope (2:19; 3:20-21).

The Gospel

Spreading the gospel: gospel message (1:12; 2:22; 4:3, 15); 'speak the word' (1:14), 'preach Christ' (1:15), and "proclaim Christ" (1:17)

Content of belief (1:7, 21b)

It has benefits (1:5). It requires defense and confirmation (1:7). Our lives must be worthy of it (1:27) and faith in the gospel demands striving (1:27).

But perhaps the emphasis in Philippians is that the gospel is what Christians partner in and for. Paul is thankful for their partnership in the gospel (1:5). Christians strive side by side for the gospel (1:27) and labour together in the gospel (4:3).

Togetherness is the next major theme...

Unity/Fellowship/Partnership/Community

Two powerful comments on the importance of unity:

- 1) **1:27** where a life worthy of the gospel = "standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel"
- 2) **2:4** where completing Paul's joy = "being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind."

Others

Eschatology/Day of Christ/Already-Not Yet, Joy, Progress, Suffering

*Peace
Gospel
Unity*

Purpose – Why did Paul write this letter?

Paul writes to the Philippians to encourage and exhort them to continue and strengthen their partnership with him in the Gospel.

Why do we say this?

Summary of Themes

Big three theme combo: The three major themes of Philippians suggest that the purpose should involve God with an emphasis on Jesus, the Gospel, and unity.

Structure

Outline

- **1:1-11** Introduction – opening, greeting, thanksgiving, and prayer
- **1:12-26** Paul's Circumstances
- **1:27-2:18** Exhortations – live worthy of the gospel in suffering and serve with a Christ-like attitude
- **3:1-4:1** Warnings – against legalism and lawlessness
- **4:2-23** Conclusion – thanks, encouragements, and benediction
- BUT, **2:19-30** contains two examples or illustrations...Timothy and Epaphroditus, his partners in the gospel!!

Chiasm

- Chiasm is a term that comes from the Greek letter chi – like an "X"
- All you need is love, love is all you need
- ~~W/ conditions W/ no means and therefore visible and invisible~~
- Demonstration

Similarities

- a call for us @ WCA, in 2016, is to continue in gospel partnership. And not just continue, but to grow in gospel partnership.
- continue – this is what we are about "making known the Greater"
- grow – Pastor Mike → better days ahead

How can we partner in the gospel?