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From Slaves to Saints; Phil 1:1-2
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Introduction – Let's talk about the context of the letter. Paul and the church at Philippi are by no means strangers, but rather have a closely knit bond. It was during Paul's 2nd missionary journey that the church in Philippi was born. You can read about it in Acts 16.

Timothy joins Paul and Silas, a vision is given to Paul to bring the gospel to Macedonia, Philippi was one of the key cities of Macedonia. One day Paul is sharing the gospel with a group of women. One of them is a fairly wealthy woman named Lydia. God opened her heart to the gospel, and she opened her house to the missionaries. She and her whole household came to faith and were all baptized. Right there was the beginning of the church in Philippi.

Other remarkable things happened as well. Paul cast out a demon who had possessed a young girl and because her owners lost their money making side-show, they had Paul and Silas arrested and thrown in jail. At midnight they did something very unusual – two shackled men started singing praises to God. God heard those praises, shook open the prison, shook off the shackles, and the prison guard assumed they had escaped so he started to commit suicide rather than face the torture of losing prisoners. Paul stops him, shares the gospel, and he and his household come to faith and were baptized. And the little new church keeps growing.

You see these Philippian believers love Paul because he brought the gospel to them. This church was filled with people like Lydia, blessed with a large home so she opened it up for the church. People like the jailor who thought life was over until he found Jesus. So they get word that Paul is back in prison in Rome, so they send him a monetary gift to ease his burden. Philippians is his thank you letter to the church he loves and that loves him.

So this letter, much like the letters of Timothy and Philemon, is very personal in tone and dripping with grace. You get a glimpse of Paul the person, the man, and as you get to know Paul and his love for the Lord and his love for the church, you

can't help but love the great church-planting, suffering, missionary to the Gentiles. Even the greeting has a lot to teach us.

I. A Humble Self-Description of the Senders

- a. Notice that Paul includes Timothy. Timothy was there visiting Paul in prison and was like a secretary for him. Paul authored Philippians; Timothy wrote down his words. Remember, Timothy was with Paul when he was in Philippi, so he too had a special connection with this congregation. And now he was sitting with Paul, still being disciplined by the Apostle.
- b. It's also interesting to note what's missing. Paul doesn't include his title of Apostle as he does in other letters because he feels no impulse to remind this particular church of his authority. He says in 4:1 this church is his "joy and crown." They know him enough to know what he writes to them comes from the Lord.
- c. The main point to note, however, is that Paul describes he and Timothy as "servants of Christ Jesus." Now the word here that is translated "servant" is actually the word for "slave." The Greek word for servant is actually used later in the verse and is translated as deacons. Deacons are servants of the church. But Paul says that he and Timothy are slaves of Christ.
- d. English translations use the word servant rather than slave because we have too much evil history and baggage with that word. When we read slave, we think of forced, involuntary, tragic, harsh enslavement.
- e. But that's not what Paul has in mind. His is not a harsh enslavement; his is a happy enslavement! Christ has bought him from slavery to sin, brought him into his household of faith. No longer is sin his master, but Christ is his master and Lord. This is not harsh and involuntary – this is true freedom.
- f. True, happy freedom is not the absence of tethers. True, happy freedom is being released from the world and bound to Christ.
- g. That's why roman chains are not able to evaporate Paul's joy. He has a deeper bond than being bound by Rome. He is chained to Another, and those chains do not clasp the wrists and ankles; those chains grip the heart and soul.

h. It's a willing, happy servitude to be bound to Christ, but make no mistake about it, it is a life of service, it will cost, and there can be no better life or no better service.

II. An Uplifting Depiction of the Recipients

a. He calls them saints – literally holy ones – meaning those set apart from the world by the Lord to serve the Lord in the world. Saints.

i. You see what makes one a saint is union with Christ. That's what makes us holy before the Lord.

ii. Being a humanitarian or philanthropist doesn't make one a saint. Having an official title bestowed upon you by the church doesn't make one a saint. But when you embrace Christ as Savior and Lord, and your sin is removed by his death, and He places upon you His own righteousness – you are a saint brother – a holy one – before Almighty God.

iii. Paul writes, "to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi." Every true believer is a saint.

b. He makes reference to their unity.

i. The believers are "with" the overseers and deacons.

ii. The words overseer, bishop, elder, and shepherd, all refer to the office of pastor. Each word signifying a different function of the pastor. Deacons is referring to a separate group of men who serve the church. Pastors are to be the spiritual leaders. Deacons are to be taking care of the material and physical needs of the body. So this one church had a group of men leading them spiritually and a group of men serving their needs. And that's God's design for the NT church.

iii. But notice he says the believers are "with" the overseers and deacons. The word there is literally "together with". Paul not only means I want all of you to read this letter. He's also hinting at their unity because they're going to need unity. In ch4 Paul will bring up an issue the church will have to address with its members, and it's an issue that could disrupt unity. They will need to be together to resolve it.

c. You see how grace, though not mentioned, has already entered Paul's message? He is gracious in his self-description, in their depiction, and will later call them to be gracious to one another.

III. A Grace-Filled Blessing for the Readers

- a. Paul's greeting ends with one of his common blessings, but there's nothing common about it. This is not just a trite, repetitive opening for Paul. It's not merely a nice-sounding spiritual slogan. When he writes, "grace to you and peace," he is genuinely praying grace and peace for these believers.
- b. It's not the grace and peace of salvation. They are already saved. No, this is a prayer for grace to live out the faith and persevere with joy in the Christian life and to know the peace of God even in the middle of the most difficult times of life – like being imprisoned for your faith in Christ.
- c. Cf 4:2,6 – they are going to need a lot of grace and will be in need of peace to live out the faith – and btw – so do we. We need a lot of grace to be gracious to one another.
- d. Finally, Paul draws our attention to the source of where we are to draw the daily grace we need and where to find the peace we need – God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Those are the wells where we drop our empty buckets every day in order to fill them to overflowing with grace and peace.

Conclusion

1. Paul's letters are means of communication. He's writing to believers about the things of God. We need to communicate with one another – in person and by every other means – and share with one another concerning the things of God. Talk about the faith. Talk about the savior. Talk about grace.
2. Paul's greeting contains a blessing. We need to bless each other. Reject talking about one another, bless one another.
3. Remember we are slaves of Christ and there's no greater master and no greater life.
4. Remember we are saints in Christ and there is no other salvation and all our righteousness is His.
5. When you need grace and when you are searching for peace – go to the source. Go to your Father. Go to your Savior. We will never find those wells dry!!