



PHILIPPIANS

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**Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ,
To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:
Philippians 1:1**

Welcome to the book of Philippians! It is comprised of 104 verses, or 51 verses shorter than the book of Ephesians. Please be blessed with wonderful insights into this beautiful epistle which comes from the mind of God and through the hand of Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles.

Paul begins by greeting his audience on behalf of himself and Timothy. Timothy is jointly named here as he is in quite a few other letters. In fact, he is mentioned in this way along with Paul in every single epistle in which another name is given, with the exception of 1 Corinthians. There, only Sosthenes is mentioned. The naming of Timothy is for a couple of reasons. First, he was very well known to the saints at Philippi. Paul will be sending him there shortly as well. This is noted in Philippians 2:19. Although unstated, Timothy may have been Paul's scribe in the writing of the letter. This is merely speculation though.

Together, they are listed as "bondservants of Jesus Christ." Unlike all of his other letters except Philemon and 1 & 2 Thessalonians, he does not claim his official title of "Apostle" here. The churches of Philippi and Thessalonica were Macedonian churches. The leaving off of the title "Apostle" probably indicates a special intimacy between them. They knew his qualifications and there was no need to state them because of this deeply rooted fraternal bond. Instead, he says that he and Timothy are "bondservants of Jesus Christ."

Though free men in the world, they were bound to their true Master. Paul felt that such a title to his close friends in Macedonia was right and appropriate to note. Another reason for not

stating his title could be the personal nature of the letter itself. This is seen in the next words. They are directed “To all the saints.” The words “saints” here applies to any and all who have received Jesus Christ, believing in His work, and being saved by it. This is in complete contrast to the idea of “saints” which is found in the Roman Catholic Church. Their idea of being a “saint” has nothing to do with biblical reality.

For the true saint, it is those who are “in Christ Jesus.” All believers are saints. This means that they are set apart as holy and declared righteous before God the Father because of the work of Christ. It is to this group of people “who are in Philippi” that this letter is written. It is further noted to include “the bishops and deacons.” This doesn’t mean these categories are not saints. What it means is that all are saints, and these categories are specifically chosen for ministering within the body. Again, this is in complete contrast to the idea of “saints” as defined by the RCC.

The “bishops” are from the Greek word episkopos; literally “overseer.” In the letters of the apostles, it is a term which is synonymous with a presbyter or elder. The “deacons” are from the Greek word diakonos. It signifies a servant in his duties, coming from two words which indicate “through” and “dust.” It is a distinct class of officers who carry out duties assigned by those above them.

As a note to consider, the term “all,” as in “all the saints,” is used frequently in this letter, and so it may be that there was an underlying sense that some thought they were more or less favored than the others. There is a noted dissension between two ladies in Chapter 4, and so Paul may be carefully using the term to show that all are one in the Lord; saints saved by His work. It also may be that he is simply noting everyone as being on an equal footing, regardless of how much they individually contributed to his needs and the needs of the church.

Life application: If you have received Jesus Christ as your Savior, you are a saint of God and set apart as holy. Be sure to act as if this is so. Continue to pursue Him, reading His word and being formed more and more into His image each day. Let nothing hinder you from your steady walk in faith and holiness each and every day.

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

After identifying himself, his calling, who was accompanying him, and who the letter is directed to, Paul now gives the standard greeting which is found in most of his epistles. It begins with “Grace to you and peace to you.”

Grace is unmerited favor which cannot be earned. This is the common greeting among the Greek people. Peace however is the common greeting among the Hebrew people. In their

language, the word is shalom. This is more than a greeting for calm or quiet, but is a state of wholeness and completion in all ways. Paul unites the two terms just as the church is being united between Jew and Gentile during his time. This grace precedes the peace because only after receiving the grace of God can a person experience the peace of God.

Paul extends this wonderful blessing to them "from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ." It is a greeting from the eternal God – both the unseen Father and His Son who reveals the Father to us. Rather than being an argument against the divinity of Jesus Christ, it is an argument for it. He is tying the two in as one - Jesus being a member of the Godhead. He is not making some type of great division, but a harmonious blending of the two.

Throughout Paul's letters, as with the entire Bible, the deity of Jesus Christ is a concept and a precept which simply can't be missed. It is the very heart of what God has done for the reconciliation of the people of the world.

Life application: Outside of God's creation, which reveals Him in a general way, we cannot comprehend Him except through His special revelation. One way we receive special revelation is through the mouths of His prophets. But these prophets all testified to the same thing - Jesus Christ (John 5:39). The most magnificent special revelation of God that we have received is the incarnation of Jesus. But for us, even this isn't sight. Instead, it is found in the testimony of those who have recorded what they knew into the New Testament. So, in order to understand God, one must know Jesus Christ, and one cannot understand Jesus Christ unless they know their Bible. Know your Bible!