

Before we get into our text for today, we should do a brief review of how the church of Philippi was founded. Philippi was a town about the size of our own, around 10,000 in population, on the Via Egnatia. This was a main road connecting Rome with the eastern empire. It was on the southern edge of the European Continent. It was originally a Greek town, but because of several significant battles there, including the defeat of Brutus and Cassius by Augustus and Mark Antony, it became a Roman colony. The officials and aristocracy spoke Latin and all the city inscriptions were in Latin, but the common folks, the slaves, merchants, and tradesmen, spoke Greek.

On Paul's second missionary journey, you may recall the night vision of the man of Macedonia calling him to come. (Acts 16:9) In Acts 16, Luke records the story of Paul, Silas, and Timothy in Philippi. There was no synagogue, but there was a group of God fearing women who met to worship the God of Israel on a river bank by the city. They shared the message of Jesus with them, and a merchant woman named Lydia became a believer. (Acts 16:14-15)

Later, a woman who was possessed by a spirit, the Greek is literally a pythonic spirit, followed them around yelling out that they were servants of the most high God proclaiming the way of salvation. It was true but perhaps the spirit was trying to gain credibility for itself. Paul cast the spirit out of the girl. (Acts 16:18) The man that owned the girl saw his means of making money through her was gone and so had Paul and Silas brought before the Roman magistrate. All that the accuser needed to say was that they were Jewish troublemakers, which resulted in them being scourged and put in stocks. Around midnight Paul and Silas were singing praises to God and an earthquake set them free. That resulted in the Centurion jailer and his family being converted and perhaps some of the prisoners as well. (Acts 16:30) Discovering that they were Roman citizens, the Roman magistrates sheepishly asked if they would please leave the town. But the damage was done! A church had been founded!

Sounds like a nice homogeneous church doesn't it, a Roman soldier and family, a former fortune teller, and a woman merchant or two?

Today we look for a church that is our kind of people with our kind of songs and preaching, in our part of town. Back then, they just wanted to praise the living Lord Jesus with anyone else that knew Him as Savior. The church is bound not by social status or culture or age or any other factor. (1Corinthians 12:13) **The church is bound by our relationship with our Savior** and our gratitude for what He has done for us! That's why we love each other. We share the same passion for our Savior. If we are red or yellow, black or white, or half and half, rich or poor, it's the love of Jesus that makes

Commented [Paul1]: Acts 16:9 (ESV)

⁹ And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."

Commented [Paul2]: Acts 16:14-15 (ESV)

¹⁴ One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.

¹⁵ And after she was baptized, and her household as well, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us.

Commented [Paul3]: Acts 16:18 (ESV)

¹⁸ And this she kept doing for many days. Paul, having become greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And it came out that very hour.

Commented [Paul4]: Acts 16:30 (ESV)

³⁰ Then he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

Commented [Paul5]: 1 Corinthians 12:13 (ESV)

¹³ For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body— Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.

us what we are and binds us to one another. Everything else is insignificant compared to the one thing! (1Corinthians 2:2)

Commented [Paul6]: 1 Corinthians 2:2 (ESV)

² For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.

It had been some time since Paul and company founded that first European church. Paul was now in prison and writing to this church for which he seems to have great affection. He had received a gift from them to support his needs while in jail, brought by Epaphroditus. Epaphroditus is about to return and Paul is sending this letter to encourage them and to let them know that Timothy is coming to them to prepare them for the Judaizers. (Philippians 2:19)

Commented [Paul7]: Philippians 2:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you.

¹ *Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons:* Philippians 1:1 (ESV) Paul's opening to this letter is the same as most letters in some ways and different in others. Perhaps because of the affection they had for him and he for them, Paul did not mention his authority as an apostle as he did in the opening lines to most churches. (Romans 1:1)

Commented [Paul8]: Romans 1:1 (ESV)

¹ Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God,

He writes that it is from him and Timothy. Timothy was co-authoring the letter. Paul often includes co-laborers and shares the credit. That is the Christian way. The worldly will often try to retain all the glory they can for themselves. The follower of Jesus recognizes we are soldiers that have each other's back. We are in it together. We need one another. (1Corinthians 12:19) We are incomplete without one another. We are sheep in flock, parts of a body or stones that make up a building, a family. (1Corinthians 3:9) We only operate alone when it is absolutely necessary and even then constantly leaning on the Lord.

Commented [Paul9]: 1 Corinthians 12:19 (ESV)

¹⁹ If all were a single member, where would the body be?

Commented [Paul10]: 1 Corinthians 3:9 (ESV)

⁹ For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building.

"Servants" is literally the word "slaves". When we surrender to Christ, we find great strength and joy in serving Him. We set aside our own will and take on the will of the one who knows what we need and has our best interest at heart. We walk in daily obedience to him. A slave of Jesus is a high calling. **We are either a slave of self and sin or a slave of Jesus.** (John 8:34) One is self-deception. The other is true liberation to be what we were created to be.

Commented [Paul11]: John 8:34 (ESV)

³⁴ Jesus answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is a slave to sin.

The saints are all the believers that worship together in Philippi. All believers are saints because of what Jesus did for us. (Hebrews 13:12) You don't need to be beatified first; you are already blessed! You don't need to be perfect. You are a work in progress. But God sees you as holy because you did the one work he requires, believing in Jesus. God sees you as a saint because you are *in* Christ Jesus. Amen? (John 6:29)

Commented [Paul12]: Hebrews 13:12 (ESV)

¹² So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood.

Commented [Paul13]: John 6:29 (ESV)

²⁹ Jesus answered them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in him whom he has sent."

Paul added the mention of the overseers and deacons. We saw the role of deacon in the closing sermon on Colossians. Paul elaborates on these roles in the church in the letters to Titus and Timothy. (Titus 1:5) The Philippian church had matured to the point

Commented [Paul14]: Titus 1:5 (ESV)

⁵ This is why I left you in Crete, so that you might put what remained into order, and appoint elders in every town as I directed you—

to where there were men in the office of elder. Overseer and elder are used interchangeably in Acts 20. (Acts 20:28; 17) Qualified, equal and accountable elders are God's plan for overseeing the church. **There are so many different forms of church government today, but this is God's form.** This is what He established in His word. We aren't meant to have CEOs or lone pastors who make all the decisions, nor are we to have boards of businessmen who do what they think best because of practical experience. A Biblical church will have elders, plural, who oversee the church through prayer, who teach the Word of God, and shepherd the flock. (1Peter 5:1-3)

There are also deacons. This is also a high calling of spiritual men and women who handle the practical affairs of the church. These are the only God appointed offices of the church Jesus established.

² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Philippians 1:2 (ESV) Every letter of the Apostle Paul has this greeting. His last letters to Timothy add the request for mercy as well. Grace (*Charis*) is the Greek greeting. Peace (*Eirene Gk. or Shalom Heb.*) is the Jewish greeting. Christianity poured new meaning into both.

Grace now meant more than beauty in life, but the loving kindness of God. Peace is no longer just life's blessing but now includes peace with God through Jesus. Paul writes that the source of grace and peace is the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. If you don't have those glorious qualities in life, now you know where to go to get them. The only true grace and lasting peace come from God the Father and Jesus the Son. (John 14:27)

³ I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, Philippians 1:3 (ESV) Paul had some amazing testimonies about those days in Philippi. Those kind of experiences bind you together. We've been through many here. I'll never forget the Coll's transformation, or starting off Hope Cottage's fund raiser, or the radio tower in Guinea Bissau, or the Tabernacle. Even the strife that we work through binds us together. We thank God when we remember what God has done in our lives as a body of believers. And thank the Lord that there is more to come!

⁴ always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, ⁵ because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. Philippians 1:4-5 (ESV) Paul thanked the Lord when he prayed for them. He did so with great joy because of the partnership in the gospel. Partnership is also translated fellowship (*koinonia*). He's not talking about times they shared punch and cookies, but that from the day they came to Christ, they were earnest about praying for Paul and supporting the ministry through him.

Commented [Paul15]: Acts 20:28 (ESV)

²⁸ Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.

Commented [Paul16]: Acts 20:17 (ESV)

¹⁷ Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him.

Commented [Paul17]: 1 Peter 5:1-3 (ESV)

¹ So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed:

² shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly;

³ not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.

Commented [Paul18]: John 14:27 (ESV)

²⁷ Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid.

This is that unity that true believers share. It's what I was speaking of earlier of being bound by our relationship with our Savior and our gratitude for what He has done for us! It is when the main thing in my life is the main thing in your life, and that is Jesus! We talked about it last week in the term "beloved brother". (Colossians 4:7) We aren't just friends. This isn't just a club. This is our life. Soldiers and first responders experience it in a slightly different sense. We have one purpose. That is how the church should be!

Commented [Paul19]: Colossians 4:7 (ESV)

⁷ Tychicus will tell you all about my activities. He is a beloved brother and faithful minister and fellow servant in the Lord.

Some people don't know what I'm talking about because church is just a social gathering. Jesus is a side issue in their life. Deep down they long for that kind of relationship but they don't want to let go of their boundaries of self-protection. It might cost too much. But then that verse comes to mind, Jesus laid down His life for us and we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers. (1John 3:16) You have to let in the first big love before you will have the second. Love the Lord with your all and your neighbor as yourself.

Commented [Paul20]: 1 John 3:16 (ESV)

¹⁶ By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.

⁶ And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. Philippians 1:6 (ESV) Oh what a great hope! We are works in progress but what God begins He completes. God wants to transform us into the image of His Son. (Romans 8:29) He wants us all to have our own unique personalities but also have the attributes of Jesus when He walked this earth. That's my definition of heaven. Imagine, if you can, a world where everyone has love and grace like that of Jesus. We are on our way. Every day is a day closer.

Commented [Paul21]: Romans 8:29 (ESV)

²⁹ For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers.

One man said it was supposed to have happened May 21st. I wish. As long as we're still here, there is still work to do and work to be done in us. Amen? So let's get on with the metamorphosis. (Philippians 3:13) We'll delve into the dilemma of wanting to go but still having work to be done later in this same chapter.

Commented [Paul22]: Philippians 3:13 (ESV)

¹³ Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead.

⁷ It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. ⁸ For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. Philippians 1:7-8 (ESV) This is the heart of a pastor for those who are with him in his ministry and calling. Sometimes the pain is unbearable, but the joy is unspeakable and full of glory. Paul says they are partakers with him of grace, both in the trials of life and the proclamation of the good news of Jesus. (2Corinthians 7:3) We experience the grace of God to endure, the strength that comes through weakness, and the joy of grace that comes in the darkest of times. We know the wind of the Spirit that fills our sails when outwardly we can see no reason for it. We also know we stand together for what the Lord said and did for us. (2Timothy 2:9) The

Commented [Paul23]: 2 Corinthians 7:3 (ESV)

³ I do not say this to condemn you, for I said before that you are in our hearts, to die together and to live together.

Commented [Paul24]: 2 Timothy 2:9 (ESV)

⁹ for which I am suffering, bound with chains as a criminal. But the word of God is not bound!

transformation of our lives confirms the truth of it. The fruits of the Holy Spirit bear witness. Praise God for a family of fellow believers! We share Jesus' love for one another.

⁹ And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, Philippians 1:9 (ESV) Now Paul shares just how he prays for them. His first request is for an abounding increase in their love. He doesn't say whether that love is for God or for man, but he doesn't need to. Love for God results in love for one another. Without saying which, he is implying both. Look how the prepositional clause points to both. Knowledge of God and His word must refer to love for God. We can't love God unless we know who He is and what He is really about. The more we know Him, the more we will love Him. (1John 4:11)

"All discernment" can't be toward God, but must be toward our fellow man. We love one another but we exercise discernment. Jesus didn't commit himself to man. He knew what was in man's heart. (John 2:24-25) Our love must be discerning. We can love mankind, but the kind of love we should have for the family of God must come with discernment or we will be enabling the sin of others. Our love for God must grow with knowledge and our love for one another must grow with discernment.

And why did Paul pray this for them? *¹⁰ so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, ¹¹ filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.* Philippians 1:10-11 (ESV) He wants them to choose not only what is good but what is excellent, the perfect will of God. He wants to see them ready for their graduation to our heavenly home. He wants to see them overflowing with the fruit of the Spirit and that comes from a relationship with Jesus, through Jesus' very life in them. (John 15:5) That love with knowledge and discernment, that holy life, is all to the glory and praise of God.

It is similar to a portion of the Colossian prayer that we have been praying. Colossians 1:9-12 (ESV) It includes discernment to walk worthy of Jesus, the knowledge of God's will, and that we be fruitful. I hope you don't get tired of praying this prayer because this is what we need. Let's pray it until we see it come to pass in our lives so that we may approve what is excellent and be pure and blameless for the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God.

Let us be bound together with the glue that held the Philippian church and Paul together, that partnership in the gospel, that priority of Jesus, that love for the family of God and desire to see God glorified in all that we do. Can we become beloved brothers and sisters to one another? Only with a great deal of surrender to the Spirit of God and

Commented [Paul25]: 1 John 4:11 (ESV)

¹¹ Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.

Commented [Paul26]: John 2:24-25 (ESV)

²⁴ But Jesus on his part did not entrust himself to them, because he knew all people
²⁵ and needed no one to bear witness about man, for he himself knew what was in man.

Commented [Paul27]: John 15:5 (ESV)

⁵ I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing.

Commented [Paul28]: ⁹ And so, from the day we heard, we have not ceased to pray for you, asking that you may be filled with the knowledge of his will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, ¹⁰ so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God. ¹¹ May you be strengthened with all power, according to his glorious might, for all endurance and patience with joy, ¹² giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of the saints in light. Col 1:9-12 (ESV)

a continual death to self! Only if our love abounds more and more with knowledge and all discernment! Are you willing? Will we invest the time in one another's life, to the glory and praise of God? God will help us, enable and strengthen us, if we are willing.

Questions

- 1 Go over the amazing stories of Acts 16.
- 2 Describe the first church of Philippi.
- 3 What is common and unusual in the greeting of this letter?
- 4 Why was Paul so fond of them?
- 5 What did Paul pray for them?
- 6 What are the similarities to the Colossian prayer?
- 7 Why is an increase in love needed?
- 8 What must it come with?
- 9 To what end is this increase in love?
- 10 How do we get it?