

Philippians

Lesson #3, Chapter 1:1-11

Before you begin this lesson, ask the Lord for His help in gaining the most from His Word. He loves to answer the prayers of His children!

“Paul apparently visited Philippi twice during his third missionary journey, once at the beginning (cf. 2 Cor. 8:1–5), and again near the end (Acts 20:6). About 4 or 5 years after his last visit to Philippi, while a prisoner at Rome, Paul received a delegation from the Philippian church. The Philippians had generously supported Paul in the past (4:15, 16), and had also contributed abundantly for the needy at Jerusalem (2 Cor. 8:1–4). Now, hearing of Paul’s imprisonment, they sent another contribution to him (4:10), and along with it Epaphroditus to minister to Paul’s needs. Unfortunately Epaphroditus suffered a near-fatal illness (2:26, 27), either while en route to Rome, or after he arrived. Accordingly, Paul decided to send Epaphroditus back to Philippi (2:25, 26) and wrote the letter to the Philippians to send back with him.” John MacArthur¹

1. Right from the get-go we learn some important information about Paul and Timothy. What do we learn about them in verse 1?

2. In verse 1 Paul uses a term to describe himself and Timothy that comes weighted with meaning. Define *bond-servant* [Strong’s #1401 (ESV, NIV *servants*)] using your study Bible notes, a commentary, a Bible word study book or something along those lines (Don’t forget the excellent online tools available for word studies).
 - a. From the following verses try to piece together what Paul wants us to understand about himself: Romans 6:22; 7:6; 1 Corinthians 7:22-23; 2 Corinthians 4:5; 5:14-15; Galatians 1:10. What do you learn about a *bond-servant*, as Paul is using the term, from those verses?

“The word is *doulos* and refers to one bound to another. Paul was bound to Jesus Christ by the bands of a constraining love. It refers to one born into slavery. Paul was born into slavery to sin by his first birth, and into the position of a loving bonds slave of the Lord Jesus by his new birth. It refers to one who is in a

¹ John MacArthur Jr., ed., *The MacArthur Study Bible*, electronic ed. (Nashville, TN: Word Pub., 1997), 1818.

relation to another which only death can break. Paul's relation to Satan was broken by his identification with Christ in His death. He now is in a relation to Jesus Christ which will last forever, since Christ can never die again, and Paul's life is Christ. It refers to one whose will is swallowed up in the will of another. Paul's will was at one time swallowed up in the will of Satan. Now his will is swallowed up in the sweet will of God. It refers to one who serves another even to the disregard of his own interests. Paul served Satan to the detriment of his own interests. Now he serves the Lord Jesus with a reckless abandon, not regarding his own interests." Kenneth Wuest²

3. With one word—*bond-servant*—the tone is set for understanding Paul and the book of Philippians, while also laying the groundwork for understanding our own relationship with the Lord. As God's bond-servant, what motivations are the focus of your heart and how do those motivations guide the choices you make throughout the day?

4. To whom does Paul address his letter in verse 1? What do we learn about the recipients?

5. What benediction does Paul give the Philippians in verse 2?

6. Kenneth Wuest points out, "The *grace* spoken of here is sanctifying grace, that part of salvation given the saint in which God causes him to grow in Christ-likeness through the ministry of the Holy Spirit." The word "*peace*" means "the operation of God's grace in binding the believing sinner to God and His life again, ... in bringing that believer in his experience more and more into harmony with God in his life and service."³ When Paul writes his customary greeting of "grace and peace" to his friends and fellow believers, what does he want to communicate to them?

²Kenneth S. Wuest, *Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English Reader*, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 26–27.

³Kenneth S. Wuest, *Wuest's Word Studies from the Greek New Testament: For the English Reader*, vol. 5 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997), 29-30.

7. What is Paul thankful for when he remembers the Philippians? See Philippians 1:3-5.

8. Describe the beginnings of the Philippian church and its first converts. See Acts 16:11-40.

9. In what way did the Philippian believers *participate* or *partner* in the sharing of the gospel “from the first day until now?” See Romans 15:26; 2 Corinthians 8:1-5; Philippians 1:7; 4:10, 15-16. What does that tell you about this group of believers, even if you know nothing else about them?

10. What assurance did Paul have about these believers according to verse 6?

11. What do you learn about God’s work in the life of a believer from Philippians 1:6? Try to make at least 5 observations from verse 6.

“Though we are renewed, we have not fully recovered from the injury we received by the fall of Adam. If God withdraws His life-giving strength, our secret corruptions will break forth and our interest in holy things will soon disappear. O the glory of God’s grace! From the first to the last we are indebted to it (Galatians 2:20). We can do nothing without Him. When we come to heaven, how will our souls admire the riches of His glorious grace.” Thomas Manton⁴

⁴Thomas Manton, Richard Rushing, editor, *Voices from the Past, Volume 1* (Edinburgh: The Banner of Truth Trust, 2009), 73.

12. In verse 7, Paul states, “For it is only right for me to feel this way about you all.” What is Paul referring to that encourages him so greatly? See Philippians 1:3-6 and verse 7 for your answers.
 - a. How would you describe this group of believers based off Paul’s description of them in verses 3-7?

13. What is God a witness to according to verse 8?

14. Eager Beaver: Paul frequently uses the idiom, “God is witness.” What does he mean when he uses that saying? See Romans 1:9; 2 Corinthians 1:23; 1 Thessalonians 2:5, 10.
 - a. Where does Paul get the idea of calling a witness, and even more specifically, calling God as witness? See Genesis 31:50; 1 Samuel 20:12; Isaiah 43:12; Jeremiah 42:5.

15. With great affection motivating him, Paul prays for his friends—and what a prayer it is! List what Paul prays for these dear believers. See verses 9-11.

16. Define *knowledge* [Strong’s #1922] and *discernment* [Strong’s #144 (NIV *depth of insight*)].

- a. Why is it so important that the Philippians' love be hemmed in by *knowledge and discernment*? See Romans 10:2; Ephesians 5:1-5; Colossians 1:9-12; 1 Thessalonians 5:21-22; 1 Timothy 1:19; 4:15-16.

17. How does love that is informed and grounded in knowledge and discernment help us *approve the things that are excellent*?

"Here are two good tests for us to follow as we exercise spiritual discernment: (1) Will it make others stumble? (2) Will I be ashamed if Jesus should return?" Warren Wiersbe⁵

18. What's the result of having a knowledgeable, discerning love that approves of excellent things? See verse 10.

"A growing love, fed by proper knowledge and moral insight, enables one to see the best way to live in light of the day of Christ." Richard Melick⁶

19. Verse 11 gives us another description of what sincere, blameless lives are like. What do you learn in verse 11?

"The difference between spiritual fruit and human "religious activity" is that the fruit brings glory to Jesus Christ. Whenever we do anything in our own strength, we have a tendency to boast about it. True spiritual fruit is so beautiful and wonderful that no man can claim credit for it; the glory must go to God alone." Warren Wiersbe⁷

⁵Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 66.

⁶Richard R. Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, vol. 32, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991), 66.

⁷Warren W. Wiersbe, *The Bible Exposition Commentary*, vol. 2 (Wheaton, IL: Victor Books, 1996), 66.

20. If Philippians 1:9-11 was the only prayer God chose to answer in your life, what do you think the results would be? How would this answered prayer give you wisdom in dealing the wide variety of events and relationships in your life?

21. What is the ultimate goal of a Philippians 1:9-11 kind of life? See verse 11.

“The day of Christ characterized Paul's thoughts; the glory of God motivated Paul's actions. He saw the entire scope of salvation as an outworking of God's grace and as a contribution to God's glory. The chief end of persons was the glory of God. He reminded the Philippians of their ultimate calling, to reflect God's character in their lives. He explained the reason for their careful living: the glory of God in their lives.”

Richard Melick⁸

22. We've taken apart the pieces of this section of Scripture; now let's put it all back together again to capture the main point of this passage. As you review verses 3-11, what is the main thing Paul wanted to make sure the Philippians understood?

⁸Richard R. Melick, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*, vol. 32, The New American Commentary (Nashville: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 1991), 67.