

PHILIPPIANS

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Philippians 1:1–11

1:1–2 *¹From Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus. To God's people in the city of Philippi and their bishops and deacons—to everyone who is united with Christ Jesus. ²Good will and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ are yours!*

Paul opened his letter to the Philippians with a salutation that often characterized his writings. Together with his spiritual son Timothy¹ (1 Timothy 1:2; 2 Timothy 2:1), they saluted the elders and deacons of the church along with the saints who were united in Jesus Christ. They invoked God's favor on the church, asking for God's grace and peace to be abundant in their lives.

Paul and Timothy were the servants of Jesus Christ. Paul acknowledged the unity they enjoyed with the saints in Philippi along with their bishops and deacons. They were God's people who had been joined together as one in the faith Jesus Christ gives. Even though he was an apostle appointed by God, Paul preferred to identify himself with his spiritual children. His message was important to the officers

of the church and to the members of the body of Christ. Therefore, instead of talking down to the Philippians, Paul fondly greeted them with God's grace, favor, peace, and goodwill.

Paul left no doubt in the minds of the Philippians that his letter was Christ's inspired Word conveyed to God's people in the authority of God the Father, His Son Jesus Christ, and in the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul wrote with a dedication defined by his relationship to his Master Jesus Christ, his loyalty to the office to which he was appointed, his unreserved surrender to the Lord, and his passionate care for God's people. As God's children united in one faith in Jesus Christ, he expected the Philippians to receive his epistle with the same dedication, a genuine surrender to the instruction of God's Holy Word, and an unqualified reverence for the Author of the Gospel.

1:3–4 *³I thank my God for all the memories I have of you.
⁴Every time I pray for all of you, I do it with joy.*

Paul was fond of the saints in Philippi. His memory of the believers there produced warm sentiments toward them. Paul personally rejoiced in the grace that God gave him when the Spirit called him to Philippi. He actually thanked God for the personal experience he had while serving God in Philippi and for the joy that filled his heart as he thought about their spiritual welfare.

Paul was filled with joy every time he prayed for these dear friends. Praying for his spiritual children was not a cumbersome duty for Paul. His heart was continuously refreshed by the joy of the Lord as he observed God's redeeming love work in the lives of those to whom he was sent to preach the Gospel. He always prayed for the Philippian saints with rejoicing and God-given enthusiasm.

1:5 *I can do this because of the partnership we've had with you in the Good News from the first day [you believed] until now.*

Paul realized that rejoicing over someone else's good fortune was foreign to the deep-seated human impulse. Therefore, he explained the

reason for his joyful attitude when he prayed for them—their partnership in Jesus Christ through the fellowship they shared in the Gospel.

Paul appreciated the excellency of Jesus Christ Who changed his life from a persecutor to an apostle of the Good News of God's redemption. The same transforming work of the Gospel occurred in everyone in whom the Holy Spirit accomplished God's salvation. Knowing that the same Spirit brought the joy of God's salvation to all of them, Paul showed them how the union they had in and through Christ also produced the love and care they had for each other. They rejoiced with each other in the fellowship of the Gospel. Paul rejoiced with these dear brothers and sisters, because the Holy Spirit generated an unfeigned joy in all believers as they worshiped the Lord together.

1:6 I'm convinced that God, who began this good work in you, will carry it through to completion on the day of Christ Jesus.

Paul rejoiced with the Philippians not only because they were rescued from condemnation but also because he knew what God had prepared for them. Paul wanted the saints to know that God was their eternal Father. He would be faithful to the end. What He had begun in them He would bring to a glorious conclusion. Paul wanted them to share his confidence in God. He rejoiced over their common destiny in Christ. The Lord Who delivered them from eternal death is also able to sustain them until that day when they see Jesus face-to-face. Paul's joy was fostered by his knowledge and confidence that God is faithful to bring His redemption to its glorious conclusion.

1:7 You have a special place in my heart. So it's right for me to think this way about all of you. All of you are my partners. Together we share God's favor, whether I'm in prison or defending and confirming the truth of the Good News.

Paul was especially fond of the Philippian Christians. They should not be surprised by the way he viewed them. He loved them in the Lord. He shared their joy about the marvelous work of God's grace in them.

So he assured them that it was natural for him to be excited about their spiritual well-being.

Paul considered the Philippians to be bonded with him in a true fellowship both in his suffering and in the service of the Gospel. Because of the union they had in Christ, they shared in the calling of the defense and confirmation of the Gospel. Even though they were not called to apostleship as Paul was, their life as the redeemed children of God provided a viable evidence for the Gospel that was committed to Paul. So Paul rejoiced with the Philippians not only as his spiritual children, but also as fellow laborers for the Gospel. God's all-sufficient grace given to him to persevere in all circumstances for the sake of the Gospel was also given to them.

1:8 *God is my witness that, with all the compassion of Christ Jesus, I long [to see] every one of you.*

Paul truly loved the Philippian Christians. He loved each member individually and as an assembly of the body of Christ. He considered them as his partners both in his suffering and in the service of the Gospel. He had a special place for them in his heart. He missed them. He often longed to see them. Remembering his experience in Philippi while a prisoner in Rome, Paul yearned for the day of his freedom so that he could go and visit them personally. He loved them in the compassion and care of Jesus Christ. He was passionate and caring for their spiritual well being in and through the power of Christ's love. His care for them was more than ordinary human emotional fondness. This was truly a God-given love demonstrating the power and love of Jesus Christ working through him toward the Philippian believers in a practical way.

1:9–10 *9I pray that your love will keep on growing because of your knowledge and insight. 10That way you will be able to*

determine what is best and be pure and blameless until the day of Christ.

Paul's prayer for the Philippians surpassed the expression of his fond love for them. He wanted their love to reach beyond a commonplace conduct of Christian care and compassion toward one another. Paul fervently prayed that the love of the Philippians would also turn into a sincere desire toward gaining godly knowledge and wisdom. He wanted them to be lovers of people and lovers of the truth.

Paul encouraged the Philippians to be more than believing and loving Christians. He prayed that they would gain a viable spiritual maturity. As he did in Ephesians 1:17–18, Paul prayed that the Philippians too would receive wisdom and knowledge, and that the eyes of their understanding would be enlightened by the Holy Spirit toward the things of God and the mystery of His redemption. He wanted the Philippians to be discerning and insightful believers so that they might be able to live for Christ in the power of God's purifying and sanctifying truth. Even though loving and dedicated, Paul recognized that the Philippians and all believers need to realize that their new life in Christ must be nurtured into a life of godly excellence and holiness.

1:11 *Jesus Christ will fill your lives with everything that God's approval produces. Your lives will then bring glory and praise to God.*

Paul assured the Philippians that their lives will be transformed by the power of their Redeemer in a practical way. Godly excellence, holiness, truth, love, and faith will certainly be cultivated into their new life as the Holy Spirit Himself nurtures their growth with God's eternal truth. The fruit of Christ's righteousness will gradually begin to fill their lives. They will be drawn to the things that please and glorify God. They will ultimately live for the glory and praise of God. As Christ encouraged His disciples, they will deny themselves for Jesus Christ's sake and love Him with all of who they are and what they have.

Notes/Applications

Paul knew that God's wisdom, knowledge, and understanding work effectively in setting the hearts and affections of the redeemed on their heavenly riches in Jesus Christ. So he encouraged the Philippians to be forward looking in their pilgrimage, unequivocally certain that He Who began the good works in them will bring everything to a sure completion. Paul's focus was not just the beginning and the end of the life of the redeemed. The process of their new life in Christ is just as significant as their moment of redemption and ultimate consummation into the glory that God has prepared for them.

The church at Philippi appeared to be structurally quite organized, vibrant, and had the distinguishing marks of an assembly of loving, obedient, and faithful believers. However, even though he dearly loved them and unequivocally commended them for their love and faith, Paul was uncompromising in his assertions that their Christianity is of no heavenly value without the redeeming grace of God the Almighty, the eternal sacrifice of God the Son our Lord Jesus Christ, and the irresistible power of the Convictor and Enabler, God the Holy Spirit. God Himself is the Initiator, Sustainer, and the Finisher of the salvation He extends to the redeemed among the lost according to His sovereign choice and pleasure.

Paul encouraged the Philippians by affirming them in the faithfulness of the God Who inaugurated them into His redemption. He also assured them that their lives would be enriched by the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Their hearts and minds would be transformed by God's wisdom and knowledge, maturing to discerning and insightful disciples of Jesus Christ. In essence, the fruit of the righteousness of Jesus Christ would gradually become the unavoidable reflection of a life over which the Holy Spirit is in charge. The same truth keeps the redeemed looking forward to the undeniable hope of our redemption in Jesus Christ.

God Who initiates His redemption in the saints is completely faithful to finish what He has started. The righteousness of Jesus Christ enriches the lives of all His people. He transforms their hearts

and minds with the truth of God's wisdom and knowledge, bringing His people to a maturing faith where they are equipped to discern what is best and pure and blameless until Christ comes again. The fruit of the righteousness of Jesus Christ will gradually become the reflection of a life over which the Holy Spirit is in charge. The same truth keeps the redeemed looking forward to the undeniable hope of their redemption in Jesus Christ.