

Philippians

December 7, 2008

Introduction/Phil. 1:1-8

I. Introduction

Philippi was named after Philip of Macedonia, the father of Alexander the Great. It was founded in 356 BC. It was made a colony of Rome after Anthony and Octavian defeated Brutus and Cassius there in 42 BC. The church at Philippi was the first church founded by Paul in Europe (Acts 16:11-40). Philippians was written in 61 AD while Paul was under house arrest in Rome. Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon were apparently written at the same time, and delivered by the same carrier.

Philippians is the book of joy. “Joy” or “rejoicing” is used 16 times in this short book.

Phil 4:4

4 Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

NIV

The church is doing well, which accounts for Paul’s joy throughout the letter, but it is not perfect. Paul offers it little hints, though; throughout the book that God’s work with the Philippians is not yet done, including points to be made in this lesson. If the Philippians are to continue to flourish, they must continue to grow.

II. Opening Verses

Phil 1:1-2

1:1 Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons: 2 Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

NIV

Verse 1 Timothy is a very visible person in the NT. He is listed as co-author for six books:
Philippians
Colossians
Philemon
2 Corinthians
1 & 2 Thessalonians

Paul writes two letters to him (1&2 Timothy). He is also mentioned in Acts, Romans, 1 Corinthians, and Hebrews.

Verse 2 Overseer is a literally translation of the word. There is a different word for elder, but when it is used as a church officer, the two are usually considered interchangeable. Usually, the underlying term for “deacons” is translated “servants,” as in:

Mark 9:35

35 Sitting down, Jesus called the Twelve and said, "If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all."

NIV

While “overseers and deacons” are mentioned here, FF Bruce points out that there is no consistency by Paul in what he calls leadership in the church.

III. Prayer of Thanksgiving

Phil 1:3-6

3 I thank my God every time I remember you. 4 In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy 5 because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, 6 being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

NIV

Paul visited the city on at least three occasions:

1. Second missionary journey (Acts 16:12)
2. Journey from Ephesus through Macedonia on his way to Greece (Act 19:21)
3. On his way back to Jerusalem (Acts 20:6)

Verse 3 Typically, Paul begins his letters with a prayer of thanksgiving, as he does here. Since Paul has heard that they are thinking of him and have concern for him, he returns the favor here. The reason for his thankfulness is not really mentioned fully until verse 5.

Verse 4 Paul mentions “joy” or “rejoice” 16 times in this small letter. What does joy mean?

From the New Unger Dictionary:

“Joy is a delight of the mind arising from the consideration of a present or assured possession of a future good. When moderate it is called gladness; raised suddenly to the highest degree it is exultation or transport; when the desires are limited by our possessions it is contentment; high desires accomplished bring satisfaction; vanquished opposition we call triumph; when joy has so long possessed the mind that it has settled into a temper, we call it cheerfulness. This is natural joy.

“Spiritual joy is called a ‘fruit of the Spirit’ (Gal 5:22); ‘joy in the faith’ (Phil 1:25). Its objects are God Himself (Ps 43:4; Isa 61:10); the promises (Phil 3:3; 1 Peter 1:8); the gospel (Ps 89:15); the prosperity of Christ’s kingdom (Acts 15:3; Rev 11:15,17); the happiness of a future state (Ps 16:9-11; Rom 5:2; 15:13). This spiritual joy is permanent (John 16:22; Phil 4:4) and unspeakable (1 Peter 1:8).”

Verse 5 The message of this verse has been given to other churches:

2 Cor 8:1-4

8:1 And now, brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. 2 Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. 3 For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, 4 they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints.

NIV

Verse 6 A common memory verse. What does it mean?

IV. Great Feelings

Phil 1:7-8

7 It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart; for whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. 8 God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.

NIV

How does one express genuine feelings that are so deep that words are inadequate to convey them? Paul uses the verb “feel” 23 times in this small epistle.

V. Impact of Help

How is the help that the Philippians have given to Paul related to God’s work in them continuing?

Hint: Heb 6:10

10 God is not unjust; he will not forget your work and the love you have shown him as you have helped his people and continue to help them.

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