

TO BEGIN WITH; PHIL. 1:1-2 (Ed O'Leary)

INTRODUCTION.

THIS A.M., ~ WE BEGIN A THOROUGH EXAMINATION OF THE APOSTLE PAUL'S LETTER to the church at Philippi.

▶▶ One of prison epistles along with Eph., ~ Col., ~ and Phile.

PHILIPPI WAS AN ANCIENT CITY IN NORTHEASTERN GREECE.

▶▶ And it was here, ~ around A.D. 51, ~ that Paul established his first church on European soil. ~~ A.D. 60-62

PAUL'S LETTER TO THE BELIEVERS IN PHILIPPI IS AN INTENSELY PERSONAL LETTER.

▶▶ So we're dropping in on Paul's very personal correspondence.

▶▶ But what Paul wrote to them is the word of God. ~~ Therefore, ~ though he was writing to the believers in Philippi specifically, ~ the letter is for all believers of all generations in gen.

▷▷ And we'll draw out the general principles, ~ lessons, ~ and applications

TO BEGIN WITH IN OUR STUDY, ~ TODAY WE WANT TO ACCOMPLISH TWO GOALS.

▶▶ Context and greeting

FIRST, ~ LET'S SET THE OVERALL CONTEXT OF PHILIPPIANS.

IT SEEMS PAUL HAD ABOUT FIVE REASONS FOR WRITING THIS VERY PERSONAL letter.

▶▶ 1st, ~ he desired to inform them of his circumstances and the advancement of the gospel.

▶▶ 2nd, ~ he wanted to exhort the church to live in humility, fellowship, and unity.

▷▷ Apparently rivalry, ~ personal ambition, ~ and divisions were present among some of the believers.

▷▷ He reminded them of the supreme example of Jesus, ~ who laid aside every shred of status to become the servant of all.

↪ Believers must do the same, ~ if we are to be united with one another in faith and service. ↵↵ 1/7

▶▶ The 3rd reason Paul wrote was because he wanted to let them know of his plan to send Timothy to them ~ and why he was sending Epaphroditus back to them.

▶▶ 4th, ~ he wanted to warn believers about false doctrine, ~ especially that of those who may try to impose the Jewish law on them.

▷▷ He tells believers that he himself was an excellent Jew, ~ but that he only found true righteousness in Christ.

▶▶ 5th and finally, ~ Paul wrote because he wanted to thank the Philippian church for their concern for him and their generous gifts to him.

JOY IS A, ~ OR PERHAPS THE, ~ MAJOR THEME OF THE LETTER.

▶▶ The words "joy" and "rejoice" occur again and again throughout the letter.

▶▶ E.g. ~ 1:4, ~ "always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy."

▷▷ 2:2, ~ "complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.."

▷▷ 4:4, ~ "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice."

▶▶ What is remarkable is that all of this joy and the repeated call to rejoice comes from a prison cell where threats of death are always present.

▷▷ This radiant faith and confidence can come only from one whose life is centered in Christ, ~ and who has learned the secret of being content at all times and under all circumstances.

▶▶ The NT makes it abundantly clear that it is only through a relationship with Jesus that we can have lasting joy no matter the circumstances.

▷▷ It is part of the fruit that is produced by the Holy Spirit.

▷▷ It's not linked with material possessions or external circumstances ~ but rather is an overflow of salvation.

▷▷ Even persecution could not dampen the joy that glowed in the early church, ~ as evidenced by Paul here in Philippians.

↪↪ Persecution couldn't dampen their joy because it was not dependent on external circumstances or material possessions. ↯↯ 2/7

↪↪ Paul writes in 2 Cor. 7:4b, ~ "In all our affliction, I am overflowing with joy."

↪↪ And to his original readers the author of Hebrews says, ~ in Heb. 10:34b, ~ "and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one."

↪↪ And Acts 5:40-42 says, ~ "and when they had called in the apostles, they beat them and charged them not to speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. ~~ ¶¶

→→ Then they left the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer dishonor for the name. ~~ ¶¶

↪↪ And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they did not cease teaching and preaching that the Christ is Jesus."

↪↪ They were able to maintain their joy no matter what because it was rooted in their relationship with Jesus.

↪↪ I guess the question for each of us believers this morning is, ~ "in what is my joy rooted?"

▶▶ Application for evangelism ~~ Obviously, ~ unbelievers can know joy.

▷▷ But it's not a lasting, ~ fulfilling joy.

↪↪ Because it's dependent solely on external circumstances and material possessions, ~ which cannot ultimately bring lasting joy

▷▷ So let's listen carefully and look for openings ~~ The joy that comes from a relationship with Jesus will burn brightly and will withstand anything thrown at it.

THERE ARE TWO MORE THINGS I WOULD LIKE TO BRIEFLY NOTE IN SETTING THE context.

▶▶ 1st, ~ the letter contains one of the most powerful New Testament affirmations of Jesus' humanity, ~ deity, ~ and lordship. ~~ 2:6-11.

▶▶ 2nd, ~ 4:13.

LET'S NOW LOOK AT PAUL'S GREETING TO THE CHURCH IN PHILIPPI. ~~ 1:1-2.

VERSE 1a, ~ "PAUL AND TIMOTHY." ¶¶ 3/7

ANCIENT LETTERS.

▶▶ In our letters, ~ we usually mention the writer's name at the end; ~ whereas in ancient letters, ~ the name of the writer comes first.

PAUL FAMILIAR WITH. ~~ BUT NOT SO MUCH TIMOTHY

ALTHOUGH TIMOTHY IS MENTIONED AS A FELLOW SENDER, ~ THERE IS NO HINT that he is a joint author of the letter.

▶▶ The first person singular pronoun "I" is used throughout the letter; ~~ and when Timothy is mentioned again, ~ he is referred to in the third person.

▷▷ Most likely, ~ he was either Paul's secretary

▷▷ Or Paul mentioned him because he wanted to pave the way for Timothy's visit mentioned in 2:19-23.

IN VS. 1b, ~ PAUL REFERS TO HIMSELF AND TIMOTHY AS "servants of Christ Jesus."

WE CAN NOTE AT LEAST THREE OBSERVATIONS HERE ABOUT THE WORD "SERVANTS."

▶▶ 1st, ~ this term reminds all believers that we all belong to Jesus now. ~~ Jesus bought us out of the slave market of sin.

▷▷ In 1 Cor. 6:19-20, ~ Paul says to us, ~ ¹⁹ Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, ²⁰ for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body."

↪↪ "bought" means "to purchase as one's own."

→→ God did not purchase us in order to give us away. ~~ God purchased us to be His own, ~ that we would become His people exclusively, ~ solely His and no one else's.

▷▷ And in 1 Pet. 1:18-19, ~ Peter tells us exactly what that price was.

↪↪ NIV ~ ¹⁸ For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your ancestors, ¹⁹ but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect."

▷▷ Jesus' blood was the payment through which He has "bought" believers for Himself. ~~ A high price indeed God has paid for us! ↪↪ 4/7

▷▷ So, ~ in using the term servants, ~ Paul is reminding the believers in Philippi, ~ and believers here at NHCC in the 21st century, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ that we are slaves of Jesus. ~ I.e., ~ we are to submit to Jesus' lordship, ~ follow His commands, ~ and do His will.

▷▷ But the believer's slavery to Jesus Christ is no cringing, ~ cowardly, ~ shameful subjection.

↳↳ In the OT, ~ prominent men who served God were called His servants. ~ Abraham, ~ Isaac, ~ Jacob, ~ Moses, ~ Samuel, ~ and King David were all called God's servants.

↳↳ In the NT, ~ along with Paul and Timothy, ~ Peter, ~ James, ~ and Jude were called servants of God.

↳↳ So, ~ far from something terrible, ~ the Bible presents being a slave of Jesus as a position of honor.

↳↳ And think about it, ~ what believer in his right mind

▶▶ 2nd, ~ Paul's use of the word "servants" speaks of humility. ~ Paul was not puffing himself or Timothy up.

▷▷ Paul didn't begin the letter by saying, ~ to paraphrase 3:4-6, ~ "I Paul, ~ who has more confidence in the flesh than anybody, ~ who was circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; ~ ¶¶

↳↳ as to the law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless, ~ ¶¶

↳↳ write to you, ~ lowly Christians at Philippi."

▷▷ No, ~ he said, ~ "Paul and Timothy, servants, ~ slaves, ~ of Christ Jesus."

▷▷ Now, ~ this is not saying that status or credentials are a bad thing.

↳↳ Apostle

→→ It's saying that status and credentials in the kingdom of God are to take a backseat to servanthood.

▷▷ Jesus gave us both the mandate and example for this. ~ Mk. 10:42-45 ¶ 5/7

▷▷ Now, ~ I happen to be ordained. ~~ And sometimes I use my title. ~~ And that's ok in and of itself.

↪↪ I have a Bible college degree and have been called by God to preach His word. ~~ And that's ok to acknowledge and talk about these things in and of themselves.

→→ But, ~ if my credentials puff me up or begin to overshadow my most important position of being a servant of Jesus, ~ **which is every believer's most important position, ~ then I've got a big problem.**

▷▷ A believer's primary purpose and position is to serve and glorify Jesus ~ not ourselves.

▶▶ The 3rd and final observation that we can make about the word "servants" is that it indicates equality among believers.

▷▷ Here is Paul the apostle putting himself on the same level as Timothy and all other believers.

▷▷ In [Rev. 1:9a](#), ~ notice what John says, ~ "I, John, your brother and partner."

▷▷ We've talked about this before. ~~ And it bears repeating ~~ There is no caste system in the kingdom of God. ~~ There is no spiritual elite in the kingdom of God.

↪↪ In God's kingdom there is no spiritual superiority or inferiority.

▷▷ Look at what Peter says in the introduction to his second epistle.

↪↪ [2 Pet. 1:1](#), ~ "Simeon Peter, a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ, To those who have obtained a faith of equal standing with ours by the righteousness of our God and Savior Jesus Christ."

↪↪ Writers in Peter's day used the Greek word translated "of equal standing" to refer to those who shared the rights & privileges of citizenship.

→→ This means that everyone who has genuine, ~ **saving faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord share equally in the rights and privileges of citizenship in the Kingdom of Heaven.**

↪↪ This means that all believers of all places, ~ financial status, ~ and ethnic background are on an equal level. **↵↵ 6/7**

→→Whatever position we may hold in the church, ~ every one of us is just as important as anyone else.

→→There may be distinctions in the work undertaken by each one, ~ and yes there is a definite leadership structure in the church and in marriage and the family, ~ but in regard to our standing before Christ, ~ we are all equal.

IN VERSE 1c, ~ PAUL SAYS WHO HE'S SENDING THIS TO.

"TO ALL THE SAINTS IN CHRIST JESUS WHO ARE AT PHILIPPI, WITH THE OVERSEERS and deacons."

▶▶"saints" = believers.

IN VERSE 2, ~ PAUL FINISHES HIS INTRODUCTION WITH A BRIEF PRAYER.

"GRACE TO YOU AND PEACE FROM GOD OUR FATHER AND THE LORD JESUS CHRIST."

▶▶Paul desires that believers experience the unmerited favor and contentment that come from God the Father and God the Son.

▶▶I'll just make two brief observations in passing here.

▷▷1st, ~ God is the source of unmerited favor and inner contentment.

↪↪Praying this prayer for ourselves and our brothers and sisters in Christ should become routine.

→→Because we always need unmerited favor and inner contentment.

▷▷2nd, ~ God the source of all that is worthwhile.

↪↪James 1:17, ~ "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change.

CONCLUSION.

AND SO BEGINS OUR THOROUGH EXAMINATION OF PHILIPPIANS.

▶▶I encourage everyone to read this brief letter at least once a week.

LET'S PRAY 7/7