

Philippians 1:1-20 | 8/14/16

- Introduction

- The book of Philippians was written by the apostle Paul. It was a letter written to the church in the town of Philippi whom Paul showed great love and adoration for.
- When Paul wrote this letter during his imprisonment at Rome (A.D. 60-62).
 - Acts 28:30
 - He had three others that were also written from prison – Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon.
- This letter is lacking in doctrinal teachings that is quite prevalent in many of his other letters. This one seeks to encourage and strengthen the church.
- Paul desired for their unification and this point is stressed in the letter. Paul understood the importance of Christian unity and what it did for the entire body of Christ.
- This letter also gives a picture of what it looks like to live the Christian life. To embrace the character of Christ that He has given us with the Spirit.
- Also notably missing from this letter is correction for the church. In many of his other epistles he need to correct the church.

- **Read Philippians 1:1-11**

- Paul throughout his letters has addressed himself in different ways. Here in Philippians he states that he is a “slave” or “servant” of Christ. | Philippians 1:1
 - If we turn our attention to the first verse, I want us to examine the description that Paul gives himself.
 - Paul says that he is a “slave” or “servant” of Christ Jesus.
 - Paul sees his relationship with God as being far more than just a basic relationship between two people who are acquaintances.
 - He sees it as far different than just being “friends” with Christ.
 - The significance of the use of the word “slave” (Greek - doulos)
 - While different words are used in the various translations like servant, slave or bondservant we must be sure we fully understand the meaning of this word.
 - The straightforward translation for the Greek word “doulos” is slave, servant is also used in translations but it can at times dull or take away from the full meaning of the word.
 - **By definition slave or “doulos” is a person who is totally responsible to and dependent upon another person (master).**
 - This is the definition that Paul is referring to when he refers to himself as a slave or servant of Christ.
 - Paul is making it clear that he puts himself completely under the **Lordship of Christ.**
 - That he is completely dependent on Him.
 - **Christ is much more than a friend or acquaintance. He sees Him as Lord of his life.**
 - This is quite evident when we read **the rest of His letter, we see how Paul speaks of submission** to Christ and **sacrificial service.**
 - Paul understood a critical truth of what being a Christian is, that one must be submissive to Christ.
 - If you look at **what is important for a slave** in the general sense we see that **obedience, humility and submission** are all important traits of how the slave views the master.

- This is no different for the Christian, Paul understood how he must submit to Christ and be obedient.
- Paul's submission was done willingly and with thankfulness.
 - Paul's example also shows us that this master/slave relationship is not one of a task master who is forcing the slave to act.
 - **But instead the slave (Paul) is willingly submitting himself to the master (Christ) and he is thankful in doing so.**
 - This made clear when we see his state of mind as he is writing this letter from prison.
 - Paul is not in a "good" place right now he is in jail. Yet he is still seeing all that he is going through as part of God's will and he is humbly submitting himself before God.
- Lordship and the Christian
 - **This example by Paul shows Christians today what we are sometimes lacking in our relationship with God.**
 - Christians see God as a friend, a co-pilot or someone to go to when they need help.
 - But Christ demands much more than that from us, Christ is our Lord and Savior. He wants to be the Lord of our lives and with that **the Christian MUST submit to Him as a slave.**
 - This Lordship is taught by Christ throughout the Gospels, it cannot be ignored.
 - Matthew 16:24
 - "Then Jesus said to His disciples, "if anyone wants to come with Me, he must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow Me."
 - You must deny whatever it is that you want to do, this is what a slave does.
 - Matthew 8:21-22
 - "Lord, another of His disciples said, "first let me go bury my father." But Jesus told him, "follow Me, and let the dead bury their own dead."
 - It wasn't that Jesus doesn't care that we bury our loved ones, but He was showing how important it was that we deny ourselves and put Christ first.
 - This person stated he wanted to do something before Christ, Jesus said no I come first. This is what Lordship means.
 - **We can only truly serve one master. It will either be Christ or ourselves.**
 - Matthew 6:24
 - "No one can be a slave of two masters, since either he will hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot be slaves of God and money."
 - **Paul saw himself as a "slave" of Christ and saw Jesus as Lord, but do we?**
 - That is the question that Christians must ask themselves and one that we must address.
 - Christ is far more than our friendly companion. **He is the Lord of our lives.**
 - **Why is it difficult for Christians to see themselves as a slave to Christ and to look to Him as their Lord? Why is Jesus commonly seen only as a friend or companion whom we consult but don't feel it necessary to be obedient?**
- Paul's statement of thanksgiving, encouragement and love for his fellow Christians. | Philippians 1:2-11
 - Paul didn't leave us to wonder too much about what he thought of the Christians in Philippi.
 - He saw them as obedient Christians who were living out their lives for Christ. In fact, unlike in other letters he didn't see the need to provide any correction to them.

- Paul told them that the work that Christ began within them will carry it on to completion.
 - **The good work that Christ began in each of the Christians was salvation, it is the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives.**
 - It is the culmination of the Christian life that God would see until the day of Christ which is when Jesus will return.
 - Paul knew that regardless of worldly circumstances of persecution (which he was now experiencing) or the works of Satan that God would complete His works within them.
 - These Christians were already being obedient and God was using them for great and wonderful things in continuation of proclaiming the Gospel and doing the works of God.
 - Paul was certain that these works would continue.
- Paul also commended the unity of the Christians.
 - Paul commended the Christians on their unity.
 - He held them in his heart because they were all partakers or partners with him in grace.
 - Paul understood that all Christians make up the body of Christ and that we all share the same grace.
 - Christians are therefore unified and when we are obedient great things are done for Christ.
 - All Christians are part of the universal church which is made up of all believers.
 - **Even though Paul was in prison he could sense their unity, that regardless of his chains and shackles that they were with him in Spirit.**
 - These Christians were unified in their defense and also were a witness for the Gospel.
 - These Christians were actively living out their faith and were sharing their faith with others to glorify Christ and to build up the body of believers.
- Paul closes this statement of thanksgiving with a prayer.
 - Paul deeply desires for their continued spiritual growth. For them to grow in love and discernment so that they can live the life that Christ has called them to live.
- We must see things from the perspective of God instead of a purely human perspective. | Philippians 1:12-20

- ***Read Philippians 1:12-14***

- Again we need to remember that Paul is writing this letter from prison, he is not in a good place.
 - While in his own rented home (Acts 28:30) it was custom for him to be chained to a Roman guard.
 - He was not able to go as he pleased.
- It is natural for others to be saddened because of his condition and even to lose hope. But Paul writes this letter telling them that instead of feeling sorrow they should feel joy.
- Paul understood his circumstance of being in jail to be of a divine nature.
 - Paul didn't look upon his jailing as a work of Satan to hinder him from spreading the Gospel, **no Paul saw it as the work of Christ to advance the Gospel.**
 - In fact, this is what happened on his journey to Rome being under arrest.
 - Paul was not sulking in his prison cell shaking his fist at God, he instead realized that even though he was certainly experiencing physical discomfort, that his sacrifices were necessary to advance the Gospel.
 - **That God was using his circumstance according to His will and he fully accepted whatever it was regardless of how it might have affected him.**
- The Gospel was proclaimed because of his imprisonment.
 - Paul goes on to tell them how his imprisonment actually advanced the Gospel.

- The whole palace guard
 - Paul was not silent while he was in his chains, he continuously spoke of the Gospel to all those who were around him which were numerous guards.
 - Because of his imprisonment he had a captive audience of soldiers who were now able to hear the Gospel.
- He had many visitors who heard the Gospel
 - Acts 28:30-31
 - “Then he stayed two whole years in his own rented house. And he welcomed all who visited him, proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching the things concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with full boldness and without hindrance.”
 - Even though he was stationary, many came to see him and he was freely able to proclaim the truth of the Gospel to them.
- Confidence was gained among other Christians to more boldly share the Gospel.
 - Another unintended side-effect of his imprisonment was confidence that was gained among the Christians on the outside.
 - The work that Christ was doing through Paul while he was in jail did not go unnoticed.
 - This gave those who were likely reluctant to share the Gospel before, a new found fire to speak about Christ.
- The Gospel spread in a way that would not have been possible without his imprisonment.
 - Paul realized that without his imprisonment these things would not have happened.
 - It required self-sacrifice on his part to further the kingdom of God. While yes he experienced hardship it was well worth the sacrifice for Christ.
- Christians must learn to look at our circumstances from God’s perspective instead of our own.
 - Christians all too often look at our circumstances from a self-centered perspective.
 - We see them as either good or bad for us.
 - When we go through a trial or a hard time in life we immediately look for a way to get out of it.
 - We focus on how our circumstance are affecting us directly.
 - But this is the wrong perspective, we instead need to look at everything that happens in our lives from God’s perspective.
 - God has a very different view life than we do. We are His hands and feet that He uses to share and proclaim the Gospel.
 - He knows that at times it is necessary for us to experience a trial or hardship because in doing so it will bring great glory for Him.
 - **If we always look at everything with ourselves in focus and at the center, then we will never be able to see the big picture.**
 - We will never be able to see or understand that there are times where we will suffer for the advancement of the Gospel and for the benefit of others.
 - God’s plan is far beyond anything we can comprehend and He will use us and our circumstances in life in ways we would never think possible.
 - How can God use us if ourselves is all we are concerned about? Did Christ not suffer for others why shouldn’t we?
 - When we look at our circumstances from God’s perspective, only then will we have the hope and faith to move forward.

- When we have our moments of crisis it can be very hard to not focus on ourselves and how we are effected.
- Paul could have very easily been complaining of his hardship and only seeing the negative in how it affects him.
 - He may have wondered well how can I obey God and share the Gospel when I am always chained to this guard?
- But Paul put aside his human perspective and looked at it from the eyes of God.
- He saw how God was using his imprisonment to spread the Gospel.
- **This new perspective gave him hope, encouragement and peace in knowing that while he may be suffering it was for Christ.**
- **This allowed Paul not worry about his problems, but it instead gave him great joy knowing that he was glorifying God.**
- If we see Christ as our Lord, then we can more easily see things from God’s perspective.
 - When Christians submit themselves as a slave to the authority of Christ it is much easier to see the world from His eyes.
 - **If we truly see Christ as our Lord, then instead of being concerned about ourselves and how WE are effected, we instead say how can God be glorified?**
 - It is exactly this truth of the right perspective of Christ that allowed Paul to see the good in his hard time.
 - Paul saw Christ as His Lord and he submitted to Him regardless of how it affected himself.
- **Do you find it hard to see things from God’s perspective instead of your own that is self-centered?**
- **Do you think that if we focus on truly seeing Christ as our “Lord” and being a slave to Christ, that it will make it easier for us to see our circumstances from His perspective? Why?**
- Paul rejoiced in the spreading of the Gospel even when other Christians did it out of envy and strife.
 - ***Read Philippians 1:15-19***
 - There were two kinds of groups of Christians that Paul speaks about.
 - One group is lovingly sharing the Gospel and doing it out of good will by showing their love and support for him.
 - But there was another group that shared the Gospel out of envy and strife towards Paul. They apparently didn’t have the same love for Paul as did the others.
 - However, this group showing envy and strive to Paul were not sharing a false or untrue, Gospel they were still doctrinally sound.
 - Because Paul the proceeds to say “what does it matter?” because Christ is being proclaimed.
- Paul is unashamed of his circumstances for Christ sincerely desires to Honor Christ either in his life or death.
 - Paul’s heart is clearly put on display as he tells the Christians that regardless of his circumstance that he lives to honor Christ.