An Introduction to Philippians

The city of Philippi was named after King Philip, the Grecian Father of Alexander the Great. This city first visited by Paul on his second missionary journey, was a fortified city of Macedonia near the Thracian border. This geographic position gave the city its importance. Luke describes Philippi as "a city of Macedonia, the first of the district, a Roman colony" (Acts 16:12). This phrase probably meant that Philippi was the first city which met the traveler as he entered the region of Macedonia; however there is the possibility that the phrase referred to Philippi's strategic position as a border town in Roman defenses. As a Roman colony, it became in ideal a miniature reproduction of the city of Rome, where the spirit and practices of Rome prevailed. The population of the city was mixed, consisting of three main elements: Roman colonists, old Macedonianites, and Orientals. Being situated on the famous Egnatian way, Philippi was daily visited by strangers from many lands. In Philippi, however, the Jewish population was evidently low, because there were not enough Jews to have a regular synagogue, but they maintained their religious practices at a "place of prayer" situated outside the city by the riverside (Acts 16:13).

The Church in Philippi was established through the labors of Paul and his co-workers during Paul's second missionary journey. The first convert in Philippi was a proselyte to Judaism, Lydia, a business woman from Thyatira (Acts 16:12-14), followed by the conversion of her whole household. The opening of her home provided a base of operation for the work and a place of assembly for the young church (Acts 16:15). While imprisoned for teaching a religion which was "illegal for Romans to receive" (Acts 16:21), God provided an occasion for Paul & Silas to then lead the Philippian Jailor and his entire household to Christ.

It is evident that Paul had been a prisoner in Rome for quite some time when he wrote to the Philippians (cp.1:7, 13-20; 4:22). The Epistle was probably written near the close of this first Roman imprisonment (A.D. 61-63). Paul's warm words of affection for the Philippians indicates a well maintained intimate relationship of friendship and love between this church and her founder (4:15; II Cor.11:7-10; Acts 20:6). Six times Paul addresses the readers as "brethren " (1:12, 31,13,17; 4:1,8) and three times as "beloved" (2:12; 4:1 twice).

The occasion which prompted Paul to write to the Philippians was not in the same vein as the special urgent crisis such as caused him to write to the Corinthians or Galatians. This letter is an epistle of love which is inspired by friendship motives. It is the most personal letter Paul wrote to a church. This epistle is also a "thank you" letter for the gracious giving by this church to Paul (4:15-16; II Cor.8:1-15).

The purpose of the epistle to the Philippians was to provide: information [Example: Paul's imprisonment (1:12-20; 2:23) and Timothy's coming (2:19-24)]; affection (1:3-11, 4:1,10-19); warning [against the extremes of the Judaizers (3:2-16) and against antinomianism (3:17-4:1)]; and finally and primarily - exhortation.

Paul's exhortation to the Philippians centers around the theme of "right thinking." The words "mind," "think," "count (reckon)," "minded," and "know" occur frequently in this short epistle. The word for example occurs eleven times in four short chapters (1:7, 2:2; 2:5; 3:15,16,19; 4:2,10). This appeal to a Christ-like mental attitude is reflected in exhortations to unity ("like minded" 1:27; 2:2,20; 3:15; 4:2); to humility ("lowliness of mind" - 2:3,5; 3:8), and to joyfulness (involving freedom from worry (4:6), the peace of God (4:70, contentment in any circumstances (4:11-120, virtuous, wholesome thinking (4:80, and full confidence in Christ (3:1,3; 4:4).

The word "Joy" is a key thought in Philippians. The verb occurs nine times and the noun times. Paul's reason for writing is to give an exhortation to joyful living through right thinking. The secret to attaining joy in a world filled with trouble is right Biblical thinking.

"Rejoice in the Lord always:
and again I say, Rejoice."
(3:1,3; 4:4)

Paul's Introductory Greetings (v.1-2)

v.1

"Paul" - The human writer (God is the Author); While in prison in Rome.

"Timothy" - The stenographer and helper of Paul.

"servants" - This word expresses their attitude as one of humility. A "doulos" was a lowly slave; The word was used of the slaves who would row on the bottom level of the ancient galley ships;
This word also expresses their total commitment toward Christ and His ministry (They were "bondslaves"; servants for life!).

"saints" - "hagiois", meaning set apart ones; Holy ones; sanctified ones.

"in Christ" - This phrase shows the believers spiritual position in Christ. Our "sainthood" or "set-apart-ness is via our oneness with Christ.

"with the bishops and deacons" -
Note: the fact that God addresses the "saints" first implicitly shows that the bishops and deacons are by no means superior to the saints (laymen)
The offices of the N.T. church are two - "Bishops and Deacons"

"bishops" - "episkopois"
The word literally means to "look over" or "over see" hence, "overseer"
It referred to a ministry of tending and superintending over God's flock.
This word describes the function of the Pastor or Elder. In the Bible God uses three words to describe the various responsibilities of the same office. An Elder (presbuteros - presiding leader), Pastor (poimen - shepherd), and Bishop (episkopos - overseer) are the same person. Each word describes a unique function of the same position. Note: I Peter 5:1,2; Acts 20:17,28; and Titus 1:5,7 to see that the three interchangeable words describe the same office.
The fact that "episkopois" is plural disproves the notion that one "Bishop" presided over a particular geographical section of churches like the "Episcopal" Denomination believes.

"deacons" - "Diakonois" - Official servants in a church who would relieve the Pastor(s) by performing the mundane service (Acts 6:1-f).

v.2

"Grace be unto you and peace"

In Paul's wish for the Philippians, he, as always, puts the word "grace" before the word "peace" since the peace of God is a result of the grace of God. No one will ever experience God's peace until they first experience God's grace.

"...from God our Father and from the Lord Jesus Christ"

The conjunction “kai” in between the Father and Jesus Christ shows that both the Father and Son are both the source of grace and peace, and thus reveals the intrinsic unity and oneness of the Father and Son.

"Thank You for Partnering in the Ministry"

(Pastor Sawyer's appreciation for the Members and Friends of Faith Baptist Church on the 25th anniversary celebration of his ministry in NY)

Philippians 1:3-11

5/19/2013

I. Like Paul, I <u>THANK</u> God for FBC (v.3-5)

II. Like Paul, I have <u>CONFIDENCE</u> in God's Great Future Work at FBC (v.6)

III. Like Paul, I'd like to express <u>HEART-FELT APPRECIATION</u> for FBC (v.7-8)

IV. Paul's <u>PRAYER</u> is my Prayer for FBC (v.9-11)

I PRAY THAT WE WILL <u>GROW</u> IN OUR <u>LOVE</u> FOR EACH OTHER (v.8-11)

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Paul's Deep Relationship with the Philippians (v.3-11)

The Theme of this paragraph: ***Paul's close relationship with the Philippians was due to their partnership (sharing) in his ministry***.

v.5 - "fellowship" (sharing, partnership) - Paul is not speaking of sharing of the Gospel (salvation) but sharing in (into) it. From the very moment Paul led these people to Christ he experienced an eager willingness on their part to serve in the Gospel ministry.

"first day" - ex. Lydia - whose whole household became Christians. She then opened her home for Paul & his fellow missionaries (Silas, Timothy, & Luke).

"until now" - They then sent gifts to meet Paul's material needs. (see Phil.2:29,30; 4:15,16)
The phrase "partakers of my grace" (v.7) also further develops this theme.

The development of this theme:

Because of the Philippians intimate and loving relationship with Paul, the following joyful response flowed from Paul's heart:

1. Paul's thanks for the Philippians (v.3-5)
2. Paul's confidence toward the Philippians (v.6)
3. Paul's affection for the Philippians (v.7-8)
4. Paul's prayer for the Philippians (v.9-11)

I. Like Paul, I THANK God for FBC (v.3-5)

A. PAUL THANKED GOD FOR THE PHILIPPIANS (whenever he remembered them) (v.3)

"upon every remembrance"
We see some insight into Paul's prayer life. Every time you remember someone pray for them. This shows that Paul had a continual, moment by moment walk & talk with God.

Paul's prayers of thanksgiving were prompted by pleasant memories.

B. PAUL REJOICED BECAUSE OF THE PHILIPPIANS (whenever he prayed for them) (v.4-5)

"making requests with joy"
Paul's memories for the Philippians were positive. Paul rejoiced in the partnership (fellowship, sharing, comradery, companionship) he had with these believers. They were his friends; on his team; They lovingly supported him.
"For ("epi" -because of) **your fellowship in the Gospel"** (v.5) (Note: to give to (share with) a man of God is to give to the gospel ministry; They shared with Paul (Phil. 4:15-16) and in so doing shared in the gospel ministry. Therefore his prayers for them were happy experiences.

Can you say "I am the kind of Christian that brings joy to my Pastor's mind when he thinks of me?"

*Paul's motivation to pray was related to the quality of the human relationships he had with them.
*The more significant the relationship the more exciting the prayer experience is.
*Meaningful, exciting prayer must grow out of deep human relationships with other believers.

II. Like Paul, I have CONFIDENCE in God's Great Future Work at FBC (v.6)

In the same way as they shared continually "from first day until now" (v.5), now Paul in verse 6 Paul is convinced that they will continue to until Christ returns.

***All true believers will not just "believe" the Gospel, they will share in the Gospel. They will partake of the Gospel ministry.

Paul sensed a reality in their lives.
He could pray with an attitude of joy because he had a confidence that God was working in their lives.

The phrase: **"good work"** includes both:

1) Salvation - God's work for them (in their hearts)
God would keep them saved.

2) Service - God's work through them (from their hearts)
God would keep them faithfully serving.

God finishes everything He starts.
It is God who works in and through believers (cp.2:13) God is at work completing or maturing the good work He begins in believers.

"Until the day of Jesus Christ" - i.e. until the day when Jesus Christ returns; until the rapture (cp.v.10)

III. Like Paul, I'd like to express <u>HEART-FELT APPRECIATION</u> for FBC (v.7-8)

Though Paul was physically far away from them, he sensed a <u>oneness</u> that went beyond any explanation.

"I have you in my heart" -
"heart" = "kardia" (The mental aspect of the heart; the volition; the will)
Paul is saying: "You are on my mind continually"

He is saying: "In my bonds you are a comfort to my heart...in my defense you are a comfort to my heart..." Paul was convinced that God would continue to perform His "good work" in their lives because <u>they were really being used by God</u> by sharing in the grace Paul was receiving. Their love and concern was part of the grace needed to keep Paul going despite bonds etc.

"ye all are partakers of my grace" - A certain grace to keep going despite bonds, imprisonment, persecution etc. was supplied to Paul via the love & concern of the Philippian believers.

Whether in chains [bound to a roman guard or prison cell], or in defending the Gospel [preaching the gospel in the midst of opposition], Paul sensed the Philippians <u>standing right beside him</u> sharing his burdens.

v.8 Although Paul had a <u>oneness</u> with them, being a great distance away, it was no substitute for a face to face relationship. Paul was human. He was lonely & his heart yearned to see them. This is a natural response in a <u>love</u> relationship.

"bowels" - "splangchnon" - the inner parts; (the heart, liver, & stomach) the seat of feeling; <u>compassion</u>. (This word describing deep emotional feelings is the word we commonly call "heart" today.

"the inner emotional heart of Jesus Christ"

What does the genitive "of Jesus Christ" mean?

1) The compassion that Christ gives.
2) The same compassion that Christ has.

IV. Paul's PRAYER is my Prayer for FBC (v.9-11)

I PRAY THAT WE WILL GROW IN OUR LOVE FOR EACH OTHER (v.8-11)

A. GROWTH IS NEEDED IN LEARNING HOW TO LOVE (v.8-9a)

"love" – "agape" (unconditional, volitional, sacrificial, desire to give for the well being of others)

"abound" – "perisseuo" - to overflow the banks.

"knowledge" – "epiginosko" - a full and deep knowledge of God's love.

B. GROWTH IS NEEDED IN LEARNING WHAT TO LOVE (v.9b)

"Judgment" – "aisthesei" - insight, perception, discernment. A deep insight, good judgment in making proper decisions.

1. THE PURPOSE OF GROWING IN A DISCERNING LOVE (v.10a)

"eis to" plus the infinitive describes purpose

"approve...excellent"
To discern the mind of God and love like Christ (cp.v8)
Biblical love is not blind! It is discerning.

The heart (loving) and mind (thinking) work together so that we have discerning love & a loving discernment. Wiersbe p.26.

2. THE RESULT OF GROWING IN A DISCERNING LOVE (v.10b)

"hina" - describing the result

"sincere" – "eilikrineis""tested by sunlight" It describes one who is not afraid to stand in the light, because you have nothing to hide! Your love is genuine. No false motives. Cp.2:3 "let nothing be done through strife or vain glory..."

"the day of Christ" = a reference to the rapture (cp.v.6).

a) Empowered through ("dia") Jesus Christ (the source of righteousness) (v.11a)

b) Motivated for ("eis") God's glory & praise (the purpose for righteousness) (v.11b)