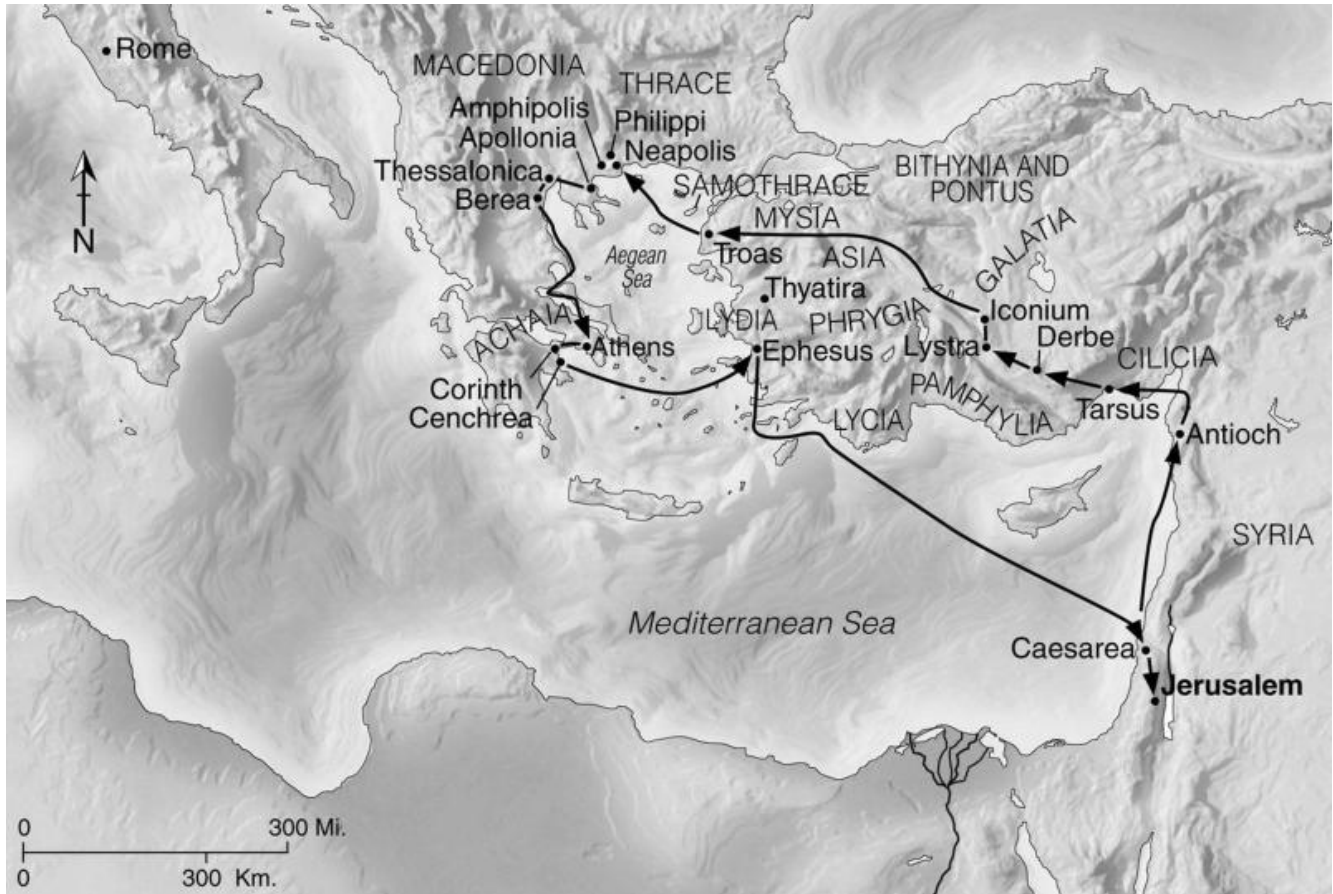


Philippians 1:1-11¹



Paul's Secondary Missionary Journey © Tyndale House Publishers, Visual Bible Alive

Geographical and Historical Context²

Philippi was located at the far eastern end of a large fertile plain (Dartos) in central Macedonia; it sat astraddle the Egnatian Way, nestled on the edge of the plain at the initial ascent up a considerable acropolis, 16 kilometers inland and across a low range of coastal mountains from the seaport of Neapolis (modern Kavála). Originally founded as Krenides by some Greek colonists from the island of Thasos (ca. 360 bce), it was taken over and renamed after himself by Philip of Macedon (father of Alexander the Great) in 356.

Philippi (and all Macedonia) came under control of the Romans in 168, who abolished the ancient Macedonian dynasty and eventually created a Roman province, divided into four parts. According to Luke, Philippi was "the leading city of that district of Macedonia" (Acts 16: 11).

¹ Scripture is taken from the NASB and the NKJV unless otherwise noted.

² This section is taken from: *Paul's Letter to the Philippians*, Fee, Gordon D. (1995-07-14). (Kindle Locations 1314-1317). Eerdmans Publishing Co - A. Kindle Edition.

Our interest in the history of the city stems particularly from 42 BCE, in which year two major battles were fought nearby in the plain – between Cassius and Brutus (the assassins of Julius Caesar) and the victors, Octavian (later the emperor Augustus) and Mark Antony. Following these victories Octavian honored Philippi by "refounding" it as a Roman military colony, thus endowing its populace with Roman citizenship.

By the time Paul came to the city in 49 CE (Acts 16: 11-15), Philippi was the urban political center of the eastern end of the plain. Its population was both Roman and Greek; and although Latin was the official language, Greek was the predominant language of commerce and everyday life – all the more so in a city located in Greece.

The People at Philippi

Lydia, a merchant from Thyatira, bears the name of her home province. That she had a household large enough to include Paul and his companions suggests she owned a villa; at least some of the women who were gathered with her at the river for worship, perhaps including Euodia and Syntyche, were very likely members of her household. The jailer, on the other hand, who also had a household, probably belonged to the artisan class; whereas the young girl from whom Paul had cast the divining spirit belonged to the slave class that often made up a large part of early Christian congregations (as members of Christian households or, as in her case, on their own).

Finally, the fact that three of the people whose names are known to us are women is probably not accidental, since there is good evidence that in Greek Macedonia women had long had a much more significant role in public life than in most other areas in Greco-Roman antiquity.

Paul brags about the Philippians

Paul's deep affection for this congregation, evident throughout this letter, is also evidenced in his extravagant testimony about them in 2 Cor 8: 1-5: And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints. And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God's will. Significant for our purposes is not only the affection on display here – further evidence of friendship – but the equation of "joy" + "poverty" = "generosity." These, too, have bearing on our letter.

The Philippians were suffering

That the Philippian congregation is undergoing suffering as the result of opposition in Philippi is explicitly stated in 1:27-30 and metaphorically so in 2: 17.

-the primary titles for the emperor were Kyrios and Sōtēr ("lord and savior"). Not only so, but the cult of the emperor, where the emperor was honored in a way approaching deification, had found its most fertile soil in the Eastern provinces."

-and much else within its boundaries would have taken place in the context of giving honor to the emperor, with the acknowledgment that (in this case) Nero was "lord and savior."

If this were not enough to make the citizens of Philippi begin a methodical persecution of these (now) expatriates living among them, the fact that the Christian's "lord and savior" had

taken the form of a "slave" in his becoming human, and in that humanity died on a cross (2: 6-8), would have been the final straw. But to this one, Paul says, whom the Philippian pagans scorn, God has given the name above all names, the name of the Lord (kyrios) God himself.

Paul teaches with the future in mind

The fundamental framework for all of Paul's theologizing, especially for "salvation in Christ," is his eschatological understanding of present existence – as both "already" and "not yet." With the resurrection of Christ and the gift of the promised Holy Spirit, God has already set the future inexorably in motion; thus salvation is "already." But the consummation of salvation awaits the (now second) coming of Christ— "the Day of Christ," Paul calls it (1: 6, 10; 2: 16);

The fact that the future has already begun with the coming of God himself (through Christ and the Spirit) means two crucial things for Paul: that the consummation is absolutely guaranteed, and that present existence is therefore altogether determined by this reality.

God's people belong to the future that has already come present. Marked by Christ's death and resurrection and identified as God's people by the gift of the Spirit, they live the life of the future in the present, determined by its values and perspective, no matter what their present circumstances.

The summation of the letter

Whatever else, life in Christ is a life of joy. To miss this reality is to miss Philippians altogether; and to miss Philippians at this point is to miss out on an essential quality of Christian life.

In sum : Our letter invites us into the advance of the gospel, the good news about Christ and the Spirit. It points us to Christ, both for now and forever. Christ is the gospel; Christ is Savior and Lord; thus Christ is our life; Christ is our way of life; Christ is our future; Christ is our joy; "to live is Christ; to die is gain"; and all to the glory of our God and Father. Amen.

Introduction: The beginning of the Church at Philippi

1 "The Macedonian Call"—Paul has a vision to go to Macedonia

Acts 16:6-10

Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. ⁷ After they had come to Mysia, they tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them. ⁸ So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. ⁹ And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." ¹⁰ Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them.

2 Lydia is saved and invites Paul's group to her house.

Acts 16:11-15

Therefore, sailing from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and the next day came to Neapolis, ¹² and from there to Philippi, which is the foremost city of that part of Macedonia, a colony. And we were staying in that city for some days. ¹³ And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there. ¹⁴ Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to

heed the things spoken by Paul. ¹⁵ And when she and her household were baptized, she begged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." So she persuaded us.

3 Paul casts out a demon from a slave girl.

Acts 16:16-18

Now it happened, as we went to prayer, that a certain slave girl possessed with a spirit of divination met us, who brought her masters much profit by fortune-telling. ¹⁷ This girl followed Paul and us, and cried out, saying, "These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation." ¹⁸ And this she did for many days.

But Paul, greatly annoyed, turned and said to the spirit, "I command you in the name of Jesus Christ to come out of her." And he came out that very hour. ¹⁹ But when her masters saw that their hope of profit was gone, they seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace to the authorities.

4 Paul and Silas were beaten and thrown into prison.

Acts 16:20-24

And they brought them to the magistrates, and said, "These men, being Jews, exceedingly trouble our city; ²¹ and they teach customs which are not lawful for us, being Romans, to receive or observe." ²² Then the multitude rose up together against them; and the magistrates tore off their clothes and commanded them to be beaten with rods. ²³ And when they had laid many stripes on them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to keep them securely. ²⁴ Having received such a charge, he put them into the inner prison and fastened their feet in the stocks.

5 Paul and Silas worshipped and were set free.

Acts 16:25-26

But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. ²⁶ Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed.

6 The jailer and his family were saved, baptized, and ministered to Paul and Silas.

Acts 16:27-34

And the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself. ²⁸ But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, "Do yourself no harm, for we are all here."

²⁹ Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas. ³⁰ And he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

³¹ So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household." ³² Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. ³³ And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized. ³⁴ Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household.

7 Paul refuses to slip out quietly.

Acts 16:35-40

And when it was day, the magistrates sent the officers, saying, "Let those men go." ³⁶ So the keeper of the prison reported these words to Paul, saying, "The magistrates have sent to let you go. Now therefore depart, and go in peace." ³⁷ But Paul said to them, "They have beaten us openly, uncondemned Romans, and have thrown us into prison. And now do they put us out secretly? No indeed! Let them come themselves and get us out." ³⁸ And the officers told these words to the magistrates, and they were afraid when they heard that they were Romans. ³⁹ Then they came and pleaded with them and brought them out, and asked them to depart from the city. ⁴⁰ So they went out of the prison and entered the house of Lydia; and when they had seen the brethren, they encouraged them and departed.

Philippians 1:1-8

VERSE 1

*Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ,
To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:*

- I. Paul identified himself as the author of this letter.
 - A. Timothy was with Paul and was one of Paul's most trusted co-workers.
Philippians 2:19-22
But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly, that I also may be encouraged when I know your state. ²⁰ For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state. ²¹ For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus. ²² But you know his proven character, that as a son with his father he served with me in the gospel.
 - B. It is interesting to note that Paul does not mention in his greeting to the Philippians that he was an apostle.
 - C. Paul calls himself and Timothy "bondservants".

"The word is doulos, and refers to one bound to another. Paul was bound to Jesus Christ by the bands of a constraining love."-Wuest

"Even so, the slave in the Roman Empire was not a free person, but "belonged to" another. Thus, whatever else, the word carries connotations of humility and servitude."-Gordon Fee

- D. Paul calls himself and Timothy "bondservants" in the sense that they were dedicated to carrying out His will, but he also taught that we are God's sons and no longer slaves (same word).
Galatians 4:1-7
Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, does not differ at all from a slave, though he is master of all, ² but is under guardians and stewards until the time appointed by the father. ³ Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world. ⁴ But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law, ⁵ to redeem those who were under the law, that we might receive the adoption as sons. ⁶ And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!" ⁷ Therefore you are no longer a slave but a son, and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.
- E. Paul knew of himself as a son of God, and as being loved by God. Before we can walk as a "love slave", we must know we are loved sons.-dhh

VERSE 2

² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

- II. Paul's salutation to the Philippians is not a mere nicety.
 - A. "Grace" is one of the few words in the New Testament used to describe the gospel.
Acts 20:24
But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.
 - B. "Peace" is another.

Romans 10:15

And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: "How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, who bring glad tidings of good things!"

C. Paul is proclaiming God the Father's and the Lord Jesus Christ's grace and peace was toward them.

- 1. Grace is God's unmerited and unlimited favor. You can't earn it or it would cease to be grace.**

Romans 11:6

And if by grace, then it is no longer of works; otherwise grace is no longer grace. But if it is of works, it is no longer grace; otherwise work is no longer work.

Grace says you have nothing to give, nothing to earn, nothing to pay. You couldn't if you tried! Salvation is a free gift. You simply lay hold of what Christ has provided. Period. And yet the heretical doctrine of works goes on all around the world and always will. It is effective because the pride of men and women is so strong. We simply have to do something in order to feel right about it. It just doesn't make good humanistic sense to get something valuable for nothing. -Charles Swindoll

The Greek word for "grace" is a wonderful word. It is hardly too much to say that God has in no word uttered Himself and all that is in His heart more distinctly than in this. In its use among the pagan Greeks it referred to a favor done by one Greek to another out of the pure generosity of his heart, and with no hope of reward. -Wuest

- 2. Peace is not only a sense of calm, but a state of peace with God. We are not His enemies. He is FOR us not AGAINST us.**

Romans 5:10

For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

Colossians 1:19-22

For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, ²⁰ and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross. ²¹ And you, who once were alienated and enemies in your mind by wicked works, yet now He has reconciled ²² in the body of His flesh through death, to present you holy, and blameless, and above reproach in His sight—

Thus instead of the familiar "greetings," Paul salutes his brothers and sisters in Christ with "grace to you — and peace." It is worth noting that this is the invariable order of Paul's words, not "grace and peace to you" as in most translations. Very likely there is significance to this order: the grace of God and Christ is what is given to God's people; peace is what results from such a gift. Hence, "grace to you — and peace." In a profound sense this greeting therefore nicely represents Paul's larger theological perspective. The sum total of God's activity toward his human creatures is found in the word "grace"; God has given himself to his people bountifully and mercifully in Christ. Nothing is deserved, nothing can be achieved. The sum total of those benefits as they are experienced by the recipients of God's grace is "peace," ⁶² God's eschatological shalom, both now and to come. -Fee

Verses 3-5

I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, ⁴ always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, ⁵ in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now.

- III. Paul's remembrance of the Philippians caused him to give thanks to God.
A. His thanksgiving was not just a routine general giving of thanks. As we will see, there were good REASONS that he gave thanks for them.

It means "upon the basis of." That is, the Philippians form the basis for Paul's thanksgiving. The word "every" in the Greek text has the idea of "whole." Paul thanks God because of his whole remembrance of the Philippians. There were no regrets in all of Paul's relationships with them.-Wuest

- IV. Paul's prayers for them were offered with JOY (delight)!

The word order ("with joy the prayer making") gives this phrase special emphasis; indeed this is the first of 16 occurrences of this word group ("joy") in the letter. -Fee

Joy, it should be noted, which occurs only here in the Pauline thanksgivings, lies at the heart of the Christian experience of the gospel.-Fee

- V. The word "participation" is "fellowship".

A. *Koinōnia*

Partnership, that is, (literally) participation.

Koinonia comes from the word koinōnos which means "a sharer, that is, associate: - companion, X fellowship, partaker, partner".

- B. Thus, Paul was thankful for their participation with him in the gospel. He saw them as co-laborers in the gospel, and they supported him financially.

The Philippians supported Paul with their prayers and finances while he went about his missionary labors. This is what he is thanking God for. And this is part of that "whole remembrance" of them for which he is grateful. -Wuest

VERSE 6

Being confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ;

- VI. Paul is confident that the Lord will complete the work He began in the Philippians until the day of Christ Jesus.
A. The word "complete" is *epiteleo* and means "to fulfill further (or completely), that is, execute; by implication to terminate, undergo: - accomplish, do, finish, (make) (perfect).
B. Notice who does the perfecting. Jesus.

C. It is interesting to note that Paul does not express the same confidence to the Galatians.

Galatians 1:6-7

I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel,⁷ which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ.

Galatians 3:1-4

O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?² This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?³ Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?⁴ Have you suffered so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain?

Galatians 4:19-20

My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you,²⁰ I would like to be present with you now and to change my tone; for I have doubts about you.

Galatians 5:4

You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.

Galatians 5:7

You ran well. Who hindered you from obeying the truth?

VERSE 7

Just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace.

- A. Even though the Philippians were not present with him, and even though he was in prison at the time, Paul could feel their support in the gospel. They were “sharers” of the gospel of grace.

In this joint-participation of the Philippians, not only in the missionary enterprise but in the defense and establishment of the gospel, Paul says that they were partakers of his grace. -Wuest

VERSE 8

For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ.

Paul thus describes his longing, not as his individual emotion, but as Christ's longing, as if the very heart of Christ dwelt in Paul. -Wuest

epipotheō “To greatly long for”

From [G1909](#) and ποθεῖν potheō (to *yearn*); to *dote upon*, that is, *intensely crave* possession (lawfully or wrongfully): - (earnestly) desire (greatly), (greatly) long (after), lust.

