

Who is the author of Philippians? The Apostle Paul.

- Clement of Rome, who lived in the first century, wrote a letter to the Corinthians and referred to Paul's letter to the Philippians.
- Polycarp, who lived in the second century, wrote the Philippians and mentioned Paul's letter.
- Ignatius, another early church leader, alluded to it.

When was it written? It is Uncertain.

- Probably somewhere around A.D. 60-63 while Paul was in prison at Rome.
- The letter has been listed among Paul's Prison Epistles. (W/Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon)

Who was the letter written to?

Philippians 1:1 Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:

- The message is certainly applicable to all the saints of every church.

PURPOSE: Paul wrote Philippians for several reasons.

1. He wished to prevent any criticism against a very dear friend and servant of Christ, Epaphroditus.
2. Paul wished to thank the Philippian church for its help throughout his ministry.
3. Paul wished to call the church to unity and harmony.
4. Paul wished to deal with some false teachers who were just beginning to arise in the church.

SPECIAL FEATURES:**1. The City of Philippi. Philippi was the gateway to Europe.**

- The city was named after Philip of Macedonia, the father of Alexander the Great.
- The site was a natural fortress, sitting on a range of hills that separated Europe from Asia, the East from the West.
- Philippi was a proud Roman colony. In fact, it was famous as a miniature Rome.
- The city of Philippi fit right into Paul's master plan. It lay on the great Roman road known as the Egnatian Way.
- And because of its strategic location it assured the spread of the gospel throughout the Roman Empire.

A. The Marks of a Healthy Church.

- In Paul's greeting, he gives us some outstanding distinctives of the Christian Church. (Or their "traits")

What are those Traits/Marks of a Healthy Church?

1. A healthy church disciples young people (v.1).
2. A healthy church serves Christ (v.1).
3. A healthy church is full of true saints (v.1).
4. A healthy church has leaders who lead by example (v.1).
5. A healthy church experiences grace and peace (v.2).

1. Discipleship: A healthy church disciples young people.

Philippians 1:1 Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:

- In the words "**Paul and Timothy**" we see a *father and son in the faith*—the adult and the young person together. There was deep affection that bound Paul and Timothy together.
- That affection found its root and purpose in the mission of the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Paul contributed the wisdom of experience, and Timothy the hope and vibrant energy of youth.
- It should be noted that the adult, Paul, is mentioned first.
- The adult always holds the primary responsibility and privilege for taking hold of young people and making disciples of them.
- **This was the command of the Lord's great commission;** therefore, the believer must always keep his focus upon finding young people and making disciples of them.

Matthew 28:19-20 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: ²⁰ Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, *even* unto the end of the world. Amen.

2 Timothy 2:2 Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ.

2. Servants— Slaves: a healthy church serves Jesus Christ, really serves Him.

Philippians 1:1 Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:

- The word "servant" is the word **bond-slave** in Greek.
- **There is a distinct difference between a servant and a slave.**
- A servant is free to work for whomever he wishes; a slave is bought and purchased—completely and totally owned by a master.
- A slave is bound by law to his master. Paul calls himself and Timothy the *slaves of Jesus Christ*.

A look at the slave market of Paul's day shows more clearly what Paul meant when he said he was a "slave of Jesus Christ."

1. First, the slave was owned by his master; he was totally possessed by his master. This is what Paul meant.
 - Paul was purchased and possessed by Christ.
 - Christ had looked upon him and had seen his degraded and needful condition.
 - And when Christ looked, the most wonderful thing happened: Christ loved him and bought him.
 - Therefore, he was now the possession of Christ.
2. The slave existed for his master and he had no other reason for existence.
 - He had no personal rights whatsoever. The same was true with Paul: he existed only for Christ.
 - His rights were the rights of Christ only.
3. The slave served his master and he existed only for the purpose of service.
 - He was at the master's disposal any hour of the day.
 - So, it was with Paul: he lived only to serve Christ—hour by hour and day by day.
4. The slave's will belonged to his master.
 - He was allowed no will and no ambition other than the will and ambition of the master.
 - He was completely subservient to the master and owed total obedience to the will of the master.
 - Paul belonged to Christ.
 - In fact, he even said that he fought and struggled to bring *every thought* into captivity "to the obedience of Christ" ([2 Cor. 10:3-5](#), esp. [2 Cor. 10:5](#)).
5. There is a fifth and most precious thing that Paul meant by his being "a slave of Jesus Christ."
 - He meant that he had the highest and most honored and kingly profession in all the world.
 - **Men of God, the greatest men of history, have always been called "the servants of God."**
 - *It was the highest title of honor.*
 - The believer's slavery to Jesus Christ is no cringing, cowardly, or shameful subjection.

It is the position of honor—the honor that bestows upon a man the privileges and responsibilities of serving the King of kings and Lord of lords.

3. Saints— Sanctified— Holy: A healthy church is full of *true saints*.

Philippians 1:1 Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, **to all the saints in Christ Jesus** which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:

- The Bible never uses the word *saint* to refer to a few people in the church who have achieved unusual spiritual maturity.
- The word saints refers to the sanctified or holy ones. It simply means to be set apart/to be separated.

Therefore, every believer who has truly trusted Jesus Christ as his Savior is separated from the world and set apart to live for God.

- Every true believer is a "saint," a person set apart unto God. (See [Deeper Study #1—1 Peter 1:15-16](#) for more discussion.)

There are three stages of sanctification.

1. There is initial or positional sanctification.

- When a person believes in Christ, he is immediately set apart for God—once and for all—permanently.

Hebrews 10:10 By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once *for all*.

2. There is progressive sanctification.

- The true believer makes a determined and disciplined effort to allow the Spirit of God to set him apart day by day.
- The Spirit of God takes him and conforms him into the image of Christ more and more—for as long as he walks upon this earth.

2 Corinthians 3:18 But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, *even as by the Spirit of the Lord*.

3. There is eternal sanctification.

The day is coming when the believer will be perfectly set apart unto God and His service—without any sin or failure whatsoever.

- That day will be the great and glorious day of the believer's eternal redemption.

Ephesians 5:27 That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

1 John 3:2 Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is.

Note: We are the property of the Lord Jesus, set apart as His holy possession.

- Let us, therefore, live as the possession of the Lord.
- Let us walk as the separated people of God, living holy and righteous and pure lives.

4. Bishops— Deacons: a healthy church organizes for ministry and has leaders who lead by example.

Philippians 1:1 Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, **with the bishops and deacons:**

- Note that both bishops and deacons are mentioned as being in the Philippian church.
- What Paul is doing is addressing the leaders of the church and setting them apart from the membership whom he addressed as "saints."
- This is significant, for it means that the leadership or officers of the early church are here named: they were bishops and deacons.

The point to see in this passage is that believers organize for ministry.

1. The bishops were apparently the same as the elders (*presbuteros*) or ministers of a church.

- The two words are used interchangeably to refer to the same men (Acts 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5, 7).
- The word "bishop" means to oversee, look after, manage.
- The instructions in the Epistle of Titus say that his duties included primarily exhortation and overseeing the lives of the believers.
- The bishop was the person whom we call the minister of the church.

2. The deacons were spiritually minded men who had dedicated their lives to the Lord to minister to the *saints* of God.

- They were persons who were chosen to minister to the widows and widowers and to the poor and sick of a church *in order to free the minister to concentrate on prayer and preaching*.

Two significant points need to be stressed.

- 1) The church must organize for ministry and must always be careful to ordain only persons who have proven to be spiritually mature in the Lord.
- 2) The ordained officers of the church must be diligent in both their duty and in sharing the Word of the Lord.
 - a. Every believer is needed to bear witness for the Lord Jesus and the *leadership must take the lead*.
 - b. How can we expect others to be witnessing and ministering if we, the leadership, are not witnessing and ministering?

5. Grace— Peace: Next, Paul tells us that a healthy church experiences grace and peace.

Philippians 1:2 Grace *be* unto you, and peace, from God our Father, and *from* the Lord Jesus Christ.

The minister, Paul, wanted the believers of Philippians to experience the grace and peace of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.

1. Grace mean's the undeserved favor and blessings of God.

The word *undeserved* is the key to understanding grace.

- Man does not deserve God's favor; he cannot earn God's approval and blessings.
- God is too high and man is too low for man to deserve anything from God.
- Man is imperfect and God is perfect; therefore, man cannot expect anything from God.

The truth is that man deserves nothing from God except judgment, condemnation, and punishment.

- But God is love—perfect and absolute love.
- Therefore, God makes it possible for man to experience His grace, in particular the favor and blessing of salvation which is in His Son, Jesus Christ.

2. Next Paul said... "Peace be unto you..."

- Peace means to be bound, joined, and weaved together with God and with everyone else.
- It means to be assured, confident, and secure in the love and care of God.
- A person can experience true peace only as he comes to know Jesus Christ.
- Only Christ can bring peace to the human heart, the kind of peace that brings deliverance and assurance to the human soul.

B. What are the marks of a mature Christian believer? This passage answers these questions.

Concisely and clearly, the marks so desperately needed by believers and churches are spelled out.

1. The mark of a thankful heart (v.3).
2. The mark of prayer (v.4).
3. The mark of joy (v.4).
4. The mark of fellowship (v.5).
5. The mark of confidence in God's salvation (v.6).
6. The mark of partnership (v.7-8).
7. The mark of a growing and discerning love (v.9-10).
8. The mark of righteousness (v.11).

1. Brotherhood— Fellowship— Church: there is the mark of a thankful heart.

Philippians 1:3 I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,

- Paul did not stand alone in the world. He was not the only person living for God and sharing Christ.
- He belonged to a great family, a family of believers who constituted the family of God.
- They, too, were living for God and sharing Christ with a lost and needful world.
- Remember that Paul was in prison in Rome and that he was a great distance from the Philippian believers.
- He did not have their presence; all he had was the memory of their time together.
- And sitting there in prison, remembering their love and care and support, his heart swelled up with thanksgiving for them, and he thanked God for them.

What a lesson for us! If Paul thanked God for believers who were so far away from him, how much more should we thank God for each other.

- We have the love and care and support of each other week by week and day by day, and we can call upon each other for help any hour of any day.
- Yet how often do we thank God for each other?

Another point is this: we should be following Paul's example and thanking God for all believers every day.

- We are not alone in the world.
- God is building a body of people world-wide—a body of people who are just like us—committed to live for the Lord Jesus Christ and to carry His gospel of salvation and love and care to a world that reels under the weight of desperate need.

2. Prayer: There is the mark of prayer.

Philippians 1:4 Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy,

- Paul says that he always prayed for the church.
- The idea is that he prayed all throughout the day for them.
- They were constantly on his mind and in his prayers.

What a dynamic lesson in prayer!

- 1) To pray by name for all the churches we know.
- 2) To take blocks of time (seasons of prayers) to pray for each church.
- 3) To always—all day long—pray for the churches of our living Lord.

3. Joy: There is the mark of joy.

Philippians 1:4 Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy,

- Remember that Paul is in prison, yet his heart is filled with joy.
- Joy means an inner gladness; a deep seated pleasure.
- It is a depth of assurance and confidence that ignites a cheerful and rejoicing heart.
- It is a cheerful heart that leads to cheerful and rejoicing behavior.

We need to understand, this is important... **The joy of the Lord is not the same as the joy of the world.**

- The joy of the world is more of a temporary pleasure than joy.
- The world's joy is always nagged by some incompleteness, some lack, some unfulfilling thing, some missing ingredient, some need still existing.
- There is not a completeness—not a complete sense of assurance, confidence, and satisfaction.
- There is the knowledge, *the haunting awareness*, that something can go wrong: circumstances can change or some situation can arise to disturb the joy (sickness, death, financial loss, war).
- The haunting awareness always keeps the world's joy from being full and complete, assuring and satisfying.

Several things need to be said about the believer's joy.

1. Joy is divine.

- It is possessed and given only by God. Its roots are not in earthly or material things or cheap triumphs.
- It is the joy of the Holy Spirit, a joy based in the Lord. It is His very own joy.

2. Joy does not depend on circumstances or happiness.

- Happiness depends upon happenings, but the joy that God implants in the believer's heart overrides all, even the matters of life and death.

3. Joy springs from faith.**4. Joy of future reward makes and keeps the believer faithful.****The source of the believer's joy is severalfold.**

1. The fellowship of the Father and His Son brings joy (1 John 1:3-4).
2. Victory over sin, death, and hell brings joy (John 14:28; John 16:20-22).
3. Repentance brings joy (Luke 15:7, 10).
4. The hope of glory brings joy (Romans 14:17; Hebrews 12:2; 1 Peter 4:13).
5. The Lord's Word, the revelations/commandments/promises which He made—brings joy (John 15:11).
6. The commandments of Christ and the will of God bring joy.
 - Obeying and doing a good job stirs joy within the believer's heart (John 15:11; John 17:13; Acts 13:52).
7. Prayer brings joy (John 16:24).
8. The presence and fellowship of believers brings joy (1 John 1:3-4).
9. Converts bring joy (Luke 15:5; Phil. 4:1; 1 Thes. 2:19-20).
10. Hearing that others walk in the truth brings joy (3 John 1:4).
11. Giving brings joy (2 Cor. 8:2; Hebrews 10:34).