



The following is the summary of the Sunday sermon that is sent to the body at Steadfast in an email called "The Weekly"

The Salutation, 1:1-2

Unlike his other epistles, Paul does not identify himself as an apostle, but, along with Timothy, as "servants of Christ Jesus." [Timothy no doubt was Paul's secretary at this point.] He addresses the letter to the "saints" at Philippi and the church leaders, "elders and deacons." Please note the plurality of church leadership.

Paul's greeting combines the typical Greco-Roman greeting, "grace" [*charis*], with the typical Jewish greeting, "peace" [*shalom*]. Is there a theological reason for doing so?

Paul's Ministry of Edification: Thanksgiving, 1:3-8

Paul expresses continual thanks to God for this church. It had been about 10 years since he was with them, but his love and interest in this church had not diminished. His remembrance of them produced joy (a key term in this epistle, appearing 12 times). The reason for this joy was their partnership (*koinonia*) with him—in their fellowship, in their giving and in their prayers, which they had been doing since they first trusted Christ.

Verse 6 expresses Paul's settled conviction, his confidence, that what God had begun in their lives (justification) He would bring to completion (through the process of sanctification) at the "day" of Christ's return, which would result in their glorification. What a fantastic summary of God's holistic perspective on the miracle of salvation!

In v. 7, Paul expressed his deep emotional loyalty to them ("in his heart") because they were partners with him in the proclamation of the gospel; even as he was preparing to make his "defense" before Caesar Nero, which would "confirm" the gospel. Paul makes a vow before God (v. 8) about the truthfulness of his "affection" for them.

Paul's Ministry of Edification: A Prayer, 1:9-11

Paul's prayer for this church is one of the most amazing in Scripture. His primary prayer was that their "love may abound more and more." But this love is not mere sentiment; it should be knowledgeable and discerning: It should be a love that fosters deeper knowledge of God and a depth of insight into God's ways, which will enable greater, deeper and other-centered love for Him and others to result.

In vv. 10-11, Paul details two intended results of his prayers:

1. That they may "approve" what is "excellent," what is best. The term approve ("test") was used in the metallurgical industry to rid ore of all its impurities, so that what resulted was "approved and best." He wanted their love to be based on moral perception and discernment.
2. That they would be "pure" and "blameless," terms that relate to the Father's goal in the sanctification process, which will be completed when Christ returns. As the sanctification process continued, he prayed that they would exhibit "the fruit of righteousness," which in turn would result in the glory of God being manifested (see 1 Corinthians 10:31).

Questions:

- Think of Paul's greeting in 1:2—"grace" and "peace." Does God's work of grace in your life produce His peace in your life?
- Read 1:6 and meditate on the entire dimension of God's salvation—justification, sanctification, glorification. Do you have the settled conviction that what God began in your life, He will complete? Does such truth give you greater assurance of your salvation?
- I encourage you to pray Paul's prayer in 1:9-11 for yourself, your spouse, your children, and your Christian friends.

In Him,

Dr. Jim Eckman