

Lesson 2
Participants or Spectators?
Philippians 1:1-8

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. We begin this morning the actual exposition of the Book of Philippians. This epistle, like all the other letters of Paul, is written almost exclusively for Christians. Paul has nothing to say to the world in this letter. His message is addressed to the church, the members of Christ's body. His teaching is to be grasped and enjoyed only by those who have been truly "born again."
- B. It seems only fitting, then, that I ask you about your personal relationship to Christ. Have you ever received Him into your life as your personal Lord and Savior? You will not comprehend or enjoy any part of the exposition of Philippians unless you are genuinely saved.

II. GREETINGS FOR THE PHILIPPIANS 1:1-2

A. Servants (1a)

1. ***Paul and Timothy.*** – Paul is the author of the Letter to the Philippians and Timothy, his right-hand man, was probably the recording secretary. As thoughts would come to Paul's mind, Timothy would write them down.
2. ***Servants of Christ Jesus,*** -- "Servants" could be translated "slaves." Paul and Timothy were slaves of Christ by God's sovereign choice of them to salvation and by their own choice out of gratitude for salvation. They were voluntarily submitted to Christ. As slaves, they had no rights of their own and desired to be obedient servants of the Master, Jesus Christ. NOTE: It is interesting to note that Paul referred to himself as a servant and not as an apostle as he does in most of his letters. In Philippi, his apostolic authority was not being challenged so he did not pull rank. Actually he subordinates his position as an apostle to that of a servant. He does not say, "St. Paul to the servants" but "Servant Paul to the saints." Paul led from a position of servanthood. He understood his role not as a power hungry dictator but as a humble servant-leader who never sought to abuse his authority.

B. Saints (2b)

1. ***To all the saints ...*** -- Every Christian at Philippi was a saint. Perhaps you think of a saint as some holy, emaciated person, wearing a black robe who is an untouchable, never smiling, like a person with a dill pickle in the mouth. Not so! Saints are not special Christians but Christians just like you and me. Saints are not spiritual giants but plain, ordinary people who love Christ. The word "saint" means "one set apart." Therefore, a saint is set apart in Christ and belongs to the order of Christ and lives in the sphere of Christ. Saints are those who have been positionally separated unto God because God has chosen them to salvation in Christ. Christians have been set apart to love Christ, to worship Christ and to serve Christ. While every Christian is a saint, separated unto Christ, it is the duty of every Christian to live saint-like in one's experience.

Dr. Harry Ironside tells the story about sitting with four nuns on a train. Roman Catholics erroneously believe that Christians become saints if they have lived good enough lives but they are not made saints at salvation as the Bible teaches. Dr. Ironside asked them, "Have you ever seen a saint?" "No," they replied. Would you like to see one?" Ironside asked. "Oh yes," the nuns replied. Dr. Ironside pointed at himself and said, "You are looking at one." He then said, "I am a saint; I am Saint Harry."

2. ***In Christ Jesus at Philippi***, -- Saints are set apart in Christ. "In Christ" is the key to understanding our salvation. All Christians have been put into spiritual union with Christ at the moment of salvation. From this new relationship, Christ's power, peace, love and strength flow to and out of the Christian to others. NOTE: We must learn what it means to be in Christ. In Christ, we are secure and have everything we need. In Christ, the peace of God patrols and guards our hearts, and His riches are laid open to meet our needs. In Christ, we become new people with new feelings. In Christ, we have a new way of looking at life, seeing His sovereign hand in all things. In Christ, we discover our identity as saints in the church and as Christians in the world. Being in Christ, helps us understand who we are in God's sight.

The Taft family was evidently good at pushing their children to cut their own swath and to find a specialty of which to be proud. When Martha Taft was in elementary school in Cincinnati she was asked to introduce herself. She said, "My name is Martha Bowers Taft. My great-grandfather was president of the United States. My grandfather was a United States senator. My daddy is Ambassador to Ireland. And I am a Brownie."

When we are in Christ we can see our accomplishments and not become proud or we can see actually what we are and not be embarrassed. We can be "Christian Brownies" and not be ashamed.

C. Leaders (1c)

1. ***Together with the overseers***

- a. Overseers are a reference to the elders (***Tit. 1:5,7: The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you... Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless***). Elders are to have the total oversight of the church in that they are to be managers as well as people persons. Administration is not just the task of the Pastor but of the elders collectively. Elders are shepherds and are commanded to shepherd the flock (***1 Pet 5:1-4 To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers—not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.***).

- b. Notice the word “overseers” is in the plural. The Church of Philippi was administered by a plurality of elders. The Pastor, while the teaching elder, is only one of the elders of a local church with no more authority than any other elder. This certainly lends support for the Presbyterian form of government.
 - c. Notice the saints are greeted before the overseers. We would think leaders should take priority over the average Christian. Notice the words “together with.” Elders are to work with the people not against them. Saints work not “under” but “with” the elders. Leadership is not an imposition upon the fellowship but an extension of it. Elders should not desire to be “over” or “go before” the saints but to use their God given authority to work humbly with the saints.
2. **And deacons:** -- The deacons are servers and are responsible for the physical aspects of the ministry of the local church. The deacons help the elders in every way they can so the elders will have time to oversee (administrate) and shepherd the flock.

D. Greetings (2)

- 1. **Grace and peace to you ... -- Paul combines a Gentile and Hebrew greeting to the Philippians.** *Gentiles*, especially Romans, would begin their letters by the word “greetings” which was from the Latin word “grace.” The Hebrews would begin their letters by the word *shalom* which means “peace.” But Paul had more in mind than just those superficial greetings. He is asking that God would shed His grace on them in their daily walk with Christ. He wants them to experience the grace of God at all times, not to be bound by legalism, but to be liberated and set free by the grace of God in their Christian experience. Paul is also asking that they experience the peace of God in their Christian lives. This is inner stability in the midst of outward crisis. It is not tranquility from all problems and conflict but inner confidence, which only those who are Christians can experience (**John 14:27: Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid.**).
- 2. **From God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.** -- The source of this grace and peace does not lie within us but within the power of God the Father and the work of God the Son. God gives grace and peace.

III. THANKSGIVING FOR THE PHILIPPIANS 1:3-8

A. For Remembrance of the Philippians (4)

- 1. **I thank God every time I remember you.** -- Paul’s memories of the Philippians were positive ones. As his mind wandered back over all God’s grace had done for these Christians in Philippi, it caused him to burst forth in thanksgiving and prayer. Their salvation, the founding of the church, their growth in spiritual things all brought praise from the lips of Paul. Paul had been away from this church for ten years but it was as though he never left. NOTE: Paul’s mind went back to Lydia, the first century, wealthy feminist, and how God opened her heart and she believed and was liberated spiritually. Then he thought of the young fortune teller who was saved and had a demon cast out of her. She too was saved and liberated. Then there was the cruel, violent jailor who God softened and he responded to Christ and was also

liberated. These and others were all different personalities, with different upbringings, with different interests and with different sinful pasts but all were worshipping Christ in one body. Salvation is the great equalizer of all men. NOTE: Paul's mind also recalled how the Philippians had faithfully stood with him in the gospel cause and even supported him financially. In one sense, this little book of Philippians is a "thank you" note to express his appreciation for their financial support.

2. ***In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy.*** -- Paul was the first pastor of the Church of Philippi, and here we see his pastor's heart, for he prayed for each one of them by name. There probably weren't very many but he had an intimate relationship with each one of them. Paul was a man of prayer, and any good pastor must be a man of prayer if God is going to bless his work. Paul, you remember, was in a house-jail, so he had plenty of time to pray. Paul redeemed his time by praying instead of sulking about his miserable circumstances

B. For Partnership in the Gospel (5)

1. ***Because of your partnership in the gospel...*** -- Paul thanked God for the Philippians fellowship with him in the gospel. The word for "partnership" is koinonia in the Greek and could be translated "fellowship" or "participation." They were not spectators; they were not on-lookers. They were participators. They were folks who had made a commitment and decided to join with Paul in the cause of Christ and the gospel. They decided to become fellow soldiers in the spiritual war. NOTE: These Philippians had labored with Paul in telling others about Christ and they also dug deep down into their pockets to give money to Paul as he left them to spread the gospel through the then known world. The Philippians were committed to world evangelism and were in partnership with Paul in proclaiming Christ and Him crucified to the whole world. NOTE: Real Christian fellowship is not sitting around in a group drinking coffee, eating donuts and having a warm conversation (although there is a place for this in the local church), but fellowship is doing something together for Christ. It is participation together in the cause of Christ. In the case of the Philippians, it was a commitment to be partners with Paul in the sharing of the gospel. NOTE: Whenever a person gives money or prays for a fellow missionary, he is a partner in that person's work for Christ. Every Christian and every local church is to have a partnership with missionaries and mission organizations. However, real fellowship in missions cannot take place until: 1) we are missionaries at home; 2) we are praying for missionaries and 3) we are personally committed to giving financially to missions.
 2. ***From the first day until now,*** -- Right from the beginning the Philippians took an interest in the sharing of the gospel. Lydia took that small band of missionaries into her home and ministered to them. When Paul left Philippi, they sent him money from time to time. There was a giving spirit in these Philippians. They were willing to depart with material possessions for the cause of Christ. They even continued to send money to Paul when he was in jail in Rome, when many other Christians had abandoned him. They were not "fair weather" Christians.
- C. For the Spiritual Progress the Philippians Had Made and Would Make (6): Verse six is a powerful verse on assurance and it covers the beginning, continuation and completion of

our Christian experience. Paul's whole point is that the Christian's spiritual life began with God, is carried on by God and is completed by God.

1. ***Being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you ...*** -- In context, the "this" refers to the "good work" which is a reference to salvation. God had convicted, drawn, regenerated and justified the Philippians. He began the good work of salvation. Perhaps Paul's mind went back to Lydia where it says in Acts 16: "The Lord opened her heart to respond to Paul's message." NOTE: While under conviction for sins and being sovereignly drawn to Christ, most people resist and fight the wooing work of the Spirit, but when God opens the heart, they respond positively to Christ.

C. S. Lewis, a brilliant British scholar and committed agnostic, in his autobiography Surprised By Joy says the following about his conversion to Christ: "In the trinity Term of 1939 I gave in, and admitted that God was God, and knelt and prayed: perhaps, that night, the most dejected and reluctant convert in all England did not see what is now the most shining and obvious thing; the Divine humility which will accept a convert even on such terms. The Prodigal Son, at least, walked home on his own feet. But who can duly adore that love which will open the high gates to a prodigal who is brought in kicking, struggling, resentful, and darting his eyes in every direction for a chance to escape.

2. ***Will carry it on ...*** -- God who initiates our Christian life is also the one who undertakes to continue it. God Himself takes the responsibility for the progress of our spiritual life. It is a process; it is continual; it is progressive but life goes on by the plan, design and power of God. One scholar translated the words "will carry on" as "he will evermore put his finishing touches on it."
3. ***To completion ...*** -- The God who began and continues our salvation will complete it. Those saved by God's grace shall be kept by God's grace and shall be made holy by God's grace and shall be perfected and taken to heaven by God's grace. God never leaves a job half done! He never begins a thing He does not intend to finish! What God starts, He completes! NOTE: This is a marvelous verse on the security of the believer. There is simply no way God will ever cast away one who has truly believed in Christ as Savior and Lord (***John 6:37: All that the Father gives me will come to me, and whoever comes to me I will never drive away. John 10:27-28: My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; no one can snatch them out of my hand.***). Remember, beloved Christian, that God is protecting, preserving and pushing on in you even when your own perseverance seems inadequate and stale. He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion. NOTE: When Paul made such a confident claim about the salvation of the Philippians, it was not based on some subjective intuition but on observable facts. He saw the evidence of salvation in their actions. They participated with him in the gospel. The fruit of their lives indicated they had the reality of salvation.
4. ***Until the day of Christ Jesus.*** -- The outcome of the Christian's salvation is guaranteed. God is working according to schedule and will complete all of salvation at the second coming of Christ. Our salvation is as sure as the coming of Christ on that glorious day. I remember the wise old saint who said, "If Christ will keep me

until His return for me, I don't care what He does after that, for I will be in heaven with my Lord."

D. For His Warm Feelings for the Philippians (7,8)

1. ***It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart;*** -- Notice how Paul had an emotional tie with each one of the Philippian Christians. This caused him to give thanks to his God for them. These Philippians were true friends. They hung in there with Paul. They loved Paul; they cared for Paul; they were burdened for Paul, and this in turn caused Paul to have warm feelings towards the Philippians.
2. ***For whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me.*** -- When Paul was free or when he was in prison, the Philippians were sharing in God's grace with Paul. They were all saved by grace and were sharing in God's grace together. Paul and the Philippians were bound together in God's grace. The Philippians shared Paul's sufferings and his joys which were all part of the gracious plan of God. NOTE: The Philippians ministered to Paul. Let me ask you a question. Who pastors the pastor? Who bears his burdens? Who lifts him up when he is discouraged? Christ, of course, but also the saints. There is not to be a wall between the pastor and the people. There is to be mutual love, concern and sharing.
3. ***God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.*** -- Paul had a tender concern for all his converts and felt very close to them even though geographically they were separated. He longed for the Philippians with the very affection of Jesus Christ. His pulse beat with the pulse of Christ; his heart beat with the beat of Christ for the ones he dearly loved in Christ. NOTE: Notice Paul says "all of you," not just the ones he liked, not just the leaders, not just the rich, not just the ones who liked him, but all. We are not just to tolerate other Christians. We must enjoy them. We must love them. We must learn from them. We must miss them when they are gone. Furthermore, our fellowship must constantly be expanding to include other Christians, even those we have never met but with whom we are forever united in the Lord.

IV. CONCLUSION

- A. You who are not Christians need to do what Paul told the Philippian jailor: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved." You also need to know that when you do this, it is God who has opened your heart so you could respond to Christ.
- B. For sure, God begins salvation. Is He convicting you right now? Do you sense a supernatural drawing even to the point where you like C. S. Lewis are being brought into the kingdom kicking, struggling and resentful?
- C. Stop fighting God. Submit to Christ! Bow your will to Him as Lord! Receive Him into your life as Savior! If you are sensing conviction, you are near the kingdom. Stop struggling and believe in Christ whom to know is life eternal.