

# Philippians 1 (Part 1):1-2 • Intro and Greeting

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Today, we start a brand-new study in Philippians, and I'm always kind of excited about starting a new Book of the Bible, and it's just kind of fun. And for those of you that underline in your Bible, if you, as you kind of page through the Book of Philippians, you'll notice that you probably—I'm guessing you probably have a lot of things underlined in this book just because there are so many amazing statements, so many amazing promises that are given in the Book of Philippians, and it's just really, really wonderful.

So, we're going to read just the first two verses, and then we're going to pray and see what the Lord will bring out of these for us. So, read along with me, or follow along, rather, as I read, beginning in verse 1. It says:

*“<sup>1</sup>Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus,  
To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with  
the overseers and deacons.*

*<sup>2</sup>Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”*  
(ESV)

Thank you, Father, for Your Word. Thank you for the blessing of giving us Your Word and also preserving it, Lord. It is amazing to see how the Scriptures have been preserved these many years, and we see, Lord God, your sovereign protection over it. Now we pray for the ministry of your Holy Spirit to move in amidst the words that are spoken here today, opening hearts, opening minds, and helping us, Father God, to understand the things that we hear because we know, Lord, that apart from the Spirit, we cannot apprehend the things of the Spirit, for they are spiritually discerned.

Lord, give us wisdom and insight. Open our eyes, open our hearts, that we would not just be hearers of the Word, but we would go on to be doers of the Word as well. Lead us and guide us as we are to be led. You are the teacher. We are the students. You are the counselor. May we listen to Your voice in Jesus' precious name, amen.

As we get ready to get in to dig into Philippians, we learn actually a little bit about this church and how it came to be by reading through the Book of Acts.

We're not going to do that this morning, but I'm going to call your attention to some of the things that you probably remember reading about in Acts.

When you get to Acts chapter 16, you find that Paul and his companions are kind of wandering a little bit because they're not really sure what direction to go. They started to move up into Asia, and the Lord blocked their way and said, no, don't go that way; not yet. And so, they turned toward Bithynia, and they started to head in that direction.

And once again, the Lord blocked their path, and so, they decided, well, let's just go on down to Troas, which was right on the shore, and let's just hang out and see what the Lord has for us. So, they made their way to Troas, and while they were there, Paul had a vision from the Lord of a man located in Macedonia, which was across the Aegean Sea from where they were, and that man was saying, come to us, come over here, and he was pleading with them to come.

So, Paul got up the next morning, and he told the other men about this vision that he'd received, and they talked, and I assume they prayed about it, and they determined that it was, in fact, from the Lord. And so, they made the decision to go over to Philippi, which marks the very first move of the gospel into Europe.

Now, let me show you—in case you're, maybe, a little unsure of some of these things geographically. I like map's help sometimes.



Let me call your attention to the lower right-hand corner just to give you a sense of where we are. Jerusalem is down there. If you go straight north up into Syria, you'll find that you're now in Antioch, which was the center, really, of the early church in Paul's day. And that was the church that sent Paul and his companions out on their missionary journeys.

Then you move up into Asia Minor, modern-day Turkey, you find another—you find Derby, Lystra, Iconium, another Antioch, and you can see that's the area where Paul was pushing west, but he was being blocked, as we said, from going into those areas. And so they went to Troas, which is where you can see there on the edge of Asia Minor—and that's where the Lord gave him the vision to go across the Aegean Sea over to Philippi. And once they arrived there, they went just to a riverside on a particular Sabbath day so they could talk to people and, no doubt, pray.

And they met a woman, you'll remember, by the name of Lydia. Lydia was a woman of some means. She was a merchant, and she responded to the Gospel. She and her whole household, we're told, were baptized and opened their heart to the Lord, and she also invited Paul and his companions to come and stay in her home—which tells us she probably was a woman of some means, and she took care of them while they were there.

You may also remember that Paul got into hot water while he was in Philippi—well, he got into hot water everywhere he went, ultimately, but there was a particular situation where a young slave girl, who was invested with a demonic spirit by which she told fortunes and earned money for her masters, would follow Paul and his companions around day after day after day. This little girl just followed Paul, and she would shout—whenever he'd get into a new area, she'd start shouting—and she'd say, these men are servants of the Most High God, and they're here to show you the way of salvation.

Now, there was nothing fundamentally wrong about what she was saying in the sense of it being an error. It was actually true, but God doesn't need the enemy to herald His coming. And so, finally Paul was so overwhelmed with just compassion for this little girl. He turned and spoke directly to the spirit, and he commanded that spirit to come out of her, and it did. She was free from that point on.

But her masters lost their ability to now earn wealth through her fortune telling, and they were quite angry about it, so they hauled Paul before the magistrates and began to make all kinds of complaints about him being a troublemaker. Eventually, the crowd got involved, gathered in on this whole thing. And of

course, crowds don't need to know what's going on to be weird and they eventually ended up arresting Paul and throwing him in jail there in Philippi.

And you remember the rest of the story. It wasn't long before he and Silas had to make their way out of that area. But even though they may not have been in Philippi for very long, it was long enough for the Lord to start a new fellowship in that area, and it began to grow, and so now Paul is writing a letter to the believers in Philippi to encourage them in the Lord.

And even though we only read two verses of the beginning of this letter, you probably noticed in verse 1 alone that the apostle Paul gives four separate titles which relate to the body of Christ. And I'll put them on the screen for you here.

- Servants
- Saints
- Overseers
- Deacons

They are servants, saints, overseers, and deacons. And I just thought it would be important for us to remind ourselves about what these mean because they are, frankly, titles that we hear throughout the New Testament but oftentimes don't take the time to really think about them and talk about what they mean.

The first title that we see is servant. Again, if you look with me in verse 1, Paul says: "*Paul and Timothy* (starting letters the way they started them back in those days with the writer of the letter, and he calls themselves), *servants of Christ Jesus.*" Now, if you have a New American Standard Bible or a New King James on your lap today, you have a different word, and yours is bondservant, which is actually a better translation, because that's what this says.

In the Greek, it's "doulos" (δοῦλος), and it can be translated "servant" or "slave," but it is better translated "bondservant." In Roman times, a bondservant or a slave could refer to anyone who was in some kind of servitude. However, in the Hebrew understanding of this word, there was— it took on a special meaning because in the Mosaic law, God created a mechanism or a means, if you will, for a servant to become a lifelong servant of their master, if they so chose.

Because, you see, many people who served in positions of slavery—don't think of it as slavery that like we had here in the United States; slavery back then was for other reasons— often, not always, but often—and it was often because of somebody got into debt or whatever and they were encumbered to their master to pay off the debt. Well, sometimes they'd get to the end of that period where

the debt had been paid off, but they want to continue serving this individual because he's a good master, they're well taken care of, and God wanted to give them an option to stay where they were.

Now this is actually told us in the Book of Exodus. Let me show you on the screen. It goes like this:

**Exodus 21:5-6 (NIV)**

*... if the servant declares, 'I love my master...and do not want to go free,' then his master must take him before the judges. He shall take him to the door or the doorpost and pierce his ear with an awl. Then he will be his servant for life.*

*...if the servant declares, 'I love my master...and do not want to go free,' then his master must take him before the judges. He shall take him to the door or the doorpost and pierce his ear with an awl. Then he will be (this is important) his servant for life.*

And so, in the Hebrew understanding of this term, a bondservant is a servant for life who has willingly made that decision, or that choice. So, you see, in the New Testament times, this term began to take on a life of its own for the believers in Jesus Christ since they knew that they, like a slave, had been purchased.

You recall that? Let me show you this again on the screen from 1 Corinthians chapter 6. Paul writes—he's talking to all believers here:

**1 Corinthians 6:19b-20a (ESV)**

*You are not your own, for you were bought with a price.*

*You are not your own, for you were bought with a price.*

Now, the price by which we've been purchased is the blood of Jesus Christ. So, just like a slave, we too have been purchased, but in the understanding of what a bondservant is, we give our lives freely and willingly to our Master. We say, He's a good master, our Lord is a wonderful master, and we want to, for our entire lives, serve Him and be His. Lifelong devotion.

Now, here's the paradox to this whole thing. Jesus already owns the title deed to your life because when you came to Him, you bowed the knee to Him. His blood purchased you from death to life, from darkness to light. And as we saw in that passage that we put up on the screen from Corinthians, you are not your own; you've been bought with a price; He already owns you; He already has that right to your life. And yet, interestingly enough, He waits for you and for me to give our lives willingly to Him in such a way as to say, I am yours for life; my lifelong devotion is to You. What's interesting about that is that He doesn't demand that we live our lives— every single day of our lives—as if those lives belonged to Him.

If we could, we could have some of you guys stand up and give all kinds of testimonies about coming to the Lord. But how many times since that time have you taken your life back into your own hands? Done what you wanted to do, gone where you wanted to go, lived your life as if your life belonged to you. We've all done it; we all do it.

The fact of the matter is our lives do not belong to us; they belong to Him. He is the Master, whether we like it or not. Eventually, however, we come to terms in our lives with the fact that when I am master of my life, when I am lord, and when I'm calling the shots, things don't go very well. And I usually get myself into all kinds of trouble, and it's just a big fat drag. And so, at those times when that realization hits, we come to Him and we say, Lord, I give You my life. I see that I've been living my life as if I'm my own master, in charge of my own destiny. But I realize that's not the case, and I offer my life to You to be Lord of my life.

And He's very gracious. He never comes to you and I and says, well, fact of the matter is, I've owned you all along. He doesn't do that. He doesn't make us feel guilty, or ridiculous, or stupid. He receives us, and He says, come to Me, my child. I love you. And He puts His arms around us and invites us to begin to walk in the reality of what it means to make Him Lord.

So, it's kind of crazy, but it's a wonderful term—“doulos” in the Greek—bondservant. We are bondservants. I hope that we are bondservants. Technically speaking, if you are in Christ today, as I said, He already bought you, paid for you, but He waits for you and I to take on that name, “doulos.” I am Yours for life.

The next title that Paul uses here, also in verse 1, he says in his letter: “*To all the saints in Christ Jesus.*” So, he writes this letter to the saints. This is an interesting word; it has so many definitions.

It's a football team. The world considers the definition of saint to be an exceptionally good person. I don't know that they ever necessarily refer to people as saints, but often, people in the world will say, he is no saint. Or, I am no saint, or something like that. We are very negative about pointing out who isn't a saint.

Now, if you have a Roman Catholic background, you were taught that a saint is someone chosen by the church according to their qualifying criteria. And one of those criteria is they got to be dead—but which is a little bit of a bummer. But anyway, so the Roman Catholic Church has its own understanding of who saints are.

The biblical definition of the saint is a believer. It's a Christian. It's somebody who has bowed the knee to Jesus and accepted and received His work on the cross personally for them. If you've done that, you are a saint. And the word in the Greek is "hagios" (ἅγιος), and it means "holy one."

Now, before you object and you say, well, I'm a Christian but I am not a holy one, just understand this: When we talk about "hagios" or holy one, we're talking about your standing in Christ. It can refer to a person's life, but in this case, we're talking about your standing. And it means that you are holy, which is to say, you have been set apart. So, this is another term that has to do with belonging, just like "doulos." A holy one is one who has been set apart unto God. In other words, set apart for God. Your life, as a Christian, has been set apart, and now is His. You are His. You are a "hagios," a holy one, a saint. All right? Again, it's not speaking of the kind of life you may or may not live. It's your position in Christ. So, your sainthood, if you will, is by virtue of what Jesus Christ did on the cross for you, dying for your sins.

It's kind of interesting, once in a while, on our YouTube channel, I'll get some messages or comments or even emails that come to me from people and they will use the name Saint when referring to some of the writers of the New Testament, and they'll say, well, I was reading in Saint Matthew, or I was reading the letters of Saint Paul, in Saint Paul's letter to the Galatians or something like that. And it's a little bit odd for me to hear that because I don't really come from that vibe where we applied that word saint necessarily, specifically to the biblical authors.

But I can tell you this much: If those apostles and authors today heard us using the word saint as an exclusive term for them, they would object to it because they knew and understood it was a term for everyone in the body of Christ. It is not something that sets you out as special among Christians; it's what sets you out as special among human beings. All believers are saints. So, if you want to

call me Saint Paul, you can, but then I get to call you Saint whoever-you-are, too. You see, it's just kind of one of those things.

All right. Next, Paul includes in his list of recipients here, you'll notice, the overseers. So, not just the saints, but he specifically lines out the overseers. Once again, if you have a King James Bible or a New King James that you're reading from, you have a different word. Your word isn't overseers; it's bishops—which is a very unfortunate translation, frankly, because that's not what the word means. It doesn't mean bishop. Bishop was put in there for traditional reasons, and the Bible should not be translated traditionally, in my estimation. It should be translated according to what the words mean.

And what the word means—and the Greek word is “episkopos” (ἐπίσκοπος). It means “overseer.” And guess what it means? Someone who oversees. This is not rocket science here, okay? It's very simple, actually. An overseer is one who oversees. It is a leadership position in the body of Christ, and it appears to be synonymous with an elder and a pastor.

And I'll show you that in just a moment in a verse, but let me, first of all, prime you a little bit by telling you that the word that is translated “pastor” in the New Testament is also translated “shepherd.” So, they mean exactly the same thing. And it could speak of a man who is overseeing a flock of animals, in which case we would translate it “shepherd”; or you could—it might be about a man who oversees a flock of people, in which case we would translate it “pastor,” but “shepherd” is fine there too, frankly.

But I want to show you how Peter uses these terms interchangeably. Let me show you this from 1 Peter chapter 5—and I even underlined and kind of highlighted the key words. He writes:

**1 Peter 5:1-2**

*To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder... 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...*

*To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder... (And so, you have the—first of all, this term elder. He says:) Be shepherds (which means be pastors) 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... (and so on and so forth).*



So, isn't it interesting that Peter refers to himself, first of all, as an elder? And by the way, that term was borrowed from the Old Testament when Moses was coming through the wilderness with this huge nation of Israel and trying to lead them all by himself. The Lord brought people alongside him to help him carry the burden of leadership, and those men were referred to as elders. But the word elder doesn't tell you what they do. In fact, it doesn't really tell you anything much about them except that they're elder. Elderly, maybe even, because the word literally means older than. So we need other words to help us to understand.

So, he says, as an elder, I appealed to the fellow elders, to shepherd or pastor God's flock that is under your care, serving as overseers, serving as the "episkopos." So, you can see that these words are used interchangeably, all right?

So here's the thing I want you to remember. It was just a few weeks back when we were in Ephesians chapter 4, when Paul talked about the leadership gifts given to the body of Christ. And I want to show you that. We'll just remember from Ephesians chapter 4, he wrote to us and said:

**Ephesians 4:11-12**

*It was [Jesus] who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up...*

*It was [Jesus] who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, (or the pastor teacher, which is really the same position) to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up...*

Now you say, well, why didn't he bring up elders and overseers in that passage? Well, because they're the same thing as the pastor. It's the same ministry gift, right? Fundamentally, it's the same thing. And so, we see that this is how God chose to lead the body of Christ, and we see in the New Testament that many of the churches had multiple overseers in the fellowship.

We have kind of a modernized version of that today in the church where we still have elders and overseers who oversee the flock. We talk about a head pastor or a senior pastor, which is a position that I hold here at Calvary Chapel, which is kind of the teaching pastor and the lead pastor, if you will, with other pastors/overseers coming alongside to kind of carry the load.

What's interesting about leadership in the New Testament church is that there's really no single passage where God says, do it just like this. What He does—and I think this is pretty wise of Him, surprise—is He essentially lines out the leadership gifts in the body of Christ, He defines them for us, and then He kind of just leaves us to set up a structure that works.

And believe me, in the 2,000 years of church history, we've come up with just about every possible combination to try to make it work. And I'll be honest with you, sometimes it doesn't. A lot of churches have entered into leadership structures that, I think, are—well, they just don't work. We've tried to pattern leadership structures after democracy. That doesn't work. We've tried to do other sorts of things, and it results in sometimes just really nasty kind of stuff.

But essentially, what God has given us is just the definition of these leadership gifts, and He has given us a kind of freedom to work out how it works best for us. But whatever structure we adopt, it always works best when we remember there's only one head of the church, and that is Jesus Christ. And that is so important.

He has appointed elders/overseers/pastors to lead in the body of Christ, but they're just men. They're just men. And although they may be in a position of leadership, they are sinners, saved by grace, just like everybody else in the body of Christ—which is one of the reasons why God gave us guidelines for choosing those individuals. Those guidelines are lined out for us in the books or the letters written to Timothy and Titus, 1 and 2 Timothy and Titus. It's why we call those letters the pastoral epistles, because they give information and understanding to us about how these individuals ought to be raised up and so forth. So, once again, leaders in the church given by God, but sinners saved by grace just like everyone else.

The last title that is given here in Paul's letter in this opening is deacons and he says: *“To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi with the overseers (and then this last one) and deacons.”* And the word deacon is literally translated servant, but it means to minister, or to minister by serving.

Check this out, I think this is fascinating. One of the variations of this word in the Greek “diakoneo” (διακονέω), which we translate “deacon,” literally means “through the dirt.” I just thought I'd let that sink in for a minute. It's kind of interesting. Literally, in the Greek, it means through the dirt, and it just refers to an attendant or a waiter or, I don't know, a landscaper or something like that, but somebody who is serving in some capacity, and it's a person who is doing. It's not a leadership gifting necessarily. It is a doer; it's a functional servant.

Now, I know there are some churches who refer to deacons in a leadership role, much like an elder or an overseer or something like that. And that's their prerogative, I suppose, to do that, but it is not a biblically accurate description of the title deacon, which simply means one who serves.

I will say this: There are times when even a deacon is given a responsibility that is so vitally important that they need to be entrusted with things of the church, and therefore they need to be trustworthy. And so, there are even guidelines for deacons that are given us in the Word of God, just like elders. So, they do need to be individuals who are mature, tested, and filled with the Spirit.

Finally, verse 2, look with me there. Paul gives his characteristic blessing. He says: *“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”* And one of the significant things about this—we talk about this every time we start really a new epistle because this is really the way Paul starts his letters—is that grace and peace is what he says to them, and he always says it in that order. It's always first grace and then peace. And the reason he puts them in that order is because until you understand and walk in the grace of God, you don't have the peace of God. It begins when we are coming to Him and coming to faith in Him, and then it continues throughout our life as believers.

When you as an individual come to God, and you want to be accepted by Him, you want to be saved and forgiven of your sins, well, there's really two ways to approach that. There's the biblical way, which is to trust in the finished work of Jesus on the cross, or there's the unbiblical way, which is to try to be a good person. I'm just going to try to be a good person as best I can; I'm going to live a good life; I'm going to do this; I got to do or not do. And if I can impress God with all the good things that I do, then He'll accept me, and He'll love me.

There's only one problem with that—well, I mean, there's tons of problems with that, but one of the major problems with that is that you never know for sure if you've measured up. You never know. Have I—okay, I've tried to be good, but have I been good enough? See, there's no peace. There's no peace along that line. You're never going to be at peace because you're never going to know for sure.

Now, when you understand the grace of God, which is favor and acceptance that God gives you apart from what you merit, simply because He's good, and He wants to bestow it upon you, then you begin to understand God's love and acceptance in my life is not predicated upon what I do. Rather, it is predicated upon who He is. Now I have peace. Ah, I have peace with God. There's peace in my heart because I know that I can get off that performance track of trying to impress God with the kind of life that I'm living.

Now, please understand I'm not suggesting that God doesn't care how we live. When you and I are called holy ones, He does want that to translate into the lives we live. He wants us to live holy lives. But that's not what's going to impress God and that is not what is going to cause Him to accept you. That is already done. That is finished through the work of the cross, which you have accepted and embraced through Jesus Christ, okay? So, do you understand that grace brings us to a place of peace? When we understand and walk in God's grace, we understand and begin to embrace peace.

And it happens throughout our entire Christian life. A person can come to know that it is only through the cross that they are saved, and yet down the line, they can slowly begin to take on this attitude of I have to be a good Christian, and if I don't, this might happen. Or, in fact, you know what happened last week to me—they're thinking—maybe that was because I didn't live quite the way I should. And those ideas and thoughts seep into our minds over time, and they begin to take hold of our hearts, and pretty soon, we're walking on this treadmill of performance-based Christian living, and it just completely obliterates our peace. Our peace with God is lost.

So, I want to encourage you: If your peace with God is something that you've noticed is missing lately, perhaps there needs to be an adjustment in your heart and mind related to understanding God's grace and knowing by faith that God has accepted you and embraced you and loves you as the apple of His eye, according to His grace, which is unmerited, unearned. It is given freely, right? And it's such an important thing for us to lay hold of. Striving to be good enough will never get you accepted to God. It's only by God's grace.