

“Howdy, Partner!” (Philippians 1:1–11)

Did you know that I am an amazing basketball player? Well, I am. I really am! I have blazing speed up and down the court, and I have a paralyzing first step to the basket. I can dribble between my legs and around my back. I even have a killer-crossover. I should be called “the ankle breaker.” I have unlimited range on my jump shot. I can hit three-pointers that are so deep they should count as four points. All in all, my game has no weaknesses. I am an “offensive assassin.” Now after hearing all of this “trash talk,” you should ask: “What team do you play for?” If you asked me this question, I would reply: “I’m not really into organized basketball. I don’t play on any team. I just play alone in my front yard.”

Isn’t that a pathetic response? How can I possibly claim to be a superstar basketball player on par with Kobe Bryant or LeBron James and not play on a team? That is ridiculous! In order to be a great “hoopster,” I must play ball on a team and showcase my skills! Similarly, Christianity cannot be lived out by reading the Bible, listening to praise songs, and praying by yourself. Christianity is not a solo sport like fishing or golf; it is a team sport like basketball, and the local church is the team. To be on the team requires active participation and partnership in the gospel of Jesus Christ. Thus, the individual who pleases God’s heart partners with a local church. More to the point, the church that pleases God’s heart partners in the gospel. *If there is no partnership, there is no church.* Instead, there is merely a social club that happens to meet on Sundays. In Philippians 1:1–11,¹ Paul pens a joy-filled greeting to his favorite church. In these eleven verses, Paul shares the key themes of this letter and the reasons why he is so pumped about the church at Philippi.

Philippians opens with these words: **“Paul² and Timothy³, bond-servants [slaves] of Christ Jesus”** (1:1a).⁴ Although Paul alone wrote this letter, he includes Timothy in the writing.⁵ Since Paul is going to send Timothy to them (2:19), he likely wants to elevate Timothy’s authority. Including Timothy in the intro as his right hand man would garner further credibility and respect for Timothy. Paul calls himself and Timothy “bond-servants.”⁶ Since Paul yearns for the Philippians to continue to model humility, he holds himself and Timothy up as examples. He doesn’t write, “Kiss our rings, hang pictures of us in your homes, and name your sons after us.” Paul isn’t a prima donna who has to be worshipped or a fragile hero who has to be treated with kid gloves.⁷ If anything, he seeks to run from the spotlight of being a successful evangelist, church planter, pastor, and Scripture writer. Instead, he is partial to the description “bond-servant.” Interestingly, the only other use of the term “bond-servant” in this letter is used of Jesus Christ who “emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant” (2:7). Paul is saying: “Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ” (1 Cor 11:1). In a book of 104 verses, Jesus’ name or title occurs a whopping 51 times.⁸ It is obvious who is central in Paul’s heart, mind, and theology. Like Paul, we must see Jesus as supreme⁹ and ourselves as slaves.¹⁰

Paul continues his greeting in 1:1b: **“to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons.”**¹¹ Paul includes the entire church in this greeting. He calls *all* the Philippians “saints” or “holy ones.”¹² A “saint” is God’s name for a believer who is “in Christ Jesus.” This term is not based on *what* you do; it is dependent upon *whose* you are. You are a “saint” or a “holy one” because of your identification with Jesus Christ. It is also worth noting that Paul includes the phrase “who are in Philippi.” Here he reminds these saints that they live in two spheres at the same time: “in Christ” and “in Philippi.” It is important to note the order Paul gives here: first in Christ, second in the world. Too many times as Christians we reverse the order. Our position in Christ should drastically affect how we live in our city. If we focus only on being “in Christ” then it will be easy to fall into a pious, monastic, self-absorbed approach to spirituality. If we only concentrate on being “in Philippi” (or in Olympia) then we may easily become absorbed into our culture and be salt that loses its savor. We will become a thermometer rather than a thermostat—one who merely reflects the conditions around us rather than altering them.¹³ Instead, we must cooperate and remember *if there is no partnership, there is no church.*

Paul concludes 1:1 by acknowledging “the overseers [elders] and deacons.” Since Paul doesn’t include a greeting to elders and deacons in any of his other letters this must be significant. In light of the content of this letter, he is likely encouraging the elders and deacons to exude humility and unity in the midst of their ministry challenges. This verse clearly shows that there was a distinction between elders and deacons in the early church.¹⁴ Nevertheless, the biblical qualifications for both offices are the same, while their functions differ. Elders must be able to teach the Scriptures, and they are responsible for the overall spiritual leadership of the church. Deacons, on the other hand, are responsible for the physical and material needs of the church. This verse also reveals a plurality of elders and deacons in the church.¹⁵ The New Testament gives no support for one man running a church; it is always to be a plurality of qualified leadership.¹⁶ This insures a necessary system of checks and balances and also keeps one person from receiving the glory, which belongs to Christ alone. While the team of elders is responsible to lead the church, they are to do so as servant leaders. *If there is no partnership, there is no church.*

Paul’s greeting continues in 1:2 with familiar words: **“Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.”**¹⁷ “Grace” and “peace” must come from both God and Christ. “Grace” is God giving to us what we don’t deserve and can’t repay. Grace results in “peace,” which is a right relationship with God and a tranquility of soul. God’s goodness ought to compel you and me to participate in the local church. While we are thoroughly secure in our relationship with God we must remember that God is “our Father” and Christ is “the Lord.” We have been bought with a price and our bodies are no longer our own. We now are the property of Jesus Christ and are subject to His desires for our life (see 1 Cor 6:19–20). Therefore, we are accepted, but we are accountable as well.

Paul’s formal greeting is now complete (1:1–2), but his introductory thanksgiving stretches from 1:3–11. So, about now Paul is just warming up. Notice the superlative language he uses in 1:3–5: **“I thank¹⁸ my God [in all¹⁹ my remembrance of you, always offering prayer with joy²⁰ in my every prayer for you all], in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now.”** Paul is thrilled with the Philippians—the man gushes over them!²¹ Why is he so excited about them? Look again at these three verses. Verse 3 begins, “I thank my God...” Now stop there! Verses 3b–4 is a parenthetical statement. Paul picks up his expression of gratitude in 1:5 where he thanks God for the Philippians’ “participation in the gospel.” Notice the key phrase “participation in the gospel.” This phrase is only used in Philippians. Significantly, the word “gospel” (*euaggelion*) appears more times per line in Philippians than any other book in the New Testament.²² Paul commends this church because of their participation with him in the gospel. *If there is no partnership, there is no church.* Before we consider what this “partnership” entails, let’s return to the parenthetical statement in 1:3–4.

Paul frequently remembers the church and always offers up prayers with joy.²³ The prayer life that Paul enjoys puts most of us to shame. You may wish you could pray like he does. Surprisingly, it may not be as unattainable as you might think. Paul cultivates the discipline of “remembering” (1:3). He consciously and continually trains his mind to reflect on God’s people. This is a discipline, just like working out or eating healthy. But it works wonders in prayer. Several examples should suffice. When you see a little boy on a bike, instead of just thinking, “What a cute kid,” let this boy remind you to pray for the children in our church (Awana, children’s SS, Kid’s Choir, VBS) and our children’s workers. When you see a young couple in the mall or in a restaurant, don’t just think: “I wish my marriage was like theirs. I wish I was married.” Or the infamous, “I wish I wasn’t married.” Instead, pray for our Family Matters ministry. Pray for the leadership who oversees these ministries. Pray for the couples in our church to build divorce-proof marriages. When you see someone with gray hair, instead of thinking, “I hope I don’t turn gray or get old.” Instead pray for the seniors in our body who have laid the biblical foundation for this church. Pray for widows and widowers, who are lonely and in need, to experience God’s provisions. When you hear a different dialect, instead of thinking to yourself, “Hmm, that’s odd sounding,” instead pray for the persecuted church. Pray that God would strengthen these brothers and sisters as they courageously live for Christ and His gospel.²⁴ When we discipline ourselves to remember we can be effective in our prayers.

I am convinced that how we pray for one another will determine how we treat one another. If we don't pray, or at best only pray when the person we are praying for is having problems, what will be the outcome of how we view that person when we see them? We will think they always have problems, and they become a burden and not a blessing to us. However, if we are frequently praying prayers of thanksgiving and faith, we will have a positive view of other believers.²⁵ As Christian leaders, it is rather easy to become cynical and critical because we deal with so many problems. People come to us when their marriage is in crisis, their child has run away, or they have cancer. They secretly hope that we can solve their problems. Instead of being pessimistic and irritated, I am seeking to thank the Lord for the person's character, spiritual gift, Christian growth, etc. To the degree that I can do this, I know I will view others the way the apostle Paul does.

Now back to the reason Paul is thankful for the Philippians. Paul is thankful for their "participation in the gospel." The word for "participation" is a Greek term you are most likely familiar with—*koinonia*—a word that can be translated "fellowship."²⁶ The problem with this rendering is when most Americans hear this word they think of coffee, cookies, and conversation. Now, it's true that drinking coffee and eating cookies has its place, but this is not true *koinonia*. The word *koinonia* originally had commercial overtones. If two men bought a boat and started a fishing business, they were said to be in *koinonia*—a formal business partnership. They shared a common vision and invested together to see the vision become a reality. True Christian fellowship means sharing the same vision of getting the gospel to the world—and then investing personally to make it happen. Thus, there are financial overtones in the word *koinonia*—as well as a call to personal sacrifice.²⁷ When Paul thanks God for the "participation" of the Philippians, he is thanking God that from the very first day of their conversion, they rolled up their sleeves and got involved in the advance of the gospel. Embedded in this word *koinonia* (1:5) are three characteristics of praiseworthy churches:

1. Praiseworthy churches are hospitable. From the very first day he met them, one of them immediately made their home available as a regular meeting place. That's probably the first thing Paul has in mind when he refers to the Philippians' tangible partnership. Acts 16:11–13 describes how Paul first connected with these Philippians and what he's remembering about them. While Paul was on one of his missionary journeys, he came to the city of Philippi. There were no Christians in the city. In fact, there weren't even enough Jews in the city to have a Jewish synagogue. The best Paul could find was a small Jewish prayer meeting, composed mostly of women, which met under some trees by the river. He joined them, began to speak about Christ, and the Lord "opened the heart" of one of the ladies there (16:14). This woman, Lydia, owned her own import business and had a large house. Lydia believed the gospel, and immediately she made her house available. She begged Paul, "If you consider me to be a believer in the Lord, come and stay in my house" (Act 16:15 NET). She wouldn't take "no" for an answer. The rest of Acts 16 describes how Paul stayed in the city for some weeks or months, including his time spent in prison due to some trumped-up charges. By the time he was let out of prison and decided to go on to the next city, Lydia's house had become a regular meeting place for the believers.

Perhaps you're saying, "Yea, if I had a home as large as Lydia, I would be hospitable as well. But I live in an apartment or I have a small house with no yard." If I may be so blunt, I'm rather confident that you would not be hospitable in a larger home. He who is faithful in little will be faithful in much. In my pastoral experience, I have seen a number of families demonstrate astounding hospitality with relatively meager means. I have also seen these same families experience God's blessing and move into a larger home where they are able to continue their partnership in the gospel. It seems that God feels that He can entrust faithful stewards with greater resources. Now, please understand, I'm not saying, "Become hospitable and God will give you a six bedroom mansion!" That's "Christian" television...that's not the Bible. But I will say this: "Be hospitable in obedience to God²⁸, and then don't be surprised if He blesses you as a result."

You and I can be hospitable if we don't try to accomplish too much too soon. It's easy to want to pull off what the hospitality superheroes are able to do. Yet, we must realize that such people most likely are extroverts who have the spiritual gift of hospitality. They are gifted in ways that we may not be. Thus, if we try to compare or compete with someone else, we will quickly admit defeat and throw in the white towel. But if we disregard the dreamy notion of a clean house and a six course meal and simply invite one person or one family over for dessert or popcorn, we can succeed. We shouldn't stop there, though. Instead, we should seek to "participate in the gospel" by spiritually encouraging these individuals. That is *koinonia*. *If there is no partnership, there is no church.*

[Paul not only remembers the Philippians' hospitality, he also remembers a second characteristic...]

2. Praiseworthy churches are courageous. The Philippians had to pay a price in their culture when they became Christians, and they paid it willingly. Philippi was a unique city that had a special government status. It was connected to the Roman emperor in ways other cities weren't. As a result, it was important in Philippi to be politically correct, and that meant worshipping the emperor as if he were a god. Paul remembers that his Christian friends in Philippi were willing to pay the price of refusing emperor worship. He'll say a little later in this letter: "You're going through some of the same stuff I had to go through; you're suffering some of the same things I did because of your Christian faith" (paraphrase). He will also compliment a couple of women in the congregation who contended with him for the gospel (4:3). Their tangible, sustained partnership is evidenced by their willingness to pay a price for their Christian faith.

It wasn't easy to be a Christian in Philippi 2,000 years ago. It isn't easy to be a Christian today in America...and it's not going to get any easier. The majority of our population doesn't believe that the Bible is the Word of God or Jesus Christ is the only way to God. We must make a decision of our will to stand strong at work, school, and in our neighborhood. As we do so, God will give us greater courage and confidence to boldly proclaim Him. This week, will you contend for the gospel? Will you choose Christ over comfort? If so, God will use you as a partner in His work in and through His church.

[The Philippians were hospitable and courageous, but the final and most important characteristic is...]

3. Praiseworthy churches are generous.²⁹ The believers in Philippi gave cheerfully and sacrificially. More than once these Philippians had sent money to Paul to support him in his travels and preaching. Thus, Philippians serves partly as a thank you note for the church's financial generosity. From the first day until the time Paul wrote this letter about ten years later, the church at Philippi was the only group that consistently gave to Paul and the work of the Lord. Nevertheless, Paul is not seeking to have his purse padded, rather he desires their reward. Paul says it best in 4:17: "Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account." Paul desired the Philippians to have a good showing at the judgment seat of Christ.

Likewise, we must recognize the importance of generous financial giving to the Lord's work. A large part of *koinonia* is sharing one's earthly resources with others for the sake of Christ.³⁰ This will only happen when you *first* give to the Lord and then trust Him to provide for you. Remember, it is impossible to out give God because He is no man's debtor. He will meet all of your needs; you can take that to the bank! So decide in your heart what you will give and stick to your commitment. Additionally, teach your children how to be generous. My wife and I grew up in homes where we were required to give to the Lord. We have followed our parents' training and now require the same of our own children. They do not resent this because they have seen God's provision and blessing time and time again. It is always exciting when we are able to say, "See how God provides! Isn't He good?" Again, we don't give to get; we give because we love God and want to partner with Him in the advancement of His gospel. After all, *if there is no partnership, there is no church.*

This leads us into the well-known promise of 1:6: **“For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you³¹ will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.”³²** Although this verse has typically been understood as a salvation/sanctification verse,³³ it is dealing with the financial faithfulness of the Philippians.³⁴ The opening words “For I am” are italicized in the NASB, meaning that they are not in the Greek text. Other versions (e.g., NIV, NKJV, KJV) rightly continue the sentence of 1:5³⁵ and translate the participle “being confident of this very thing [God’s faithfulness], that He [God] who began a good work [generous financial giving] in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus [the rapture and judgment seat of Christ].”³⁶ This interpretation is confirmed by the similar language in Phil 4 and 2 Cor 8–9.³⁷ Thus, Phil 1:6 is a tremendous promise, which should stimulate us to greater giving. Our support of a missionary may well begin a spiritual avalanche as one impacted life touches and sets off another, and that one another, and another. Who can possibly calculate the minions of lives the Philippians have impacted over the centuries as God has kept their deposit “earning interest” through this letter! It is God’s work from beginning to end; He is simply looking for channels to begin the initial work through. The essential thing to see from this passage is Paul’s perspective on laboring together for the same cause (i.e., the gospel). The Philippians were senders; Paul and his companions were goers. One was the arrow, the other was the bow. Neither was more important than the other for they were interdependent.³⁸

Verses 7–8 supply the subjective rationale for Paul’s confidence. He writes, **“For it is only right for me to feel³⁹ this way about you all, because I have you in my heart** [or “you have me in your heart,” NRSV], **since both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers[co-partners]⁴⁰ of grace with me. For God is my witness, how I long for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.”** Paul never mailed a pink Valentine.⁴¹ He had no hearts on his boxers. But he did have strong feelings for the Philippians. The word for “long” (*epipotheo*) is a very strong word for desire, used of a baby longing for its mother’s milk (1 Pet 2:2) and of a thirsty deer for water (Ps 42:1). Not only do we see the intensity of Paul’s love but also the extent of it—“for you all.” The word for “affection” is *splagchnon* (SPLONK-non). Please humor me; I absolutely love this word. It refers to the entrails, bowels, or guts.⁴² The Greeks viewed the entrails as the seat of strong emotions. *Splagchnon* describes a longing of affection and compassion⁴³ so intense it makes your belly ache! Paul so desperately yearns for the Philippians to know his love that he puts himself under an oath—“For God is my witness.” This love was not generated from Paul, but from Christ Himself. My heart is that I have this type of love for the body of Christ and vice versa.

Paul concludes this lengthy introduction with a powerful prayer in 1:9–11. He begins in 1:9 by praying: **“And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment.”** The word “love” (*agape*) does not have an object attached to it. However, the overall context of the letter reveals that Paul prays especially for the Philippians’ love for one another.⁴⁴ He prays that their love may “abound still more and more” (1:9a). When Paul says “abound” (*perisseuo*)⁴⁵ he doesn’t mean “bound like a deer or a gazelle”; he means “to flow over,” like a carbonated drink poured into a small glass.⁴⁶ The Philippians have already demonstrated an abundant love, but now Paul prays that their love will “overflow” (NLT) even more. God desires that love be the badge of our discipleship⁴⁷ and that it only increases as time goes on.⁴⁸ Of course, loving other believers can be an incredibly difficult task! This is why we need a prayer like Paul’s so much. When we feel incapable of love, we need to call on the Lord and ask Him to increase our love. It can be as simple as saying, “I’m low on love, Lord, and I ask you to fill me to overflowing.” That’s a prayer God will be glad to answer.

Paul prays that the Philippians’ love may overflow in “real knowledge and all discernment” (1:9b). “Knowledge” (*epignosis*)⁴⁹ speaks of clear perception in a broad, general sense; while “discernment” (*aisthesis*)⁵⁰ emphasizes the particular, practical applications of this knowledge.⁵¹ God desires that we speak “the truth in love” (Eph 4:15). Our lives must be characterized by compassion and conviction. If we lack compassion we will have a message but no audience. If we lack conviction we will have an audience but no message.⁵² Like Jesus, we must be agents of “grace and truth” (John 1:14).

The purpose of the Philippians' love is found in 1:10: **“so that you may approve the things that are excellent, in order to be sincere and blameless until the day of Christ.”** The word for “approve” (*dokimazo*) was used of assaying metals, testing for genuine money, or sifting wheat from chaff. Fundamentally it means “to approve after testing.” Thus we are being enjoined to sift through the objects or choices at hand and pour out ourselves for “the things that are excellent.” The word translated “excellent” (*diaphero*) can be translated “the things that really matter.”⁵³ Often the choice is not between good and bad, but between good and best. That which is best is that which is of enduring value, “the things that really matter.” The goal of this abounding and perceptive love is “that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ.” The word for “sincere” (*eilikrinees*) does not mean “honestly trying hard”; it means “pure, genuine.”⁵⁴ The emphasis is upon a life of open integrity; one which is devoid of hypocrisy and insincerity.⁵⁵ The word translated “blameless” (*aproskopos*) means “without causing others to stumble.”⁵⁶ The discerning overflow of love (1:9) should lead to a life which is sincere before God and sensitive towards men (1:10). This will result in Christian maturity and honor at the judgment seat of Christ.

Paul's prayer comes to a crescendo in 1:11 where he writes: **“having been filled with the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.”**⁵⁷ The word “filled” (*pleroo*) means “filled to all fullness.” We might say “filled to the rim.” In this context Paul is referring to “fruit” being filled to the rim. When I was a child and visited my Grandma in San Jose, CA, I would often help her pick oranges. I was always impressed with her orange trees because they were filled with bright, round oranges. So much so that many of the branches on the tree seemed like they were on the verge of snapping under the weight of the fruit. Paul is seeking spiritual fruit of this caliber! This “fullness of fruit” only comes “through Jesus Christ.” It is only as we abide in Christ (John 15:4–5) and allow Christ to live His resurrected life through us (Gal 2:20) that we can be fruitful and glorify God.⁵⁸

Paul's words can be encouraging, motivating, or indicting. Today, how is God speaking to you? I am going to share four types of persons in the church. Which one are you?

- *Parasite.* Some people come to church to get things from other people. They come to draw whatever they can from others: attention, support, sympathy, connections, money, etc. Their emphasis is upon getting, not giving. If you are a parasite, you need to become a member of a local church and begin meeting the needs of others.
- *Patron.* Other people come to church because they like a good show (preaching, worship, kids programs). If their needs are met, they will drop some money in the offering. If you are a patron, you need to give generously or sacrificially whether your needs are met or not. You also need to start serving and not just receiving.
- *Pal.* Still others are social animals who just enjoy friendships. They attend all the church functions. They hang out with people outside the church, but it is always at a surface level. There is no true *koinonia*. If you're a pal, take your relationships to a deeper spiritual level and partner with the body in advancing the gospel.
- *Partner.*⁵⁹ Finally, partners are those who transform their culture by advancing the gospel.

Which one of these people are you? I pray that you are a partner. Every church needs more partners to bring about “participation in the gospel.” Remember, *if there is no partnership, there is no church.*

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Scripture References

Philippians 1:1–11

1 Timothy 3:1–13

Romans 1:8–15

Acts 2:42–47; 16:12–40

2 Corinthians 11:23–28

1 Thessalonians 3:9–13

Colossians 1:9–14

Study Questions

1. What would a present-day “bond-servant” look like (1:1)? Do others consider me a servant? Why or why not? How am I presently serving those who are closest to me? In what specific ways do I still struggle with selfishness? How can I become more selfless and sacrificial in my home, work, and church relationships? What role does my identity (“saint”) play in this growth process? How can God’s favor (“grace” and “peace”) empower me (1:2)?
2. When I am going through difficult times am I able to take my eyes off of myself and be thankful for others (1:3–8)? Who is someone in my life that when I think of him or her I break out in a prayer of thanksgiving? Have I ever told this person? If not, will I do so today? Will I pray daily for a greater heart of gratitude for those whom God has placed in my life?
3. Am I a financially generous person (1:5, 7–8)? Would others say I am a generous person? What would God say about my financial generosity or lack thereof? Am I giving faithfully to my local church? How do I determine what to give and when to give it? In addition my regular church giving, which acts of Christian giving have given me the most fulfillment? Has God laid a particular person on my heart to help financially or in other practical ways? How will I specifically help this troubled person?
4. What does God’s preservation of my salvation mean to me (1:6)? How does God’s grace in my life motivate me to live an obedient and righteous life? By God’s grace, how will I look and act when God’s work in me is finished and Christ returns? What is the one area of my life that I’d like God to focus His attention on? How will I use Philippians 1:6 to encourage other believers in Christ?
5. Who am I currently praying for (1:9–11)? What specific prayers do I pray for these individuals? Do my prayers resemble the prayers of the apostle Paul as recorded in the Bible? Read Romans 15:14–33; Ephesians 1:15–23; 3:14–21; Colossians 1:9–14; 1 Thessalonians 3:9–13; and 2 Thessalonians 1:3–12. How will these prayers help me cultivate a deeper and more accurate prayer life?

Notes

¹ Swift writes, “These verses [Phil 1:1–11] are a true epistolary prologue because they not only introduce the central theme, but they also foreshadow all the other significant motifs that are developed in the letter.” Robert C. Swift, “The Theme and Structure of Philippians,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 141 (July 1984): 236.

² The Greek name “Paul” means “little.” In many respects this name was prophetic. Church tradition records that Paul was short, fat, bald, bowlegged, bushy eye-browed, and had protruding eyes. In spite of being “little” from a worldly perspective, Paul was “big” from a heavenly perspective. What a great reminder that our physical makeup does not affect our spiritual impact. God wants to use people like you and me even though we may never measure up to this world’s standards.

³ “Timothy” means “honored by God.”

⁴ Phil 1:1–2 compose an entire paragraph in the Greek text. They are so meaty that they could be preached as a stand-alone sermon. However, they belong with 1:3–11 so we will just carefully consider each phrase.

⁵ Silva notes, “Although commentators are correct in pointing out that this feature does not indicate coauthorship, it would be a mistake to ignore or downplay its significance. Not only was Timothy actively involved in the evangelization of Macedonia and Achaia (Acts 16–18), but he also appears to have provided special support for Paul during the latter’s imprisonment (Phil. 2:20–22), a factor that accounts for Timothy’s inclusion in the salutations of Colossians and Philemon. There is also good reason to believe (see comments on 2:19–30) that the Philippians had a strong attachment to Timothy. This faithful minister, therefore, constituted a link that bonded the apostle with his Macedonian congregation; it would have been surprising had his name been omitted.” Moisés Silva, *Philippians*, 2nd ed. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Edited by Robert W. Yarbrough and Robert H. Stein (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 1992, 2005), 38.

⁶ Typically Paul calls himself an “apostle” (1 Cor 1:1; 2 Cor 1:1; Gal 1:1; Eph 1:1; Col 1:1; 1 Tim 1:1; 2 Tim 1:1),” not a “bond-servant.” The term “apostle” connotes authority while the word “bond-servant” suggests humility. Paul calls himself a “bond-servant” (*doulos*) in Rom 1:1 and Titus 1:1, yet he also includes the description “apostle” as well. The translators of the Greek OT used *doulos* to describe Moses, Joshua, David, and various prophets as servants of God (Josh 14:7; 24:29; Ps 105:26; Jer 25:4; Amos 3:7). Yet, Paul’s connotation is based upon the Greco-Roman understanding of *doulos*. Frank Thielman, *Philippians*. NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1995), 34.

⁷ Charles R. Swindoll, *Laugh Again* (Dallas: Word, 1992), 36.

⁸ Have you ever wondered why Paul sometimes says “Jesus Christ” and other times says “Christ Jesus?” They mean the same; it’s a matter of emphasis. “Christ,” of course, is not Jesus’ *name* but his *title*: “Messiah, Anointed One.” When Paul says “Messiah Jesus” he is especially emphasizing that title.

⁹ An excellent resource on this topic is David Bryant, *Christ is All: A Joyful Manifesto on the Supremacy of God’s Son*, 2nd ed (New Providence, NJ: New Providence Publishers, 2005): www.proclaimhope.org/christisallbook.

¹⁰ See Luke 17:7–10, esp. 17:10: “So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, ‘We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done.’”

¹¹ Among Paul’s thirteen letters, only three others (Romans, 1 Corinthians, and 2 Corinthians) use the term “all” in the greeting, and only Philippians refers to the leaders of the church by their official titles in the opening section of the letter. These abnormalities must be significant.

¹² *Hagioi* is always plural except in Phil 4:21, but even there it is used in a corporate context. To be saved is to be part of a family. This term reflects an OT usage for corporate Israel as a holy people (cf. Exod 13:5; 19:5–6; Deut 7:6; 1 Pet 2:9; and Rev 1:6).

¹³ Dwight Edwards, “Earthly Conduct of Heavenly Citizens”: A verse-by-verse study through Philippians: www.bible.org.

¹⁴ For more on elders see 1 Tim 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–9; for more on deacons see Acts 6:1–6; 1 Tim 3:8–13.

¹⁵ As far as we know there was only one church in Philippi.

¹⁶ See Acts 20:17; 1 Tim 5:17; Titus 1:5; 1 Pet 5:1–4, etc.

¹⁷ Thielman, *Philippians*, 36 writes, “As in all but two of his other letters, Paul expands the typical greeting by transforming the term ‘Greetings!’ (*charein*) into the term ‘grace’ (*charis*) and by adding the Jewish salutation, ‘peace’ (v. 2). Paul’s change of *charein* into *charis* shows that he does not intend for either of his two words of greeting to function as a simple salutation but to carry a deeper significance.”

¹⁸ The verb *eucharisteo* (“to be thankful”) and its cognates occur forty-six times in Paul’s letters. Peter T. O’Brien, *Commentary on Philippians*. New International Greek Testament Commentary series (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991), 56.

¹⁹ The Greek term *pas* (“all,” “always,” and “every”) is characteristic of Philippians (cf. 1:3, 4, 7, 8, 25; 2:17; 4:4, 5, 6, 8, 13, 21).

²⁰ “Joy” (*chara*) is emphatic by position in the Greek sentence.

²¹ Paul begins all of his letters with thanksgiving, except for Galatians. He just could not bring himself to thank God for them because of their doctrinal error.

²² R. Kent Hughes, *Philippians: The Fellowship of the Gospel*. Preaching the Word (Wheaton: Crossway, 2007), 34. The word appears a total of nine times (see Phil 1:5, 7, 12, 16, 27 [twice]; 2:22; 4:3, 15).

²³ In his letters, Paul primarily thanks the Lord for people, not things. The best example of this is Rom 16 where Paul expresses gratitude for 33 people.

²⁴ See also Bruce B. Barton, Livingstone Corporation Staff, Philip Wesley Comfort, *Philippians, Colossians, Philemon*. Life Application Bible Commentary (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale, 1995), 24.

²⁵ Boice stated, “I think that ninety percent of all the divisions between true believers in this world would disappear entirely if Christians would learn to pray specifically and constantly for one another.” James Boice, *Philippians: An Expositional Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), 49.

²⁶ Perhaps you’ve heard of the book and movie, *The Fellowship of the Ring*. Well, Paul is writing the book on the Fellowship of the Gospel. Hughes, *Philippians*, 19.

²⁷ O’Brien, *Commentary on Philippians*, 61–62, rightly states, “Their partnership (*koinonia*) involved an active cooperation, in the widest sense with their recent financial support being a signal instance of this *koinonia*... The meaning is not to be restricted exclusively to the monetary support given by the Philippians to the apostle.”

²⁸ E.g., Rom 12:13; Heb 13:2; 1 Pet 4:9.

²⁹ This church apparently sent Paul financial help from time to time (cf. 1:5, 7; 4:15). The only other Pauline church from whom we know he accepted help was Thessalonica (cf. 2 Cor 11:9).

³⁰ See Rom 15:16; 2 Cor 8:4; 9:13; and Heb 13:16 where *koinonia* refers to sharing or giving of money or goods.

³¹ Since “you” (*humin*) is a plural pronoun, the “good work” that God is doing is taking place “among” the believers rather than “in” any isolated believer.

³² The Knox translation best captures the nuance of Phil 1:6, where the gift is more primary: “Nor am I less confident, that he who has inspired this generosity in you will bring it to perfection, ready for the day when Jesus Christ comes.”

³³ Thielman, *Philippians*, 38, 40 represents many who see the Philippians’ financial generosity in 1:5 and 7, but not in 1:6.

³⁴ My friend, John Hart, has written extensively on Phil 1:6. I strongly recommend his two part article entitled: “Does Philippians 1:6 Guarantee Progressive Sanctification?” Both articles are available at www.bible.org. Dr. Hart’s research, exegesis, and conclusions are the best I’ve seen on Phil 1:6.

³⁵ Swift writes, “The *ergon agathon* (“good work”) in verse 6 must be interpreted by the *koinōnia* of the previous verse. This exegetical point is frequently noted by commentators, though few of them consistently restrict it enough to this sense. This writer holds that verse 6 refers *restrictively* to the perfecting of the Philippians as workers for the gospel, and to the perfecting of their works in the cause of the gospel. Many exegetes, failing to note this, have thus failed to see that verses 3–6 contain a thematic summary of the entire epistle... Verses 3–6 then, are a cameo of the entire epistle. They introduce the main theme, the Philippians’ partnership in the gospel.” See Swift, “The Theme and Structure of Philippians,” 237–38.

³⁶ “The day of Christ Jesus” refers to the rapture and judgment seat of Christ (see 1 Cor 1:8; 5:5; 2 Cor 1:14; Phil 1:6, 10; 2:16). This is not to be confused with “the day of the Lord,” which is used sixteen times in the OT, the first time being Isa 2:12, which refers to God judging the nations, dealing with idolatry and human pride, and shaking the earth. The “day of the Lord” is mentioned four times in the NT (1 Thess 5:2; 2 Thess 2:2; 2 Pet 3:10; Rev 1:10). This day embraces the coming period of judgment and the millennial age and concludes with the cataclysmic dissolution of the universe. The “day of God” (1 Cor 15:24–28; 2 Pet 3:12) is the eternal state beyond all events of time when God is “all in all.” See also Homer A. Kent, Jr. “Philippians.” In *Ephesians-Philemon*. Vol. 11 of *The Expositor’s Bible Commentary*. 12 vols. Edited by Frank E. Gaebelin and J. D. Douglas (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), Electronic ed. and John Phillips, *Exploring Ephesians and Philippians*. John Phillips Commentary Series (Grand Rapids: Kregel Academic & Professional, 2002), 34.

³⁷ See Hart, “Does Philippians 1:6 Guarantee Progressive Sanctification?”: www.bible.org.

³⁸ Edwards, “Earthly Conduct of Heavenly Citizens,” www.bible.org.

³⁹ Paul uses the verb *phroneo* (“to feel, think”) twenty-three times in Philippians.

⁴⁰ This book has an unusual number of compounds with *syn* which means “joint participation with”:

- 1:7; 4:14 *syn* + fellowship (*koinonia*, same root, 1:5; 2:1; 3:10; 4:14, 16)
- 1:27 *syn* + strive (*athleo* in 4:3 a proper name)
- 2:2 *syn* + soul (*psuche*, same sense in 1:27)
- 2:17–18 *syn* + rejoice (*chairo*)
- 2:25; 4:3 *syn* + worker (*ergon*, cf. Rom 16:3, 9, 21; 2 Cor 1:24)
- 2:25 *syn* + soldier (*stratiote*, cf. Phlm 2)
- 3:10 *syn* + form (*morphe*)
- 3:17 *syn* + initiator (*animeomai*, same root in 1 Cor 4:16)

⁴¹ Hughes, *Philippians*, 33.

⁴² BDAG s.v. *splangchon* 1: “the inward parts of a body, including esp. the viscera, *inward parts, entrails*.” See the amusing translation of the KJV: “For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.”

⁴³ *Splagchnon* literally means “compassion” and is often used of Christ (Matt 9:36; Mark 1:41)

⁴⁴ See Paul’s other uses of “love” (*agape*) in Phil 1:16; 2:1, 2. Paul speaks only sparingly of love for God (Rom 8:28; 1 Cor 8:3), but he emphasizes love in relationships between Christians (1 Thess 4:9; Col 1:4; 3:19; Phlm 5; Eph 4:2; 5:25; 6:23).

⁴⁵ Paul uses *perisseuo* (“to abound”) in Phil 1:26; 4:12 [twice], and 18. He also uses the term 21 additional times in his other letters (Rom 3:7; 5:15; 15:13; 1 Cor 8:8; 14:12; 15:58; 2 Cor 1:5 [twice]; 3:9; 4:15; 8:2, 7 [twice]; 9:8 [twice], 12; Eph 1:8; Col 2:7; 1 Thess 3:12; 1 Thess 4:1, 10).

⁴⁶ Don Sunukjian, “Choosing What Is Best” (Phil 1:9–11): www.preachingtoday.com.

⁴⁷ Jesus said, “A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another” (John 13:34–35).

⁴⁸ This explains why almost all of Paul’s prayers in the NT begin with a petition for love. Love is supreme among the Christian virtues. It alone will last forever (1 Cor 13:13). No matter how much love we have, our love can always increase.

⁴⁹ Paul uses *epignosis* (“knowledge”) elsewhere in Rom 1:28; 3:20; 10:2; Eph 1:17; 4:13; Col 1:9, 10; 2:2; 3:10; 1 Tim 2:4; 2 Tim 2:25; 3:7; Titus 1:1; and Phlm 6.

⁵⁰ *Aisthesis* does not appear elsewhere in the NT. It does, however, appear 27 times in the Greek OT, 22 of which are in Proverbs. The general meaning refers to the practical action of wisdom (e.g., Prov 1:7; 2:3; 10:14; 11:9; 12:23; 22:12). Cf. BDAG s.v. *aisthesis* 2: “capacity to understand, *discernment*...denoting moral understanding.” It seems *aisthesis* may be closely related to *aistheterion* (“senses”) in Heb 5:14.

⁵¹ See also Silva, *Philippians*, 49.

⁵² Edwards, “Earthly Conduct of Heavenly Citizens,” www.bible.org.

⁵³ See BDAG s.v. *diaphero* 4 and the renderings of the NET, HCSB, and NLT.

⁵⁴ The only other NT use of *eilikrinee*s is found in 2 Pet 3:1: “This is now, beloved, the second letter I am writing to you in which I am stirring up your sincere mind by way of reminder.”

⁵⁵ *Eilikrinee*s comes from two other words that mean “judgment” and “sunlight.” In the first century the shops were often dimly lit which meant that prospective customers would have trouble viewing the wares. When they took the pottery or the fabric into the sunlight, they could see it as it really was. The sunlight revealed the truth. To be pure means to live in such a way that the truth about who we are is clear. It means that people don’t have to wonder about what you are doing in the darkness because you have nothing to hide. You are the same in the darkness as you are in the light.

⁵⁶ *Aproskopos* only occurs two other times in the NT. In 1 Cor 10:32 Paul writes, “Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God.” In Acts 24:16 Luke records Paul’s declaration: “In view of this, I also do my best to maintain always a blameless conscience *both* before God and before men.” *Aproskopos* comes from the Greek word family from which we get the English word “scandal.” It originally referred to the bait in a trap that would catch unsuspecting animals. It came to mean a lifestyle that caused others to fall into sin.

⁵⁷ The language in this prayer is very similar to Paul’s prayer in Colossians. See Silva, *Philippians*, 48.

⁵⁸ See Eph 1:12–14 for more on how our lives bring praise to God.

⁵⁹ These four categories of people come from Bob Kerrey, “Rethinking Your Relationships” (Phil 1:3–11): www.moonvalleybible.org/sermons.php.