

Philippians 1:1-2

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[0:00] Well, 2021 has been a year already full of oddities of various kinds. We've had a lot of folks in our church sick and out.

We've had a lot of musicians out. I'm thankful for the plethora of musicians that we do have that can help and fill in. We found ourselves the first Sunday of the year with me leading us a cappella, which was the strangest of oddities this year.

We've had a lot of our regular folks out, unable to be with us. And then as a wonderful oddity, we've had a lot of guests here with us.

For some time now, we've been preaching expositional sermons from various texts throughout the Old Testament and New Testament, which is an oddity for us.

Because our habit for the past 12 years has been to preach verse-by-verse expositional sermons through a book of the Bible. Well, typically a New Testament book than an Old Testament book and back and forth like that.

[1:03] And so, it's with great joy that I'll ask you to turn with me this morning to Paul's letter to the Philippians as we begin, once again and Lord willing, a 15-week exposition of this wonderful book.

Our plan is, across the next 15 weeks, to walk ourselves through Paul's letter to the Philippians. As a very brief reminder to you, we purchase and have handy these ESV scripture journals.

I just want to make one more little pitch to you. They're extremely helpful for me in my study. I use them to read through the entire letter, in this case, and make notes off on the note page and mark it up.

I'm not marking in my Bible any longer because it gets terribly messy, but I'm doing that. If you would like one of these, they're actually back on the rail of the sound booth.

They're just five bucks. You can owe us. So, if you want to run back there and grab one, no one here will mind if you do that. There's a little stack of them back there for you if you'd like to follow along and keep notes in that way.

[2:04] You can also find them all over the internet. You can purchase them if you'd like to do that as well. Our text for this morning will be Philippians chapter 1, verses 1 and 2.

And I do promise that we're going to spend some time with these two verses, but I would first like to do two things. Number one, I'm going to give you seven reasons that Christians should study the book of Philippians, which should give us some bearing on the themes of this letter.

And secondly, we will read the entirety of Paul's address to the Philippian believers as this would have been his intent in its writing. It is the way that the Philippian believers would have first heard it, and doing so should help us think about its thematic content.

It'll take about 10 to 12 minutes to do that together. So, because we have some ground to cover, let's get right into it. And first, consider seven reasons Christians should study the book of Philippians.

Number one, Philippians is a purposely relational book. It's a purposely relational book.

[3:16] God intends for us to be in relationship with one another. We are meant to be saved to a people. We need each other.

And in a culture where relationship is being fractured, right? We have a sense of knowing more people than we've ever known before, but yet know fewer people deeply as we should.

It's good for us to consider the relational nature of this book. But these are not unaimed relationships. These are not relationships for the sake of relationship, but they are aimed.

These relationships are to be for the magnification of the gospel to the glory of God. I'll show you two examples. Philippians chapter 4 and verse 1. Paul writes, Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.

Just a single verse packed full of Paul's affection for these Christians. His brothers. He loves them and he longs for them. He calls them his joy and his crown.

[4:29] And then finally, his beloved in that single verse. Then in Philippians chapter 1 and verse 27, another example of an exhortation toward relationship.

Paul writes, These things being of one spirit and one mind, striving together, side by side, does not happen without purposeful relationship.

Second reason, Philippians is a gospel-oriented book. This is always a good thing, and this is true of the scripture in totality.

While this letter does not contain an explicit gospel presentation, it does contain much gospel application. Paul makes mention of the gospel repeatedly in chapter 1 and on occasion in chapters 2 and chapter 4.

Philippians chapter 1 and verse 5, verse 7, verse 12, verse 16, and verse 27. He mentions the gospel in each of those verses. And then chapter 2 and verse 22, chapter 5, excuse me, chapter 4, verse 3, and verse 15.

[6:00] We will not be able to wade into the waters of Philippians without making the gospel abundantly clear. Otherwise, the letter would make no sense.

As we strive together to work out all of those applications, we're going to have to, again and again and again, make the gospel abundantly clear. It will be foundational to our understanding of Philippians to know that apart from the saving work of Jesus Christ, we are enemies of God and deserve his just punishment.

But by grace alone, through faith alone, in the person and work of Jesus Christ alone, we can be granted the salvation of our souls.

So Philippians is a gospel-oriented book. Third, Philippians is a doctrinally rich book. We discover in Philippians great theological truths, right?

In its few verses, it is just packed full. Let me give you two quick examples. We see the incarnation of Christ for the purpose of propitiation.

[7:09] Philippians chapter 2, verse 6 and following. Who, though he was in the form of God, did not account equality with God, a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.

And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. It is going to be a joy to unpack these verses together.

We also see the exaltation of Christ to the right hand of God. There in Philippians 2, verse 9 and following. Therefore, God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name.

So that the name of Jesus, every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father. We're going to have such opportunity to discover and explore many other grand theological truths as we study Philippians together.

Fourth, Philippians is a prayer-producing book. If we learn from the example of Paul, our prayer lives will be deepened as we study Philippians.

[8:26] Paul expresses heartfelt prayer for the Philippian believers in chapter 1, verses 3 through 11. Just a sampling of that, beginning in verse 3.

I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you, all making my prayer with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.

And he encourages the Philippians to pray if they are to avoid anxiety and experience peace. Philippians chapter 4, verses 6 and 7. Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything, by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God.

And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. Paul, rightly, is going to be encouraging us to pray as we study the book of Philippians.

Fifth, Philippians is a holiness-growing book. This letter has much to say about how we are to live the Christian life.

[9:36] It speaks to the part that we play in our growth in holiness, and it reminds us of the part that God plays, the prominent part that God plays.

Just as an example, Philippians chapter 2, beginning verse 12, Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence, but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.

For it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure. Sixth, Philippians is an eternity-gazing book.

Christians need to think more on eternity. We think far too much about the present state of things. We need to think much more about the eternal state of things.

We need to have our minds drawn to the world to come to give us hope for today. Again, Philippians chapter 3, here's verse 20 and 21.

[10:39] Paul says, But our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself.

That ought to just birth hope in you thinking about it. And lastly, Philippians is a joy-producing book. We see the theme of joy repeated in this work more than any other, and we live in a moment where many Christians are learning, many for the very first time, what it means to fight for joy.

Joy has just come easy and natural as we've lived a life of ease, but many Christians now are finding their world upset and rocked for all sorts of reasons and are having to learn what it means.

How is it that we have an abiding joy that's rooted in an unchangeable Christ? This will be good and instructive for us. And you see this theme over and over again.

[11:51] Chapter 1 and verse 4, verse 18, verse 25, chapter 2 and verse 2, verses 17 and 18, 28 and 29, chapter 3 and verse 1 and chapter 4 and verse 10.

We see this idea of joy and rejoicing over and over and over. One example to read out loud to you, Philippians chapter 4 and verse 4.

Paul exhorts them and us to rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say rejoice.

Not based on your circumstances, right? Not rejoice in the Lord when it's easy to rejoice, but rejoice in the Lord always. Again, I will say rejoice.

So, I hope that sets up a framework for you, a platform for you to go, man, this is going to be good. I hope you're eager, expectant, looking forward to our time together in this short letter.

[12:56] So, I'm going to read it now. I'm going to read the letter as I guess I would imagine. Of course, it would have been read in Greek, not in English, but as it would have been opened to a church, right?

It would have been received. And if you could just imagine for a moment what that would have been like, right? The Apostle Paul, right? The man who came and preached the gospel in this city and started this church is now, many years later, writing back to this church, this church that's been in partnership with him financially in his mission efforts.

in the world and he writes to them a letter. One of their elders announces to them that they've received this letter and opens it up and reads it.

Before I read it, I want to remind you, beloved, that this is God's word to us, written for his glory and our good. We would all do well to listen to it in order to believe its promises and obey its commands.

So, chapter 1, beginning in verse 1. Paul and Timothy, servants, of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi with the overseers and deacons, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

[14:07] I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine for you, all making my prayer with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.

And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. It is right for me to feel this way about you all because I told you in my heart for you are all partakers with me of grace.

I hold you in my heart because you are all partakers with me of grace both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. For God is my witness how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus.

And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more with knowledge and all discernment so that you may approve what is excellent and so be pure and brainless for the day of Christ. filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God. I want you to know brothers that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ.

[15:15] And most of the brothers having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment are much more bold to speak the word without fear. Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry but others from good will.

the latter do it out of love knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. The former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment. What then? Only that in every way whether in pretense or in truth Christ is proclaimed and in that I rejoice. Yes and I will rejoice for I know that through your prayers and the help of the spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed but that will with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body whether by life or by death.

For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain. If I am to live in the flesh that means fruitful labor for me yet which shall I choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two.

My desire is to depart and be with Christ for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. Convinced of this I know that I will remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus because of my coming to you again.

[16:38] Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ so that whether I come and see you or am absent I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel and not frightened in anything by your opponents.

This is a clear sign to them of their destruction but of your salvation and that from God. For it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake.

Engage in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have. So if there is any encouragement in Christ any comfort from love any participation in the spirit any affection and sympathy complete my joy by being of the same mind having the same love being in full accord and of one mind.

Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interest but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourself which is yours in Christ Jesus who though he was in the form of God did not account equality with God a thing to be grasped but emptied himself by taking the form of a servant being born in the likeness of men and being found in human form he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death even death on a cross.

[17:59] Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name so the name of Jesus every knee should bow in heaven and on earth and under the earth and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Therefore my beloved as you have always obeyed so now not only in my presence but much more in my absence work out your own salvation with fear and trembling for it is God who works in you both to will and to work for his good pleasure.

Do all things without grumbling or disputing that you may be blameless and innocent children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation among whom you shine as lights in the world holding fast to the word of life so that in a day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial

offering of your faith I am glad and rejoice with you all likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon so that I too may be cheered by news of you for I have no one like him who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare for they all seek their own interests not those of Jesus Christ but you know Timothy's proven worth how as a son with a father he has served me in the gospel I hope therefore to send him just as soon as I see how it will go with me and I trust in the Lord that shortly I myself will come also I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier and your messenger and minister to my need for he has been longing for you all and has been distressed because you heard that he was ill indeed he was ill near to death but God had mercy on him and not only on him but on me also lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow

I am the more eager to send him therefore that you may rejoice at seeing him again and that I may be less anxious so receive him the Lord with all joy and honor such men for he nearly died for the work of Christ risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me finally my brothers rejoice in the Lord to write the same thing to you as no trouble to me and it is safe for you look out for the dogs look out for the evildoers look out for those who mutilate the flesh for we are the circumcision who worship by the spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also if anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh I have more circumcised on the eighth day of the people of Israel of the tribe of Benjamin a Hebrew of Hebrews as to the law a Pharisee as to zeal a persecutor of the church as to righteousness under the law blameless but whatever gain I had I counted as loss for the sake of Christ indeed I count everything as loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord for his sake

I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish in order that I may gain Christ and be found in him not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law but that which comes through faith in Christ the righteousness from God that depends on faith that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and may share his sufferings becoming like him in his death that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect but I press on to make it my own because Christ Jesus had made me his own brothers I do not consider that I have made it my own but one thing I do forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus let those of us who are mature think this way and if anything you think otherwise God will reveal that also to you only let us hold true to what we have attained brothers join in imitating me and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us for many of whom

[22:00] I have often told you and now tell you even with tears walk as enemies of the cross of Christ their end is destruction their God is their belly and they glory in their shame with minds set on earthly things but our citizenship is in heaven and from it we await a savior the Lord Jesus Christ who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body by the power that enables him even to subject all things to himself therefore my brothers whom I love and long for my joy and crowned stand firm thus in the Lord my beloved I entreat Yodia and I entreat Cintiq to agree in the Lord yes I also ask you true companion help these women who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with the Clement and the rest of my fellow workers whose names are in the book of life rejoice in the Lord always again I will say rejoice let your reasonableness be known to everyone the Lord is at hand do not be anxious about anything but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your request be made known to God and the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus finally brothers whatever is true whatever is honorable whatever is just whatever is pure whatever is lovely whatever is commendable there is any sorry if there is any excellence if there is anything worthy of praise think about these things what you have learned and received and heard and seen in me practice these things and the God of peace will be with you

I rejoice the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me you were indeed concerned for me but you had no opportunity not that I am speaking of being in need for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content I know how to be brought low and I know how to abound in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger abundance and need I can do all things through him who strengthens me that it was kind of you to share my trouble and you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel when I left Macedonia no church entered an apartage with me in giving and receiving except you only even at Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again not that I seek the gift but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit I have received full payment and more I am well supplied having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent a fragrant offering a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God and my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus to our God and Father be glory forever and ever amen greet every saint in Christ Jesus the brothers who are with me greet you all the saints greet you especially those of Caesar's household the grace of the Lord

Jesus Christ be with your spirit and then I imagine that the Philippian believers spent much more than 15 weeks trying to understand everything that Paul was trying to say to them in that time so that's the work that we'll be about and we're going to begin this morning with the first two verses and I hope that we're setting us up for the rest of our study to be fruitful so verse one and two in order to look briefly at these two verses I want to draw your attention to two titles first Paul refers to himself and his compatriot Timothy as servants of Christ Jesus some of your translations may say bond servants which I applaud this is a wonderful way to translate that Greek word the Greek word *doulos* this signified a person who was owned by someone else and was entirely dependent on their owner for their livelihood a *doulos* was different than someone who served as a servant in a household who would have a household of their own who would come and do work and then go home to their home not a particular task that they accomplished a *doulos* a bond servant had no ownership of their own they were entirely owned by their master and anything that they got for their own livelihood came from their master in many of Paul's other writing he will remind his readers of his apostolic standing he starts out as declaring that he is an apostle but he sees no need to do so here the Philippian believers do not seem to need a reminder of Paul's leadership status amongst the church but he does see fit to remind them of his subservient status to the Lord

Jesus Christ he is reminding them that the Christian goes and does and says what he is commanded by God and that every ounce of our being is derived from him he introduces Timothy in the same way as he is commending Timothy to them he is hoping to send Timothy to them we see that in chapter 2 in verse 19 it is contextually important to note at the outset of our study of this letter that it was written from a Roman prison this is mentioned there in chapter 1 it was most likely delivered in the early 60s somewhere around 62 Paul's bond service to Christ Jesus found him jailed and we will make mention of this often as we explore the themes of this book remember the prominent theme of joy Paul does not find himself in a condition that any of us would wish on ourselves and yet this prominent theme emerges again and again and again beloved

Jesus has not asked for us to be admirers he has asked for us to be followers I wonder how many of us are as keenly aware as we should be of the reality that we are in Christ and that we belong to him and we depend on him entirely for our livelihood I wonder how our lives how the culture of our church and how our broader community might look different if we also consider ourselves bond servants of Christ Jesus doing everything at the will of his command recognizing that we receive everything by his good pleasure so this is the first title I wanted us to note this morning second Paul addresses the letter to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi with the overseers and the deacons notice first that while

[28:59] Paul recognizes that the church at Philippi was properly ordered with the biblical offices of overseers or elders and deacons he's commending that good for the church at Philippi they had both overseers and deacons he's being very careful to address this letter to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi he's being very inclusive and we do well to understand that this was a letter written by a man to a group of people these were real people they existed in time and in space right and this letter had a purpose right Paul had something in his mind that he's trying to communicate to these people as he wrote it but also this letter was inspired by the spirit of Christ and therefore is also

addressed to us and to all who have believed or who will ever believe in Christ but to get the mind of Paul we have to remember that he's a real person writing a real letter to a real group of people and then we get to receive the wonderful benefit of this letter written between these saints right he's thinking of all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi but the spirit as he inspires the text has us in mind has you in mind has me in mind as we sit under this word that's why on Sunday mornings before I read the text for the morning I remind you beloved this is God's word to us it has bearing and meaning for us today right while it has its context its historical context it means something for us today and it was written for his glory and our good and because of that right we would do well to listen to it to believe its promises and to obey its commands now Paul gives these people and us a very specific title what does he call them saints he calls them saints this title refers to someone who is set apart for God and not the way the Catholics treat that special sainthood Paul saying all Christians anyone who is found in Christ is a saint has been set apart for God the Greek word is which is often translated holy so when we see the word saints we can also read holy ones people set apart for God Paul is referring to their status in Christ Jesus when God saves us he changes us fundamentally we become different we're not changed in degree you don't become a little bit better you are changed in kind you are regenerate you are made new and then because we are changed in kind we can be changed in degree to be more like God who has declared we are we are changed in kind fundamentally we are now given the title saint we're not becoming saints we are saints we're very often not saintly we do still sin but we are saints that is why Paul has the moxie to say in chapter 1 in verse 6 I am sure of this that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Christ saying you you saints because God made you saints he's going to work that out he's going to bring that to completion your sanctification at the day of Christ not by any plan it was wonderful that this morning's new city catechism question was about justification and sanctification right justification declares us righteous before

God sanctification is the gradual outworking of us becoming more like Christ significantly Paul says of these people and us that we are saints but saints in Christ Jesus we cannot be saints apart from Christ Jesus we cannot be set apart for God without the saving work of Christ Jesus on our behalf that's why Peter declares in Acts chapter 4 and verse 12 there is salvation in no one else for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved Paul's doing something very significant when he calls them saints in Christ Jesus there's no other way to be set apart for God than in Christ so we can only be set apart for God with

[34:32] Christ but Paul doesn't say saints with Christ he says saints in Christ Jesus Paul uses this phrase in Christ Jesus or some variation of it like in Christ or in the Lord 124 times in his writing that's a lot you're going to see this you start to pay attention in your New Testament reading these types of phrase in Jesus Christ in Christ Jesus in Christ or in the Lord 124 times in his writing so we have to pay very careful attention to what he means by it Paul is reminding them and us that we are not saints holy ones for God because of a righteousness of our own impossible cannot produce the kind of righteousness required by God but because as Martin Luther called it an alien righteousness a righteousness that comes from outside of us the righteousness that justifies us before

God must be a perfect righteousness you can't be pretty good or mostly good you have to be completely good and we cannot do this on our own the righteousness that makes us saints must be distilled to us from an outside source and this source must be the Lord Jesus Christ because he obtained his righteousness this righteousness that's necessary for us to have he obtained it by a perfect life that's why God saved us this way right he became a man to fulfill the law right to obtain perfect righteousness that that perfect righteousness might be given to us by faith in him imputed to us Paul wrote in Romans chapter 4 verse 22 and following that is why Abraham's faith was counted to him as righteousness but the words it was counted to him were not written for his sake alone but for ours also it will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead

Jesus our Lord this righteousness it this righteousness will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord so if you have believed in the person and work of Jesus Christ you are a saint in Christ Jesus you are found in him you are clothed in his righteousness we need to hear this gospel truth constantly and I hope that this is a gospel truth that is true of you this morning

that you have been set apart by God and for God if you have any doubt of this repent of your rebellion flee from the wrath to come you deserve eternal judgment if you are an enemy of God and flee to Christ flee to his person and his work his sacrificial work and his perfect life on your behalf for God is gracious and merciful and he is abounding in love he is quick to place you in Christ Jesus and forgive you all of your sins if you don't find yourself positionally in Christ this morning if you have not been changed in kind then your end is destruction there's nothing this world can offer you for the salvation of your soul Christ you need to be found in Christ you need to have it said of you you are a saint in Christ Jesus if you are in Christ Jesus this morning it's not to be a great encouragement for your soul not because of your performance this past week is God pleased with you not because of the good that you did or the bad that you did or the good that you didn't do but because of Christ's perfect righteousness we are imperfect people declared saints because of who Jesus is because of his work not our own what hope there is in the gospel of Jesus Christ every world religion places God on the top of a mountain and sets up a number of ways in which you climb the mountain to reach to God Christianity declares that we are unable to climb and yet our God came down the mountain to us all we have to do is receive this wonderful gift that's found repentance and faith to be declared saints in Christ Jesus Paul concludes the opening of his letter to the Philippians with a common salutation found in his writing in which he states the source of saving work and the eternal status of those who repent and believe I'm going to read this salutation as my closing words for our time in the word this morning this is verse two grace to you and peace from

[40:11] God our father and Lord Jesus Christ let's pray together