



CAPITOL COMMISSION

Greetings From A Prisoner—Philippians 1.1-2

JANUARY 11, 2010

PHILIPPIANS: CULTIVATING A CHRISTIAN PERSPECTIVE AT THE CAPITOL

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INTRODUCTION

What do we mean when we speak of keeping things in proper perspective? Isn't this a question of how accurately you are interpreting the world around you?...of whether or not the lens through which you view your world is helping you to see things more clearly?...of whether the grid through which you filter your circumstances, relationships, past events, hopes for the future is serving you well? However you define it, keeping things in proper perspective is an ongoing battle for all of us.

This can become especially difficult when, as is daily the case in the capitol, you are confronted with competing interpretations of your world. It is challenging to keep a clear head amidst the cacophony of voices pressing upon you to embrace a certain position. An accurate viewpoint on yourself and all that is going on around you is vital to being effective in your role as a state leader. Making time to cultivate a healthy, positive perspective that is consistent with truth and reality is certainly worth the effort.

To this end, this session Capitol Commission will offer a weekly study through the Biblical book of Philippians. This practical study is entitled, *Cultivating a Christian Perspective at the Capitol*. The studies will be thoughtfully prepared and concise, with precise applications for those who are part of the capitol community. I encourage you to block out time for these studies each week. You'll be glad you did.

Now, into the introductory study, *Greetings From A Prisoner*.

Philippians 1.1-2—Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

I. FROM A SLAVE OF JESUS CHRIST

Paul, as a prisoner in chains, pens a very personal letter to the church he founded in the city of Philippi. Though he finds himself in a place of great difficulty, he exhorts them to rejoice in the Lord. In this letter every follower of Christ is to interpret the world around them through a uniquely Christ-centered frame of reference. The Christian works from the assurance that God can bring victory from what looks to the world like defeat. Paul had an overwhelming assurance that his chains were in Christ and would ultimately serve to advance the gospel mission to which he had been called.

A MASTER AND HIS APPRENTICE

Master teacher, mentor, advisor, coach, counselor, protégé, apprentice, pupil, disciple, understudy are but a few of the terms that have been used to describe the connection between Paul and Timothy. From Paul's day and going forward the cause of Christ has been passed along from Pauls to Timothys until it reached you and me.

Every Timothy—that is, each young believer aspiring to spiritual growth—needs a Paul. And every Paul—that is, each mature believer called to pass along to another that which has been spiritually invested in them—needs a Timothy. Ultimately, discipleship is the product, not of church programs, but of personal relationships like the one Timothy shared with Paul.

A SLAVE AND HIS MASTER

As the founder of the church at Philippi, Paul could have opened this letter by trumpeting his authority as an apostle. Instead he appeals to these believers as a mere slave. His emphasis is not on the rank of a slave within the social structure of his day, but on the attitude of humble servitude. Old Testament priests, prophets, and kings spoke of themselves as servants of God. In calling himself a servant of Jesus Christ, Paul not only humbles himself before his readers, but also affirms the deity of Christ.

BIBLE STUDIES

LEGISLATORS: WEDNESDAYS @ LUNCH AT THE AUSTIN CLUB OR THURSDAYS @ 7:30 A.M. IN THE MEMBERS' LOUNGE (ROOM E2.1002)

STAFF: THURSDAY @ 6:00P.M.

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II. TO THE SAINTS IN JESUS CHRIST

This letter is noteworthy for its lack of reproof, for its bright outlook and its personal warmth. Who were these people to whom Paul would write such a letter?

SET APART

Saints? You may be saying to yourself, “Well he certainly wasn’t writing to me.” Paul uses a label that every follower of Jesus Christ should be prepared to reverently, but gladly apply to themselves. The word speaks of someone or something which has been set apart for a sacred purpose. A saint is someone who has been consecrated or separated from common purposes unto God’s eternal glory.

Do you profess faith in Jesus Christ? If so, you are a saint. It is a humbling thought, a realization that is accompanied by fear and trembling. Your initial reaction to the idea of being labeled a saint may be to recoil, feeling that it would be proud of you to receive such an approbation. The fact is, it would be proud for you to refuse it. It would be a refusal to acknowledge God’s claim upon you. You are a saint by virtue of your redemption in Christ, you are bought with a price, God’s own special possession that you might live unto His glory.

A LITTLE ROME AWAY FROM ROME

Philippi was a prominent city in Macedonia with the distinction of being a Roman colony. Philippians were granted Roman citizenship, Roman law was enforced and its customs followed among its people. It was like a little piece of Rome away from Rome. Citizenship was a significant privilege and carried with it a sense of pride and responsibility.

As Philippians, these were people who lived as citizens of Rome, even though, by ancient standards Rome was a world away. Consider Paul’s reminder to these believers that their citizenship was in heaven. As those set apart in Jesus Christ, their citizenship was in heaven, even though heaven was a world away. Their heavenly citizenship carries both privileges and responsibilities.

III. WITH WORDS OF BLESSING FROM JESUS CHRIST

The salutation carries a customary greeting, but with a deepened sense for the believer. The Greek blessing of grace is joined the Jewish blessing of peace as both flowing from God, but more specifically, the Lord Jesus Christ.

GRACE

Grace, to a Greek contemporary of Paul’s, spoke of a favor done for you by someone else without any thought of your returning the favor. For the Christian, grace speaks of God’s generosity in sending His Only Son, as our substitute to pay the penalty of our sin on the cross of Calvary! In the Greek world, favors were common among friends. Yet in the case of salvation, God’s grace was extended to those at enmity with Him—those who were His sworn enemies were the benefactors of His unmerited favor. Amazing Grace!

PEACE

Shalom was a customary Jewish greeting blessing another with wishes of prosperity. For you and I, the word peace may conjure up images of people protesting war, carrying signs with peace signs painted on them. We think of peace meaning, primarily, the absence of war. For the Christian, peace is the result of God’s gracious act of salvation in Christ. Through Christ we enjoy peace with God and the blessings of God upon our lives in this life and the life to come. True shalom is only experienced through faith in Christ!

CONCLUSION

The opening two verses of this letter provide signals of Paul’s theme. In the span of two verses, Paul makes specific mention of Jesus Christ three times. Paul was a bondservant of Jesus Christ. He writes to all the saints in Christ Jesus. He solicits blessings from God and the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul goes on to make specific mention of Jesus Christ 18 times in the opening chapter. Paul exalts Christ and seeks to cultivate a frame of reference from which we view all of life through the Person and Work of Our Lord Jesus Christ! May we work together at Cultivating a Christian Perspective at the Capitol this session!