

Philippians Ch 1 Vs 1-6

Fellowship in the Gospel

Last week we spent our time in overview of this epistle. Considering the over all emphasis of this letter; that being joy and peace. We considered four issues that Paul addresses in this letter that seek to rob us of our joy and our peace and the scriptural remedies that guard against those “thieves”, and real quick those things that have the propensity to rob us of the joy of the Lord are our circumstances, people, the things of this world (meaning possessions or the desire for them) and worry., and then the remedy for absolving us of the results of these thieves breaking into our lives and stealing our joy is the in reality the same basic thing for each of them. The answer lies in the mind, the way that we think, our attitudes and frame of heart toward our circumstances, towards the people we’re around, toward the things of this world, and the things that are causing us to worry. and In these 4 ch Paul talks about the single mind, the submissive mind, the spiritual mind, and the secure mind.

You could summarize all of those things by simply drawing the conclusion that it’s absolutely essential to our spiritual mental health and well being as it relates to our joy or really any other aspect of our Christian lives that we be seeking and operating in and toward our circumstances, people, and worldly things through the *mind* of Christ. Ch 2 Vs 5 of this letter says, “*Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus*” I’m becoming increasingly convinced that in there lies the key to a successful and absolutely contented Christian experience in life. That we allow the Holy Spirit to cause us to operate in and work in us the mind of Christ concerning any given situation and circumstance, regarding any person or people that we’re around, and as it pertains to the things of this world. and When we get there we’ll take the time to discuss exactly what it means to have the mind of Christ, but there’s some fascinating things in this letter and I pray that we’re all changed as a result of spending time in it.

Vs1

Now as this epistle starts out we read Paul and Timothy, now understand that Paul is writing the letter. Timothy isn’t writing it with him, this is Paul’s address to the Philippians and we see that all throughout this letter as Paul makes statements concerning himself in the 1st person, “I know that this will turn out for my deliverance”, “I’m hard pressed between the two” Timothy’s not in prison here, he’s not worried about being delivered. As a matter of fact Paul mentions later in this letter that he’s going to sent Timothy to them and so by mentioning him in this opening salutation, he’s sort of paving the way for Timothy’s coming to them to encourage them and report back to Paul their spiritual condition. So Paul’s is writing the letter, but Timothy is with him and he’s the only one that he has there in Rome with him that he truly feels has his heart and is likeminded with Paul not seeking the things of himself but who will sincerely care for their state therefore he’s going to send Timothy to them.

We see that in Ch 2 Vs 19-21 (read) so Paul is going to send him to them in a while, not just yet, but he's coming soon. As you read on there you'll see that Epaphroditus will come 1st and take this letter to them, and so Paul encourages them to receive him with gladness and goes on to tell a little bit about him. But here in the beginning he lets them know that Timothy is with him and is his companion and co-laborer which is interesting because when we go back to Acts toward the end of ch 15 and in the beginning of ch 16 you find a change taking place in Paul's ministry. Because Paul went on his 1st missionary journey with a guy by the name of Barnabas, and he was an encourager, as a matter of fact his real name was Joses or Joseph but the apostles renamed him Barnabas, which means "Son of Encouragement."

You remember that he was the one who sought Paul out in the 1st place after his conversion. Ananais had come to Saul (who would later be called Paul) and laid hands on him that he'd receive his sight because he'd been blinded after the Lord revealed Himself to him and spoke to him. and After he received his sight he began to preach Jesus in the synagogues, but when he came to Jerusalem he tried to join the disciples but they were all scared of him because he'd persecuted the church so vehemently. But we read in Acts 9:27 *"But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. And he declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus."*

So Barnabas hooked him up, and so when Paul went on his 1st missionary journey, he took this Son of Encouragement with him. and They also took this (at the time young guy) by the name of John Mark. As in the writer of the gospel of Mark and when you get to Acts ch 15 there towards the end you see that Barnabas wants once again to take John Mark on their 2nd missionary journey. But the problem that Paul had with that is that on the 1st trip Mark bailed out on the work before they were finished, in Acts 13:13 you read where John Mark departed and went back to Jerusalem to mommy. I guess things were just a little to intense for him at that time, but for whatever the reason it was enough of a signal to Paul that he wasn't going to take him again, he didn't need people on his team that were going to cut and run in the middle of it, he had enough problems dealing with people who were coming against them on the outside with out having to worry about people buckling in and folding on the inside. and Paul didn't mess around, "we got serious business to attend to, this world needs Jesus Christ and if you can't hang with what that's going to entail in order to get the message out that's fine but you're not coming with me."

Paul was very single minded, and he had world wide vision and so we read in Ch 15 that the contention got so steep that they parted from one another. Barnabas felt the need to continue to minister with John Mark, encourage him, Paul didn't have the time to take that type of a chance again and so Barnabas took John Mark and went one direction as a missionary team and Paul grabbed a guy (seemingly sort of last minute) by the name of Silas and took him, and went the other way.

Now I'm giving you the long story but it's getting ready to come full circle as to how Timothy entered the picture. Now at that point Silas was his Paul's right hand man, having taken Barnabas' place and when we read of Paul in prison there in Philippi who was it that was right there with him? It was Silas, but Silas wasn't the only guy with him there because we read in Acts 16 that when he came to Derbe and Lystra that's when he met this young guy by the name of Timothy who was well spoken of by the brethren there and so Paul yoked up with him and the relationship was born. and It would seem as though even though Paul grabbed Silas at 1st kind of making a snap decision, and God used them mightily together, but it would appear as though Timothy would be the one that God would raise up to replace Barnabas.

There are those times when God will raise up people on a temporary basis to labor with for a season, but after meeting Timothy and seeing the work that God was doing in this young mans heart, it bore witness in Paul's heart and so Paul took him under his wing and just kept him right there and towards the end of his life who do we find that was still there when everyone else had seemingly forsaken him Timothy was still there. Now just so that you know God did restore Paul's relationship to John Mark and when he was writing to Timothy we read in 2 Tim 4:11 where Paul said, "*Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for ministry.*" So God did a wonderful reconciliation there that I'm sure Barnabas had a part in as he continued to work with Mark being faithful to the call of encouragement that God had placed on his life thereby bringing John Mark on into maturity.

But here Paul is speaking of this young disciple of his by the name of Timothy who shared his heart more than anyone else and Paul is there in prison awaiting the verdict on his life and who's with him? Timothy, and it kind of gives you some insight into how much Paul loved the Philippian church because who is it that he's going to send to them, his right hand man, he's releasing Timothy to go to them. and As I mentioned last week, generally speaking Paul would begin his letters recalling to the readers mind his apostolic authority, but here we don't see that, he says, "*Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ*" Now I know that we've spoken of bondservants in the past but allow me to stir up your memory here concerning the role of a bondservant (or a bond slave) because some of your bibles may simply say, "servants of Jesus Christ" but the Greek word is "doulos" which is the word that translates "Bondservant". You see servants were paid, bondservants were owned, servants could come and go, bondservants were the property of their owners. But they became the property of their owners by choice out of love for them, and once you became a bond slave it was for life, look at Ex Ch 21. Vs1-6

So you've served this guy for 6 yrs it's time to be on your own but he's treated you good, and you love him and his family and you say, "You know, I don't know why in the world I'd ever want to leave this place. I want to be your servant for the rest of my life." and So he takes you down to the judges, you state your case, he pierces your ear and that's it, you're a slave for life, your life is no longer your own it belongs to him. That's the type of relationship that Paul considered his to be to the Lord, out of my love for Jesus Christ, because of His great love for me and overwhelming goodness, I've chosen to be His servant forever, my life is no longer my own. In Rom 6:22 he wrote, "*But now having been set free from sin, and having become slaves of God, you have your fruit to holiness, and the end, everlasting life.*" So Paul and Timothy, bondservants, not of the church, not of the people of Philippi, but of Jesus Christ "to all the saints in Christ Jesus."

Now, this word saints can today be misleading, because we've been inundated with the mindset that a saint is someone who's done something extraordinary with his life that has somehow elevated him above the rest of us acquiring him the position of sainthood. However that couldn't be further from the truth, this word "saints" simply means "sanctified ones" or "set apart" ones. and What is it that sets people apart? Some magnanimous work that no one else can accomplish? No, the answer is given in the next 3 words, "in Christ Jesus" you are set apart unto God for the work of His service by being "in Christ Jesus", there are only 2 types of people in this world, the "saints", and the "aints". and The only thing that determines which of those 2 you are is your relationship to Jesus Christ, if you're in Christ you're a saint, if you're not in Christ, you're not a saint. Being in a church isn't what makes you a saint, and it doesn't matter where on the planet you are, these people are at Philippi, but they're "in Christ" and that's what matters, so if you're in Christ, this is to you, because you're a saint, and so he says it's to all the saints in Christ, in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons. Now don't be confused over this word "bishop" that word literally just means "overseer", it's synonymous with the word "elder" or "pastor" as well. and These are really the only 2 offices of the church, now there are various giftings or spiritual emphasis with in those offices but by and large this is it, there are no more. These are the only 2 biblical offices of government with in the church, those who have oversight of the flock of God, the overseers or the elders, or pastors, which are the bishops (same thing) all those words are interchangeable. In Acts ch 20 vs 17 we see where Paul called for the elders of Ephesus, and in his address to them we read where in vs 28 in talking to the elders he calls them both "overseers" and "shepherds."

Acts 20:28, it says, "*Therefore take heed to yourselves and to all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.*" So we see all in the same context of the same group of men Paul calling them elders, overseers, (or bishops) and shepherds.

Peter does the same thing in 1st Peter ch 5 Vs 1-4 he says, “*The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock; and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that does not fade away.*” and When Paul was writing to Titus in ch 1:5 he said, “*For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you*” and then in vs 7 he says, “*For a bishop must be*” and he calls him a bishop speaking of the same office and he goes on to list the qualifications of the elders.

He gives Timothy a very similar list of qualifications in 1st Tim ch 3 for the office of a bishop and there he tells also of the office of qualifications of a deacon. and So here in Philippians he addresses all the saints, all the believers, along with the pastors or elders and overseers, along with the deacons. Now what are the deacons? That word primarily denotes the hands on servants of the church, so as to where the elders and/or overseers tend primarily to the spiritual needs of the body and are to be given to the word of God and prayer. The deacons are the hands on physical labor type guys that tend to the physical or material needs, probably the most practical scriptural example of these 2 offices co-laboring together is found in Acts ch 6 let’s look at it together (vs 1-7)

Vs1-2

Now they’re not saying we’re above serving tables or that we’re too good for that, they’re saying we have a primary calling on our lives that won’t be good for you for us to be distracted from. Because if I’m serving tables, I’m not in the word or in prayer, therefore I’m going to be ill equipped to tend to your spiritual needs, because if the pastors or elders can’t be given to the word then the whole body will suffer.

Vs3-7

So you see, they appointed deacons, which were these men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom to tend to the physical needs of the body while they stayed focused on that which God had called them to and God blessed it and everyone was thoroughly blessed and ministered to. So these are the 2 offices and there are no more, again different gifts flow with in those offices as we see in Eph ch 4, with the evangelists and pastor/teachers, but even the apostles functioned in the capacity of the overseers and elders of the church. and So Paul breaks the office of the elders up there into what you might consider 4 subcategories, but they’re elders and overseers nonetheless. and Even in writing to all the saints and the bishops and deacons it’s a good testimony to the church in Philippi because as we saw last week it began very small, and yet now it’s grown to the point that there is overseers and deacons and various people to address, and He says in vs 2

Vs2

Grace and peace, we see this quite often in Paul's letters but I pray that we don't see it so much or become so accustomed to it that it loses its impact in what it entails. This wasn't something that Paul would just throw out there flippantly I'm sure, Paul knew grace, he said of himself, "*I am what I am by the grace of God*" and that it was the grace of God that labored in him causing him to press on in the work of the Lord.

Paul is writing this letter from prison, and he's ready to die for the message of the grace of God, and he stood for grace, and so I hope that this little word doesn't become so familiar to us that it begins to lose its impact. God's unmerited favor be upon you, Paul is pronouncing blessing upon the church of Philippi, I think we would do well to bless one another more often. and Not by force of habit, but when you say, "God bless you" I hope that you mean it, "God's favor be upon you" not because you deserve it, that's what grace is, none of us deserve it, but by the cross of Jesus Christ we can receive it. Grace; and peace and again it's found in that order because it's impossible to experience the peace of God until you've 1st experienced the grace of God, there is no peace apart from grace, so grace comes 1st, then peace (or rest) as Jesus said, rest for your soul. and There's 2 types of biblical peace, there's the peace with God, that happens when you're saved, when you give your life to Christ Rom 5:1, "*Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ*" the idea there is that of being reconciled to God. and Then there's the peace of God, which is that peace that passes understanding that just resides in your life as a believer, that guards your heart and mind. You may not know how this issue is going to work out, you don't understand it, but the peace of God passes that, it passes understanding, and guards your heart and mind. and Where does this grace and peace come from? From a solid bank account and a good steady job? From a house on the lake away from the hustle and bustle of life? (Notice) (Finish vs 2)

Vs3-4

I want you to notice in vs 3 who it is that Paul thanks for them; he says "my God" and what I want you to draw from that is the expression of intimacy. "My God" David cried out in Ps 63 "*O God, You are my God.*" We serve a personal God, One who wants to know you personally, He is your God, but as far as I'm concerned He is "my God", it's an expression of intimacy. Paul says I make request for you every time I pray (in vs4), oh how we need to pray for one another. Paul told us in Eph 6:18 that we're to be "*praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, being watchful to this end with all perseverance and supplication for all the saints*" We pray a lot for the non-believers and that's good, we shouldn't cease or wax and wane concerning that, but you and I need to be praying for our fellow believers, our brothers and sisters as well. Paul says that every time he prays he lifts these guys up, and when he does its with joy, because he's encouraged by the work that God is doing in their lives. (Notice vs 5)

Vs5

What gives him joy? Their fellowship in the gospel, their steadfast partnership and koinonia, and co-laboring faithfulness in the gospel, they were supporting (financially and prayerfully) the work of propelling the gospel through the life of Paul the apostle and that brought him great joy. and By the way it brings the Father great joy as well when we partner in the propulsion of the gospel, 2 Cor 9:6-7 *“But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.”* and That’s one of the things that I love about the work that God’s doing here, the fact that we trust the Lord to bring into our midst those people who give joyfully to the propulsion of the gospel. We believe that where God guides God provides and man if you can’t give just out of the overflow of your love for God and because you want to see the gospel propelled, then I ask you *please*, don’t give at all. Because I want God to bless your life, but He doesn’t bless it when you give out of constraint or you feel a necessity and so I just encourage to give to the extent that you can do so with joy because the minute it becomes a problem, you may as well just drive down the road and throw it out the window because it accomplished about the same amount, (for the kingdom) as far as God is concerned.

People get all hung up in legalism, is 10% right, well, it may be a good starting place, but if you can’t give more than 2% with out griping about it and loathing then you’d bettered stick to that until you have a change of heart. Because God loves a cheerful giver, Paul took joy in the fact that these guys took part in the fellowship, not of his ministry, but in the gospel of Jesus Christ as co-laborers in the Kingdom. and I believe that we’re all called to co-labor in the propulsion or in the fellowship of the gospel, if you’re not called to go, then you’re called to get behind those who are because as the body of Christ we have a corporate commission to take the gospel to the world and we all have part to some degree or another in that. and Paul says it brings me great joy to see you doing what you need to do, doing what you’ve been called to do in order to see the gospel spread. He says this is my joy, your fellowship in the gospel from the 1st day until now.

Vs6

What is it that Paul is confident of? In short, God’s faithfulness, the fact that He is faithful and true, 1 Thess 5:23-24 *“Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.”* Heb 10:23 *“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful.”* and Even when we falter, it’s not about what we *do*, it’s about what He’s *done* 2 Tim 2:13 *“If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.”*

Paul's confidence was in the faithfulness of God to keep that which He had begun and that had been committed to Him. He told Timothy *"for I know whom I have believed and am persuaded that He is able to keep what I have committed to Him until that Day."* His confidence wasn't in their ability to deliver or their ability to stand, in Ch 3 of this letter he makes it very clear that we're to take no confidence in the flesh. But he trusted in the faithfulness of God, and so can you, the bible is full of scriptures that declare the faithfulness of God, here's a few more. Num 23:19, *"God is not a man, that He should lie, Nor a son of man, that He should repent. Has He said, and will He not do? Or has He spoken, and will He not make it good?"* Deut 7:9 *"Therefore know that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments."* Lam 3:22-23 *"Through the LORD's mercies we are not consumed, Because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness."* 1more Rev 19:11 *"Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war."*

Paul believed the word of God, and God declares of Himself that He is Faithful and this morning if you know Jesus Christ it's because He's begun that work in you and as long as you're willing to let Him you can be confident of this very thing (finish vs). God will perfect that work, or complete that work, God's not like us, how many times we start a project only to get it about ½ way finished and there it sets, but God isn't like us. He finishes His work, He's going to keep working in you, changing you, breaking you, molding you, and conforming you into His image until the Day that you see Him face to face.