



# Philippians

## *Living a Happy and Holy Life*

### Week 2

Salutation, prayer, and Paul's news

1:1-26

1



### *The Occasion for Paul's Letter*

- ❖ Paul is writing from prison. But from where?
  - The answer, dating back to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, is Rome. There are a couple of clues in the letter supporting this tradition.
  - It seems that Paul is under arrest for a capital charge.
  - Other candidates are Ephesus and Caesarea, though the cases are weaker.
- ❖ If Rome, then the letter was composed in the early 60's, a decade or more after Paul's first visit to Philippi.
- ❖ Why the letter?
  - To reassure the Philippian Christians about Paul's situation
  - To commend Epaphroditus to them and explain why he has left Paul
  - To thank them

©2008 Scott L. Engle



## **The Letter's Salutation (1:1-2)**

- ❖ Timothy may be with Paul, though there is no reason to assume that he is in prison.
  - Mentioned at the beginning of six of Paul's letters!
  - Also is mentioned in the body of several letters and plays a part in the book of Acts.
  - The recipient of the letters, 1 and 2 Timothy, though many scholars question whether the letters are truly Paul's. I believe that they are.
- ❖ Slaves and saints?
- ❖ Bishops and deacons?
  - Not a formal structure yet, but only its beginnings. What is in view here are functions/roles, not offices or status.
  - "Bishops/overseers/elders" were those with pastoral oversight. "Deacons/helpers/ministers" were those who served the community.

©2008 Scott L. Engle



## **Paul's prayer for the Philippians (1:3-11)**

<sup>3</sup>I thank my God every time I remember you, <sup>4</sup>constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, <sup>5</sup>because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. <sup>6</sup>I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ. <sup>7</sup>It is right for me to think this way about all of you, because you hold me in your heart, for all of you share in God's grace with me, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. <sup>8</sup>For God is my witness, how I long for all of you with the compassion of Christ Jesus. <sup>9</sup>And this is my prayer, that your love may overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight <sup>10</sup>to help you to determine what is best, so that in the day of Christ you may be pure and blameless, <sup>11</sup>having produced the harvest of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ for the glory and praise of God.

©2008 Scott L. Engle



## **Paul's prayer**

- ❖ Very personal – “I thank my God . . .”
- ❖ Paul expresses gratitude (v. 3), joy (v. 4), confidence (v. 5), affection (v. 7), and longing for the Philippians (v. 8).
  - “Joy” or “rejoice” is used fourteen times in this letter.
- ❖ God finishes what God starts (v. 6)
  - Our labors for Christ are never in vain.
- ❖ Paul embraces the Philippians as his co-workers (v. 7)
  - He may have in mind here the financial gift that the Philippians sent, presumably to help with his prison expenses.
  - Fellowship has become partnership.

©2008 Scott L. Engle



## **Paul's prayer (cont.)**

- ❖ What does Paul pray for them?
  - That their love would “overflow more and more with knowledge and full insight.” (v. 9)
- ❖ Why more knowledge and insight?
  - So that they discern right from wrong – “to determine what is best” – to discern God’s moral will.
  - This moral discernment will be the fruit of the righteousness that is theirs through Jesus Christ.
- ❖ The “day of Christ” (v. 10) is the *big* day, the Day of the Lord, the coming of Christ and the consummation of creation’s renewal.
  - Paul will return to this day in the letter. The Philippians can look forward to that day with confidence.

©2008 Scott L. Engle



## ***Paul's news about himself (1:12-26)***

- ❖ Paul is imprisoned, but even that has been an occasion for evangelism, as all the Imperial Guard in Rome now knows why Paul is in jail. And some seem to be listening. (v. 12-14)
  - Paul's imprisonment has emboldened others to speak the word without fear.
- ❖ Some are preaching the gospel to make more trouble for Paul, but others are preaching out of love. (v. 15-18a)
  - Regardless of the reason, Paul knows that the Good News is getting out there. Paul rejoices in it all.

©2008 Scott L. Engle



## ***To live or to die? (1:18a-26)***

- ❖ Paul does not know what lies ahead for him. Will he be released or executed?
- ❖ What is Paul's hope?
  - He doesn't pray for safety or release, but only that he "won't be put to shame." He prays that his fears won't cause him to back off from his proclamation of Christ.
  - He hopes that Christ will be exalted in him, whether Paul lives or dies. "Living is Christ and dying is gain."
- ❖ Paul is even torn – stay and work for Christ or depart and be with Christ?
  - Paul believes that he is needed by the Philippians and others and, hence, will be released so he can carry on his missionary work.
- ❖ Compare this to 2 Corinthians 1:8-11
- ❖ The "Spirit of Jesus Christ?" (v. 19): aka the Holy Spirit

©2008 Scott L. Engle



## The Holy Who?!

- ❖ The gray, oblong blur – no wonder this is confusing
  - Dove, wind fire, water, oil – look at our images
- ❖ Paul calls the Spirit, the *Spirit of Jesus Christ*
- ❖ The Spirit is the **personal** presence of God
  - The anointing of David – 1 Samuel 16:13
  - The anointing of Jesus
- ❖ Look at the verbs
  - In the Bible, the Spirit *searches, knows, teaches, dwells, accomplishes, gives life, cries out, bears witness, has desires, is grieved, helps, intercedes, works all things together, strengthens, and is lied to.*
- ❖ The Spirit is always referred to using personal pronouns!!
  - Always WHO, never “it” – we have to retrain ourselves!

©2005 Scott L. Engle



## The Holy Spirit and the Godhead

- ❖ Though “Holy Spirit” is used only twice in the OT, the early Christians came to use it as the formal name for God’s Spirit. Paul uses “Holy Spirit” about as often as he uses “Lord Jesus Christ.”
- ❖ Christians came to understand that in the one God, Yahweh, there exists a community of three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Indivisible yet distinct. A unity of three. Equal and eternal.
  - The Holy Spirit is truly and completely God, every bit as much as Jesus and every bit as much as the Father.
  - Jesus is fully God, but not all of God. The Holy Spirit is fully God, but not all of God. The Father is fully God, but not all of God.
- ❖ Gordon Fee writes, “We must not merely cite the creed, but believe and experience the presence of God in the person of the Spirit.”
  - The Spirit is God’s empowering presence in our lives.

©2005 Scott L. Engle