

PHILIPPIANS

INTRODUCTION

A church in fellowship with an apostle.

Paul's first European church which supported his travelling ministry and received his apostolic delegate, Timothy.

Acts 16:11 - The leading city of that district of Macedonia.

Full Roman colony with Roman citizenship - 42BC.
(Note their embarrassment in Paul's imprisonment.)

Unlike such epistles as Romans or Ephesians where doctrine dominates early chapters and application follows. Here things are interspersed.

I. PAUL'S GREETING AND PRAYER (Phil 1:1-11)

A. GREETING

Addressed not to the Philippians but to the "Saints", a term borrowed from the Old Testament - Ex 19:6 - a holy nation.

New Testament - Saints in Christ Jesus - set apart and holy in him
- with the overseers and deacons

- Hawthorne "Paul viewed the members of the Christian church as the New Israel, the new community separated and dedicated to God, the eschatological people, the people of the end times, to whom God will make good his promises - Dan 7:18,27."
- Motyer When we add Paul the apostle and Timothy the apostle's delegate, we have a remarkably full summary of the constitution of the New Testament church; the body of believers, the local church officers, the overarching apostolic work of Paul and the occasional ministry of a person like Timothy coming into the local situation from outside."
- Motyer The impression we receive of the New Testament is of local churches loosely federated under apostolic authority, with each church managing its own affairs under the leadership of overseers and deacons."

- Motyer Deacons were obviously a distinct office, but we are told nothing about the functions a deacon was meant to fulfil.... If we ask why their respective functions were not more closely defined, then surely the answer is this: ministry arises from the nature and needs of the church not vice versa.... The appointment of the 'seven' in Acts 6 may provide a model. A need arose in the church (verses 1-2) which exposed a gap in the ranks of the leadership; the assumption was made that, if this was a true need of the church, then God would have his gifted servants at hand (verse 3) ready to be recognised, authorised (verses 5-6) and to step into the breach."

B. THANKSGIVING

- v5 Paul does not commend them simply for their work as a local church but for their partnership in the gospel (cf Ch 1:7). i.e. their 'joint ownership' or 'participation in a common purpose'.

The churches were not seen as static islands while he travelled the seas of apostolic mission - writing them theological treatise. They are in partnership with the apostolic mission.

- (i) Thanksgiving with joy
- (ii) Confidence in God.

- Hawthorne 'Confidence permeates Philippians.'
- (a) God is at work. God is the initiator. His purpose in the earth. They are his workmanship (Eph 2:10).
 - (b) His power had broken into their ignorance (see Acts 16).
 - (c) His work was IN them. Powerful invasion of their lives.
 - Acts 16:14 - opened her heart
 - Acts 16:30 - what must I do to be saved?
 - Phil 2:13 - now continuing to work in them.
 - (d) His goal was the day of Christ. Paul always has this eschatological perspective. It emerges throughout the letter. (2:9-11, 16, 3:10-14, 20-21, 4:5)
 - (e) Paul's motivation of love (4,7,8, 'all')
 - v7 In my heart.
 - v8 I long for you all with the affection of Christ (cf 2:26)
 - Not simply imitating Christ's affection.

More a partnership with Christ in *his* love so that Christ's strong feelings play a bigger part.

(Word translated affection means - "entrails" - trying to communicate the deepest inner feelings.

C. PRAYER

- Dr Martyn Lloyd Jones
"His prayers are as theological as all his arguments and discussions. They are full of teaching, of theology and doctrine; he does not know what it means to pray prayers that are moved merely by emotions and sentiment. His prayers are always based upon something foundational; they are always in the light of a certain background and they proceed from it."

His prayer is full of matters that will be raised later in the letter

(1) FOR ABOUNDING LOVE.

Paul, the former legalistic Pharisee, wants, first of all, their love to abound still more and more.

They already have love. He is praying for abounding love.

Paul loves the word 'abound'* or 'overflow' (26 of 39 N.T. occurrences)

(* see note 13 on page 99 of Fee) - 1 Cor 13.

- Hawthorne "Perhaps no other word so characterised for Paul the new age opened up by Christ as did this word. For this new age is no meagre age, but one marked by an overflowing and rich abundance of good things (eg 2 Cor 3:9 N.A.S.)"

(2) IN KNOWLEDGE AND DEPTH OF INSIGHT.

- epignosis - full knowledge (NASB - 'real knowledge')

- cf 1 Cor 13:12 - we shall know fully just as we have been fully known.

- Fee "Its primary sense is not so much 'knowledge about' something, but rather the kind of 'full' or 'innate' knowing that comes from experience or personal relationship."
- Motyer We grow in proportion as we know. Without knowledge of salvation there can be no progress to maturity."

- D A Carson "The ever-increasing love for which Paul prays is to be discriminating. It is to be constrained by 'knowledge' and 'depth of insight'. Without the constraints of knowledge and insight, love very easily degenerates into mawkish sentimentality or into the kind of mushy pluralism the world often confuses with love."

(3) ABLE TO DISCERN WHAT IS BEST (NIV APPROVE WHAT IS SUPERIOR)

Aisthesis - discernment (only time in N.T; verb - aisthonomai - "to perceive")
Love and knowledge without discernment can miss the mark.

- D A Carson "What you need is the extraordinary discernment that helps you perceive how things differ, and then make the best possible choice. That is what Paul means by choosing 'what is best'. His point thus far, then, is that love, shaped and honed by knowledge and moral insight, is the absolute requirement for testing and approving 'what is best' for developing a sense of what is vital."
- Hawthorne "The ability to make proper moral decisions in the midst of a vast array of differing and difficult choices that are constantly presenting themselves to the Christian."
- Fee "For truly Christian life some things matter and others do not."
- Dr Martyn Lloyd Jones "The whole art of life, I sometimes think, is the art of knowing what to leave out, what to ignore, what to put on one side."

So that, e.g- Euodia and Syntyche can have same mind (4:2-3)
They are clear about circumcision (3:2)
They keep minds on heavenly prize not earthly things (3:18-19)
They approve highest goals (4:8-9)

Paul does not give a list of do's and don'ts. He does not highlight forbidden areas and suggest particular objectives.

- DA Carson "Paul refuses to set up an arbitrary set of check points against which Christians are to measure themselves; he refuses to erect hoops through which believers must jump. Rather, he simply prays to his heavenly Father and asks him that these believers may pursue what is best."

(4) THAT THEY MAY BE PURE AND BLAMELESS UNTIL THE DAY OF CHRIST.

(a) pure - inner character - i.e. no mixture - cf 2 Cor 2:17.

- Paul's sincere motives
- judged in the sunlight

(b) blameless - outer conduct - "without stumbling", "giving no offence" (1 Cor 10:32)

- Motyer "A life against which no charge can be justly laid."

(c) until the day of Christ - eschatological perspective.

- v6 "He will bring it to completion at the day of Christ" - God's activity.
- v10 "You may.....for day of Christ" - our responsibility.

(5) FILLED WITH THE FRUIT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS THROUGH JESUS CHRIST.

- righteousness is fruit that comes from being joined to Christ. (see Ro 7:4)
- not the result of law (see Gal 3:21)
- Paul wants them filled with such fruit.

(6) TO THE PRAISE AND GLORY OF GOD - ONLY SUCH FRUIT GLORIFIES GOD.