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Philippians: Partners : Phil 1, 1-11

Reading a whole letter, such as Philippians is a strange and beautiful experience.

I liken it a little to being a child and sneaking down to the bottom of the stairs after they've been put to bed, and listening in to the conversation the grown ups are having in the living room and being very interested. But it doesn't stop there -

Then, as the adult's conversation finishes, its if as you're sitting there at the bottom of the stairs in the dark , reflecting on what you just heard, and all of a sudden you look up and there's one of the grown ups standing there - at first you are startled and think you might be in trouble, but then they warmly invite you into the room as well.

That's like the Holy Spirit's role - as we listen in to this conversation with God, Paul, and the Christians in Philippi, we get the sense that they are having a conversation that goes over our heads, about things, times, places, and people that we don't know about - but then the Holy Spirit surprises us, invites us in, and welcomes us into the conversation which we find out, to our delight, is meant for us, too.

That's what reading and understanding the scriptures is like.

It is a real story written by real people about real people a long time ago. We must be careful to think about what it means to them.

It is also a real, living, Spirit-filled and authored story about God's interactions with His beloved creation, up to and including the present day - and we must think about how we enter into the ongoing conversation - and what these words mean for us, today.

Some introductory facts about Philippi:

- It was the first church established in Europe
- Read about the work in Philippi from **Acts 16:11- end of chapter**

- God can work in your humble circumstances!

- women were still important co-workers with Paul in the Philippian church 10-15 years later when he wrote them this letter from Prison.
- **Paul first went to Philippi in about the year 48 - That's about 15 years after Jesus was Crucified and Raised - and wrote to them around 62.**

- God's "sovereignty" - his plan to work everything in history toward the Goal of redemption, judgement, and renewal
 - we see how God used Paul's suffering and imprisonment to do at least two things we see here: **first**, to spread the good news about Jesus within the Roman ranks - "Caesar's household" and **second**, to lead Paul to write this letter which has been read in churches and

preserved by the Holy Spirit for 2000 years to encourage and teach Christians not just in ancient Philippi, but around the world.

Paul may have written this letter from prison in Caesarea, BUT

-He execution in Rome around 64 would best explain the way Paul is writing here (aware of potential imminent death) , so we're going to work on the basis that He's in Rome writing this letter.

- Philippi was a Roman "Colony" - a special type of settlement– it had distinct privilege and responsibility.

- the city was to be an extension of the Power and Glory of the City of Rome,
-It was to be especially civilized – largely because it was full of high ranking army veterans who had Roman citizenship who were gifted land there by the emperor and charged with representing an honourable image of Rome to the surrounding barbarians.

I think you can begin to see how this parallels in some ways our own understanding of ourselves as kingdom representatives in the world!

Read Philippians 1:1-11:

Paul's greeting (vv. 1-2)

1

Paul and timothy are writing together - most likely Paul is saying here that Timothy is the writer and Paul is dictating the letter to him.

-Slaves is a more accurate way to communicate the idea that Paul and Timothy believe themselves to "belong" to Christ.

2 Paul greets and blesses all the saints in Philippi first - which is important for us to note - everyone who follows Jesus is a "saint". You are saints, if you have submitted to Jesus and acknowledged him as your king.

We often think a "saint" is someone who *does* all the right things" - while this is true in a limited sense - to be a saint is to be "set apart" -its the result of being given a new identity in Christ: this is something God does for you through faith.

- "Saints" can still mess up. Being a saint doesn't mean being perfect

-Paul greets "overseers" – (quick word study for you) overseers is the Greek equivalent of Jewish "elders" that you hear about in the Bible - and its also what we sometimes translate as "bishop" as well, though we don't use that term much in our tradition (KJV reads bishop, here).

-Paul also greets deacons, people in charge of a great deal of practical work in the local congregation,

-his greeting here is **not separating different classes of Christians**, but likely as a way of directing his "thank you" for the help he's received. He's being polite.

VV.3-11 – Paul’s Thanksgiving and Prayer

vv.3-5

Paul's tender heart toward the Philippians is obvious here. He doesn't speak this way about every church he writes to - and it's in VERY sharp contrast to the way he starts his letter to the Galatians after his greeting in that letter.

Partnership is the key idea here –

- Their partnership has been expressed in many forms – from the first instances of their own soft hearts and receptivity to the new that Jesus was the resurrected King, to the support of Paul through his times of trials, sharing meals and days as Paul lodged with them as a temporary resident, to working together in Philippi to preach by rivers and with elites, by sending financial support – and certainly their own prayers for Paul.

VV. 6, 10

-"that day of Christ Jesus, or King Jesus, or Messiah"

-This Phrase that Paul uses regularly originates in the Old Testament "day of the Lord" language that relates to judgement and setting everything Right again
- when Paul uses the language he’s pointing to Jesus, the anointed King will have this “day” when his authority is made perfect, complete, and obvious at his return to Earth.

-we can see that this “day” is also the day when his faithful followers - those who are IN CHRIST - are glorified, perfected, and completed along with him.

Vv. 7-9

- Paul clearly LOVES these people

We as a church are not going to be perfect. Sometimes we're going to need someone like Paul to speak into our church and say “hey make your peace!”

-Paul “having them in his heart” – we can have each other in our heart – and we must! By the grace of God – when Christ has our hearts, then we must have a heart for each other.

As a church we need to partner with others in the gospel and have them in our hearts, too.

There are ways *we are* blessing people doing gospel work in town, like Victoria Schreuders and Youth for Christ, there are people nearby, like Stan and Sally Brag at the Saugeen first nations and Alyssa Van Oostveen at Youth With a Mission. There is Michael Van Oostveen halfway around the world - let's keep partnering with others in the work of the gospel like the Philippians did with Paul.

Does anyone here feel compelled to write a prayer letter to one of our missionaries?

We often expect them to write prayer and update letters to us, but let's not forget to encourage them with letters and prayers regularly, too!

-Let's be a church that partners in gospel work in this way - and we'll keep talking about gospel work as we work through the rest of this letter to the Philippians.