

Overview: The Lord's Goodness in Giving us His Word (v 1a) || The Lord's Goodness in the Government of His Church (v 1b) || The Blessing of the Triune God in His Word (v 2)

I. The Lord's Goodness in Giving Us His Word (v 1a)

A. Background to this Letter - *Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ*

1) Author and Description

- a)** The Apostle Paul, under the moving and inspiration of the Holy Spirit, is writing to the visible church in Philippi
- b)** Paul also enumerates Timothy alongside of him in this epistle, not that Timothy is an author, but that he is being commended to the congregations there, as Paul intends to send him to minister to them (2:19-24).
- c)** Note, that elders are to continue without ceasing to disciple, train and raise up more elders - particularly young men for the ministry of the Word.
- d)** Servants of Jesus Christ
 - i.** It is neither in Paul's apostleship, nor in Timothy's ordination to the pastorate that is their (a) greatest and (b) most-beloved identity, but in that they are servants of Christ.
 - *In their ministry:* to preach Christ (1:18)
 - *In their lives:* to live is Christ (1:21)
 - ii.** Such calling is not only for Paul and Timothy, but for all Christians; of all our vocations, here is our greatest, that we are Christ's servants

2) Occasion and Themes

- a)** Occasion - Paul is writing from prison (1:13-14, So that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ; and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.)
- b)** Four Primary Themes
 - i.** Joy - To have joy in the Lord in all circumstances (Paul is in prison)
 - ii.** Humility - To consider oneself rightly before the Lord
 - iii.** Unity - Which follows from true humility, in that the Church is united together in doctrine and life - persevering alongside and encouraging one another
 - iv.** Christ - which is the chiefest, yet most overlooked - everything being tied to and flowing from the person and work of Christ
 - Our joy is in the LORD
 - We are humble because of the example of Christ
 - We are united together, having been first united to Christ
 - *Note,* Our eyes must be firmly fixed on Christ!

B. Audience of this Letter - *To the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi*

- 1)** *Identity of the Church:* Saints — That is, to the 'holy ones' or 'those set apart'

- a) Those who *were* sanctified - 1 Cor 6:11, 'And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.'
 - b) Those who *are being* sanctified - 1 Thes 5:23, 'And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.'
 - c) We are saints both in our (i) Standing before the Lord, and (ii) our Progressing in the Christian life.
 - d) Our *vocation* is to be servants of Christ; our *identity* is to be saints in Christ.
- 2) *Unity of the Church*: In Christ Jesus
- a) *Invisibly*: By grace, through the Spirit's regeneration granting us faith
 - b) *Visibly*: As signified in the baptism of believers and their children
 - c) *Illustrations*:
 - i. For Christ died not only for individual sheep, but the whole flock
 - ii. Christ gave Himself up for His [one] Bride - the Church
 - d) We must, then, continue to see unity (i) in doctrine through common confession, not compromise; and (ii) in our lives by submitting to one another out of reverence for Christ
- 3) *Territory of the Church*: in Philippi
- a) Area of Philippi: Roman colony in Macedonia above the North Point of the Aegean Sea; spreading of the Gospel and establishing of the Church there is recorded in Acts 16:11-40
 - b) Paul is writing to the regional Church there as a whole, which would have been made of multiple congregations (such as with the Ephesians, Galatians). This is in the same way when we speak about the Reformed Presbyterian *Church* of North America. We are many congregations, and even several presbyteries, but one *Church*.
 - c) *Ecclesial Purpose of Scripture*: When we read the Bible, we are reading God's Word not only to individuals and households, but to His Church as a whole.

C. Uses from the Text

- 1) The *Need* for God's Word
 - a) Just as the saints of Philippi needed instruction, we likewise need instruction; for though the light of nature makes clear the existence of God and His many attributes, yet we would not know Him, nor of salvation, nor of how to serve Him without His Word.
 - b) Pr 3:5, 'Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths'
- 2) The *Preciousness* of the Word - being the *Word* of God
- 3) The *Authority* of the Word - being the *Word* of *God*
- 4) The *Timelessness* of the Word
 - a) These same issues addressed in Philippians we need reminding of today
 - b) Such is clear even in this letter - Phil 3:1, 'To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe.'

- c) To those who do who believe they are flourishing in the areas of addressed in this letter, and believe it to simply be tedious, be mindful of 1 Thes 4:1, 'Finally then, brethren, we urge and exhort in the Lord Jesus that you should abound more and more, just as you received from us how you ought to walk and to please God'
- 5) Summary of Uses
 - a) We rejoice in that we have the Word of God
 - b) We make diligent use of this Word - in private, household, and public worship; throughout the day in meditating upon the Word of God and applying it to our circumstances and situations.

II. The Lord's Goodness in the Government of His Church (v 1b)

A. *With the Bishops*

- 1) Relationship between terms 'Bishops/Overseers' and the Office of 'Elder'
 - a) The term, Bishop, or Overseer, is not a distinct or third office, but the functional work of elders - to oversee the Church and her ministry
 - b) Acts 20:17, 28, 'From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called for the elders of the church... 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.'
- 2) *On the Office of Elder*: Qualified men tasked with the ministry of prayer and Word, shepherding the flock, administering the sacraments, and governing the Church.
- 3) Their Plurality and Parity
 - a) *Their Plurality*: Elders here, as everywhere in the Scriptures, are spoken of to be plural, demonstrating the church is to be governed by a plurality of elders.
 - b) *Their Parity, or Equality*: There is no distinction in authority between classes of elders. 1 Tim 5:17 says, 'Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honour, especially they who labour in the word and doctrine.' While we know that some elders, what we often call Pastors or Teaching Elders, are specifically dedicated to the ministry of preaching and instruction; yet they are equal in vote and authority with the ruling elders. We may, then summarize, this truth in this way: *While we may distinguish between two classes of elders, we may not divide the one office of elder.*
- 4) *Shepherds are Sheep*: The elders are placed alongside of and with the congregation
 - a) It is best for elders (particularly ruling elders) to be raised from within the congregation - which occurs through faithful discipling, raising up, and recognition
 - b) Elders (*both* ruling and teaching) are to be members of local congregations

B. *With the Deacons*

- 1) *On the Office of Deacon*: Deacons are those qualified men tasked with the ministry of leading the whole congregation in service and mercy ministry - a ministry which is led by deacons (as is the nature of an office in Christ's Church), but also participated in by the whole congregation (men, women and children alike).
- 2) Servants of Christ and His Church
 - a) This is certainly true also of elders (who are called under-shepherds)

- b)** Deacons, likewise, serve first under the authority and word of Christ
- C.** The only perpetual offices of the Church, as seen here, are of elders and deacons.
- D.** Uses from the Text
 - 1)** The goodness of God in giving such offices - it is indeed of His wisdom and grace.
 - 2)** Prayer for continual right (and reforming) government of the Church - in our own congregation and denomination, but also thru all the visible Church, at all times.

III. The Blessing of the Triune God upon His Church (v 2)

- There is a two-fold blessing upon the Church in God's Word: *Grace* and *Peace*. Let us not overlook such declaration, but savour it as the blessed and sure promise from the LORD.

A. The Grace of God in His Word

- 1)** *Note*, grace must be first: Before we have peace, we must be given grace - that is the receiving that of which we do not deserve, in its two general forms
 - a)** *Common Grace*: That which is grace from God and received commonly by all (such as our next breath, provision, discernment).
 - b)** *Saving Grace*: The granting of salvation by means of imputing of Christ's righteousness to the sinners' account.
- 2)** Triune Grace proclaimed in the Word
 - a)** Father - In our (i) election, (ii) constant provision and (iii) discipline
 - b)** Son - In (i) our redemption, (ii) His intercession and (iii) sanctification
 - c)** Spirit - In His (i) inspiration of the Word, (ii) illumination of the Word and (iii) making effectual to us the means of grace
- 3)** Our Need of Grace: Let us consider our two-fold need of Grace
 - a)** *Our works cannot save us.* Eph 2:1-9, 'And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins; Wherein in time past ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience: Among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind; and were by nature the children of wrath, even as others. But God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, Even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) And hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: That in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.'
 - b)** Our efforts cannot sustain us. 2 Cor 9:8, 'And God *is* able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all *things*, may have an abundance for every good work'.
- 4)** Answering Objections
 - a)** *Could this grace be conveyed to me?* 1 Tim 1:15, 'This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief'.

- b)** *But I feel not such grace in the Lord?* We must be diligent in the means He has given us. Like Jacob, we must wrestle, as it were, with the Lord until He gives us such blessing. 1 Jn 5:13-15, 'These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God. And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he hear us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.'

B. The Peace of God in His Word

- 1)** A Two-Fold Peace: We may understand such peace in two particular regards —
 - a)** *Peace with God:* In being reconciled to God through Christ Jesus
 - b)** *Peace from God:* In being fully satisfied in Christ, so that in all things our delight and gaze is upon Him and the inheritance we have with Him.
- 2)** Triune Peace from the Word
 - a)** Father - Author of our peace and deals with us as His children
 - b)** Son - The Prince of Peace who has made peace for us with the Father
 - c)** Spirit - The Comforter sent to us to abide with us forever, which (i) produces and (ii) cultivates the fruit of the Spirit, including peace.
- 3)** Our Need of Peace: Our two-fold need of peace,
 - a)** We have much anxiety and stresses in the normal cares of this life; 1 Pt 5:7, 'Casting all your care upon him; for he careth for you'
 - b)** We are at enmity —
 - i.** *With the Flesh, that is the natural man:* In the raging of our sinful desires that arise from our sinful nature and must be put to death
 - ii.** *With the World:* Which (i) actively rages and plots against Christ and His Church, and (ii) passively neglects the things of God
 - iii.** *With the Devil:* Which is an enemy, like a roaring lion, seeking to (i) destroy and (ii) suppress the Church
 - iv.** Do not forget, dear Christian, that we are engaged from the moment of our spiritual birth to the moment of our physical death in a real and spiritual war. And so we must put on the armour of God - but while we war against these things, let us not forget that peace which we have with God and from God.
 - c)** Let us not waiver in confessing this truth of the Christian faith and experience: It is infinitely better for us to be at enmity with the flesh, the world and the devil, but to have peace with God and peace from God.
- 4)** *Answering Objection:* Why do I not experience such peace?
 - a)** Besetting sin, causing our consciences to be afflicted
 - i.** Whether active disobedience - Eph 4:30, 'And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby ye are sealed unto the day of redemption.'
 - ii.** Or passive neglect - Song of Songs 5, The Church who does not come when Christ knocks upon the door in order to commune with her, and so He goes from that place

- b)** The trying (testing) of our faith, which is given (i) to increase our longing for Him in the season of His perceived absence (yet, He is still there), and (ii) to increase our love for Him when experience His peace.

- i.** *Illustration:* When one fasts, he experiences great longing for food, and is more thankful for the food when it is set before him to eat. So too when we go through such difficult and even restless seasons, we long so much more for the Lord and are so grateful once we are brought back to the sense of His grace and peace.

- ii.** Song of Songs 3:1-4, 'By night on my bed I sought him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not. I will rise now, and go about the city in the streets, and in the broad ways I will seek him whom my soul loveth: I sought him, but I found him not. The watchmen that go about the city found me: to whom I said, Saw ye him whom my soul loveth? It was but a little that I passed from them, but I found him whom my soul loveth: I held him, and would not let him go, until I had brought him into my mother's house, and into the chamber of her that conceived me.'

C. Uses from the Text

- 1)** Let us look to Christ - Isa 42:3, 'A bruised reed shall he not break, and the smoking flax shall he not quench'
- 2)** Let us delight in God, who is the Author and Provider of grace and peace
- 3)** Let us grow in grace and peace - For, indeed, these are expressed in God's Word that we should grow in them. The Christian's (a) understanding and (b) experience of God's grace and peace are neither natural nor complete. Let us, therefore, cultivate these by the work of the Spirit in our lives.
- 4)** Let us walk then accordingly in (a) Trust, and (b) Obedience - Isa 26:3, 'Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee.'

PHILIPPIANS 1:1-2 (NKJV)

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