

Philippians

The Easy Study Bible Commentary

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Christ Centered Ministries
Black Canyon City, Arizona

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Table of Contents

Introduction
Description of the Book of Philippians
Outline of Philippians
Commentary on Philippians
Greek Paraphrase of Philippians
The Plan of Salvation
Epilogue
About Trennis E. Killian

Introduction

I want to make it clear right away that this commentary series is not for Bible scholars, pastors, or anyone else who is well versed in the Greek New Testament.

Instead, this commentary series is for everyone else who does not fit into that group of scholars. It is for those who would like to study the New Testament with the knowledge of what the significant Greek words mean and how they fit into the context of each verse, chapter, and book that you may be studying.

As a pastor, I have watched many Christians (not just new Christians either) struggle to better understand what God is saying to them through His Word.

I started doing this process more than twenty years ago when I was teaching a new member class at my church. As it turned out, I started with eight adults who were all either new to studying the Bible or they were not the strongest readers. Therefore, both groups were having a tough time understanding the Bible.

So, I began by placing the verses of each lesson in a modified diagram form. When that proved to be helpful, I then began to take the Greek words and define them so they could understand the different meanings that each Greek word could have when translated into English.

The result was that the class soon became the largest class in the church and we all (especially me) learned a great deal about God's Word in the process.

Therefore, this is the approach I have taken with this new Bible commentary series. I will show you how this I did this with the example given below,

* * *

The Easy Study Bible Commentary takes *The Easy Study Bible Diagramed* and examines, describes, and expounds upon each New Testament book, chapter by chapter, paragraph by paragraph, verse by verse, phrase by phrase and finally word by word.

In my many years of Bible study and teaching, I have found this arrangement to be the easiest to follow and understand.

I have done my best to write this commentary with the idea in mind of making it easier for you to understand and therefore apply the great teachings that God gave to each of us through the various books of the New Testament.

Here is an example of how I bring in the Greek definition of all significant words. I don't put in the Greek word or the transliteration of the Greek word. I simply put the word as it is translated into the English, then I give the definition of the Greek word as it is in the context of the verse being studied.

This example is taken from the book of Philippians, chapter one, verses one and two:

Verses 1-2

Greeting

¹ Paul and Timothy, slaves of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons: ² Grace to you and peace from God, our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

¹ ***Paul and Timothy,***

*slaves of Christ Jesus,
to all the saints
in Christ Jesus
who are in Philippi,
including the overseers and deacons:
² Grace
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Verse: 1

¹ Paul and Timothy, slaves of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons:

¹ *Paul and Timothy,
slaves of Christ Jesus,
to all the saints
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including the overseers and deacons:*

Phrase by phrase:

¹ *Paul and Timothy,*

Paul – Paul or Paulus = “small or little” – Paul was the most famous of the apostles and wrote a good part of the NT, the 14 Pauline epistles (letters); Paulus was a deputy or pro-consul of Cyprus and is said to be a prudent man, in the management of affairs, as a governor (different man)
Timothy – “honoring God” – a resident of Lystra whose father was a Greek and mother a Jewess; he was Paul’s travelling companion and fellow laborer

slaves of Christ Jesus,

slaves – a slave, bondman, man of servile condition; devoted to another to the disregard of one’s own interests; a servant, attendant

Christ – the anointed One, the Messiah

Jesus – Jehovah is salvation

To all the saints

all – lineage running back to some progenitor, ancestry; a nation or tribe; family, in a wider sense, nation, people

saints – holy; things: consecrated; persons: unapproachable, perfect, pure, upright, worthy of God, saint

in Christ Jesus

Christ – the anointed One, the Messiah

Jesus – Jehovah is salvation

who are in Philippi,

Philippi – lover of horses” – a city of Macedonia located on or near the northern coast of the Aegean Sea, between the rivers Strymon and Nestus, and the cities Neapolis and Amphipolis

including the overseers and deacons:

including – with, together with, besides

overseers – an overseer; a man charged with the duty of seeing that things to be done by others are done rightly, any curator, guardian or superintendent; the superintendent, elder, or overseer of a Christian church

deacons – one who executes the commands of another, especially of a master, a servant, attendant, minister; the servant of a king; a deacon, one who, by virtue of the office assigned to him by the church, cares for the poor and has charge of and distributes the money collected for their use; a waiter, one who serves food and drink

Verse: 2

² Grace to you and peace from God, our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

² *Grace
to you
and peace
from God, our Father,
and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Phrase by phrase:

² *Grace*

Grace – grace; that which affords joy, pleasure, delight, sweetness, charm, loveliness: grace of speech; good will, loving-kindness, favor; benefit, bounty

to you

and peace

peace – a state of national tranquility; exemption from the rage and havoc of war; peace between individuals, harmony, concord

from God, our Father,

God – God the Father

Father – male ancestor; could be any one from immediate father to distant ancestor

and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Lord – he to whom a person or thing belongs, about which he has power of deciding; master, lord

Jesus – Jehovah is salvation

Christ – the anointed One, the Messiah

* * *

At the end of each section that we study, I will give you what I call my Greek Paraphrase of those verses. What I do is to take all the expanded Greek definitions and put them together to help us better understand the passage.

The following example is also from Philippians chapter one, verses one and two:

¹ Paul and Timothy, slaves of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons: ² Grace to you and peace from God, our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

(First is the Easy Study Bible Translation, then the Easy Study Bible Diagramed, and finally my Greek Paraphrase.)

¹ *Paul and Timothy,
slaves of Christ Jesus,
to all the saints
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² *Grace
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Greek Paraphrase of Verses: 1-2

From Paul and Timothy, slaves of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi along with their elders and ministers, who are in union with Jesus the Messiah. May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.

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I use this method whenever I study any part of the Bible, whether I'm just studying for my own enrichment or to teach it to others. It helps me to understand each passage well enough to apply it to my life as well as to help others do the same. This makes the whole experience so much more enjoyable for both my students and for me as well.

One more thing that I need to add is that I define every word every time it appears. Most commentaries must assume that you know the definition of a certain word because it appeared earlier in the commentary.

On the other hand, I realize that you may only want to look at one passage at a time, one verse at a time or only one word at a time. That is why I repeat the definitions every time the word appears.

My prayer is that it will make the Bible more understandable for you too. Please let me know how it works for you.

You can reach me anonymously through the 'Contact Us' tab on the menu of my web page.
<http://www.trenniskillian.com>

The Book of Philippians

Author and Date Written

Paul is recognized by most authorities as the author of Philippians. The internal and external evidence all point to Paul.

The consensus seems to be that Paul wrote this letter about 61AD from Rome while Paul was in prison there. Although there are some who believe he wrote it in either Caesarea or Ephesus.

Original Audience

Paul started this letter with the following greeting, *“To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi”* which makes it very clear to whom he was writing. For some reason, he added, *“including the overseers and deacons.”* See the commentary on 1:1 for some thoughts on why.

Paul wrote Philippians to what appeared to be his favorite of all the churches he started. There is nothing but affection, and almost no scolding in this letter.

It is different from other letters by Paul in at least three distinctive ways.

1. It has less logic and more of the heart.
2. There are no doctrinal arguments, but it has a friendship, even a fatherly approach.
3. It is an outpouring of Paul’s love for this church.

Time and Setting

The ancient city of Krenides (meaning “wells” or “springs”), was renamed Philippi, after Philip II, father of Alexander the Great, the Greek great conqueror. Philippi was in the Roman province of Macedonia and was strategically situated on the Egnatian Way, the main overland route between Asia and the West. This made it an important link in the early spread of Christianity into Europe.

The ruins of the city show signs of a rich Roman history, including an agora, or marketplace, where trade took place, and the western arch, or “gate,” of the city, described in Acts 16:13. The agora was important with its seat of judgment, library, and adjacent jail site. That was probably the place where Paul and Silas were imprisoned (Acts 16:23-40).

Paul established the church at Philippi in the early fifties as the first church in what is now Europe. When he and Silas were entering the city, they met with a group of women for prayer outside the city gate. Apparently, the city did not have a large Jewish population, since Paul usually preached at the local synagogue if there was one.

When Paul and Silas removed a spirit from a slave girl, her owners became angry and took them to court. They were beaten and jailed. In the jail, they prayed and sang until an earthquake shook the jail during the night. The next day the magistrates released them as soon as they discovered that Paul and Silas were Roman citizens and should not have been beaten or jailed without a fair trial.

Lydia, a Philippian businesswoman, became the first Christian convert there, and thus the first in all of Europe (Acts 16:12-15, 40). The church in this city was influential in opening the way for Christianity to spread to the rest of Europe. It all began with a women’s prayer group.

Purpose

Paul tells us in 4:10-18. Paul was writing a thank you note to the church in Philippi after they “*sent a gift more than once for my needs*” (4:16).

At least one of these “gifts” came from Philippi to Paul by Epaphroditus who must have also taken some questions of theirs to Paul. The doctrinal and practical teachings in the letter are probably in answer to those possible questions.

Since Paul was sending this letter to the Philippians by way of Epaphroditus again, it seems that the messenger may have had more detailed information on some of the points that Paul introduced in this letter.

Paul also seemed to be addressing some issues that were upsetting the church in Philippi.

Teachings in Philippians

Paul stressed the central thought that only in Christ are we able to achieve unity and joy.

He stressed the use of Christ as our model of humility and service. Once we do that, then we can enjoy unity in purpose, attitude, goal, and labor. Paul illustrated this point with his own life.

Righteousness is a gift of grace to believers, and it is to bear fruit in the believer’s life (1:11; 3:9).

The humility of Christ is the pattern for believers to follow in this life.

Content:

Chapter One is Paul’s account of his present circumstances.

Chapter Two is Paul’s appeal for the Philippians to have the mind of Christ.

Chapter Three is Paul’s appeal for the Philippians to have the knowledge of Christ.

Chapter Four is Paul’s appeal for the Philippians to have the peace of Christ.

Outline of Philippians

Chapter One

Greeting 1-2
Thanksgiving and Prayer 3-11
Advancement of the Gospel 12-20
Living Is Christ 21-30

Chapter Two

Exhortation to Humility 1-4
Christ's Example of Humility 5-16
Paul's Example of Humility 17-18
Timothy's Example of Humility 19-24
Epaphroditus' Example of Humility 25-30

Chapter Three

Knowing Christ 1-11
Reach for God's Goal 12-21

Chapter Four

Good Advice 1-3
Peace with the Lord 4-9
Appreciation for Support 10-20
Final Greetings 21-23

Chapter One

This opening chapter is much more than a greeting. After Paul does that, he gets into thanksgiving, prayer, advancement of the good news, and living is Christ.

Verses 1-2

Greeting

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deacons – one who executes the commands of another, especially of a master, a servant, attendant, minister; the servant of a king; a deacon, one who, by virtue of the office assigned to him by the church, cares for the poor and has charge of and distributes the money collected for their use; a waiter, one who serves food and drink

There is a subtle difference in how Paul starts this letter. In most of his other letters he makes mention of the fact that he is an apostle of Jesus Christ.

Paul includes Timothy in much the same way a spouse would be included in a letter written by only one of the couple. Timothy had nothing to do with the writing of this letter. He just happened to be with Paul at the time.

The word “slaves” is often translated as “servants” but this is not the true meaning of the word. It means “slave” as in someone who has no freedom of movement, must obey his master, and cannot change his circumstances.

Paul used this word to show that they have given themselves over to the will and service of Christ.

Paul often called believers saints. He was not describing their personalities or characters. He was merely showing their association with Christ.

Overseers and deacons were the ones chosen to serve the church. Overseers or bishops were the ones who led the church to adhere to the principles of Christ that Paul had given them. Deacons were those who were to serve the members of the church in their times of need.

Did Paul single them out for a reason? I think that he wanted them to know that, as in all the early churches, he expected them to see that the instructions in this letter would be heard by all and that it be applied to all the members of the church in Philippi.

Verse: 2

² Grace to you and peace from God, our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

² *Grace
to you
and peace
from God, our Father,
and the Lord Jesus Christ.*

Phrase by phrase:

² *Grace*

Grace – grace; that which affords joy, pleasure, delight, sweetness, charm, loveliness: grace of speech; good will, loving-kindness, favor; benefit, bounty

to you

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peace – a state of national tranquility; exemption from the rage and havoc of war; peace between individuals, harmony, concord

from God, our Father,

God – God the Father

Father – male ancestor; could be any one from immediate father to distant ancestor

and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Lord – he to whom a person or thing belongs, about which he has power of deciding; master, lord

Jesus – Jehovah is salvation

Christ – the anointed One, the Messiah

“Grace” and “peace” – As he did in other letters, Paul combined the Greek and Jewish greetings. Grace expresses God’s love to mankind and peace expresses the condition that results from God’s love.

Greek Paraphrase of Verses: 1-2

From Paul and Timothy, slaves of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi along with their elders and ministers, who are in union with Jesus the Messiah. May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace.

Verses 3-5

Thanksgiving and Prayer

³ I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, ⁴ always praying with joy for you all in my every prayer, ⁵ because of your partnership in the good news from the first day until now.

³ ***I thank my God***
in all my remembrance of you,
⁴ always praying
with joy
for you all
in my every prayer,
⁵ because of your partnership
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from the first day until now.

Verse: 3

³ I thank my God in all my remembrance of you,

³ ***I thank my God***
in all my remembrance of you,

Phrase by phrase:

³ ***I thank my God***

thank –

God – God the Father

in all my remembrance of you,

all – lineage running back to some progenitor, ancestry; a nation or tribe; family, in a wider sense, nation, people

remembrance – mention, remembrance, recollection, memory, mention

Paul was telling them not only how often he thought of them but that it was always good and he was thankful to God for them and their witness to each other and to the city of Philippi.

As some do when writing or speaking to others, Paul did not say this in order to build them up just to put them down later in the letter. He genuinely believed all that he said to them.

Verse: 4

⁴ always praying with joy for you all in my every prayer,

⁴ *always praying
with joy
for you all
in my every prayer,*

Phrase by phrase:

⁴ *always praying*

always – at all times, always, ever

praying – (two words)

making – to make; to make ready, to prepare; to produce, bear, shoot forth; to carry out, to execute

prayer – need, indigence, want, privation, penury; a seeking, asking, entreating, entreaty to God or to man

with joy

joy – joy, gladness; the joy received from you; the cause or occasion of joy; of persons who are one's joy

for you all

all – individually: each, every, any, all, the whole, everyone, all things, everything; collectively: some of all types

in my every prayer,

every – individually: each, every, any, all, the whole, everyone, all things, everything; collectively: some of all types

prayer – need, indigence, want, privation, penury; a seeking, asking, entreating, entreaty to God or to man

Paul was telling them that he was doing what he told others to do in several of his other letters, “always praying.”

When Paul was at Philippi, he was arrested and beaten, yet he only had joy when he thought of the church there.

This is the first of many times that Paul used “joy” to describe how he felt when he thought about the Philippians. This was one of the strongest words he could have used.

Verse: 5

⁵ because of your partnership in the good news from the first day until now.

⁵ *because of your partnership
in the good news
from the first day until now.*

Phrase by phrase:

⁵ *because of your partnership*

because – upon, on, at, by, before; of position, on, at, by, over, against; to, over, on, at, across, against

partnership – fellowship, association, community, communion, joint participation; the share which one has in anything, participation; fellowship, intimacy

in the good news

good news – good tidings; the glad tidings of salvation through Christ; the proclamation of the grace of God manifest and pledged in Christ; the message of good news

from the first day until now.

first – first in time or place; first in rank; influence, honor; chief; principal; first, at the first

day – the day, used of the natural day, or the interval between sunrise and sunset, as distinguished from and contrasted with the night; of the last day of this present age, the day Christ will return from heaven, raise the dead, hold the final judgment, and perfect his kingdom

now – at this time, the present, now

It was about ten years from the time Paul started the church in Philippi during his second missionary journey to the time that he wrote this letter.

Not only were the Philippians spreading the good news there in Philippi, but Paul was also referring to their helping him in his ministry.

The phrase, “from the first day until now” implies that they were faithful for the whole ten years without any turning away during that time. Paul didn’t say that about any other church, at least in his letters.

Greek Paraphrase of Verses: 3-5

I thank my God for you every time I think of you; always praying joyfully in every one of my prayers for all of you because of your participation in the good news from the very first day until now.