

## Grateful Joy

**Philippians 1:1-4 HCSB** 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. (3) I give thanks to my God for every remembrance of you, (4) always praying with joy for all of you in my every prayer,

**Philippians 1:1 HCSB** Paul and Timothy, slaves of Christ Jesus: To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons.

**Philippi.** Philippi was a Roman colony and the leading city of the district of Macedonia.

- **Acts 16:11-12 HCSB** Then, setting sail from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, the next day to Neapolis, (12) and from there to Philippi, a Roman colony, which is a leading city of that district of Macedonia. We stayed in that city for a number of days.

Its official name was *Colonia Augusta Julia Philippensis*. This rather long name reflects its history. It was first named after Philip II, the father of Alexander the great. Later it was assigned, in succession, the names of the emperors Julius Caesar and Augustus Caesar.

It was located on the main highway, called the Via Egnatia, leading from the eastern provinces (Byzantium) toward Adriatic seaports and on over toward Rome. That highway ran straight through the city and actually bisected the city's forum! Talk about a tourist trap! It was also economically important because it was proximate to the gold mines of Mount Pangaeus. Because of its wealth and strategic location, many legionaries who were retiring from the legions, chose to live in Philippi. This meant that Philippi had a strong Roman presence but also meant that many different languages were spoken there.

Philippi had also been granted the privilege of *Ius Italicum*. This was a privileged status only rarely granted to cities. It basically meant that that entire city was considered to be Italian soil. Think of it as being something like the status embassies enjoy today. The city thus was:

- Ruled by Roman rather than local law
- Able to enjoy a great degree of political autonomy
- Able to grant any person who was born there automatic Roman citizenship
- Exempt from certain taxes

Obviously, a city with these advantages tended to thrive and prosper over and above its neighbors.

**Slaves to Christ.** How fundamentally different is the biblical view of our day-to-day relationship with Jesus from the Culturally Christian view! Where they present Jesus as our facilitator, our personal promoter, our motivational speaker, Paul bluntly says "Jesus is our master and we are His slaves".<sup>1</sup>

But which view agrees more with the fact that Jesus is God? The Culturally Christian presentation of Jesus demeans Him, emasculates Him, denies His divinity. It reduces Him to our "life coach" there to "help us achieve our best life now". Paul's Jesus stands in power as our rightful king and demands a decision of us. Do we yield to His authority or continue in our rebellious ways?

---

<sup>1</sup> Romans 1:1; Titus 1:1; Philemon 1

This also sheds much-needed light on the issue of leadership. Paul also often claimed the title of apostle.<sup>2</sup> Some sought personal elevation and glory through title, sometimes referring to themselves as “super apostles” (2 Corinthians 11:5),

However, Paul understood apostleship to be inextricably associated with slavery to Christ.

- **Matthew 20:25-28 HCSB** But Jesus called them over and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles dominate them, and the men of high position exercise power over them. (26) It must not be like that among you. On the contrary, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, (27) and whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave; (28) just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life--a ransom for many."

Tell me, which of these two views more closely adheres to Jesus' teaching? Paul's or the so-called “super-apostles”?

One more thing; while acknowledging his gift of apostleship, notice that Paul was careful to specify that he is Christ's slave. The elders of the church are not the congregations' “hired hands”. We serve Christ first and foremost and we serve the congregation to the extent that that service furthers His cause and obey His commands.

- **Acts 5:29 HCSB** But Peter and the apostles replied, "We must obey God rather than men.

**Overseers and Deacons.** The Greek word for overseers is the word *episkopos* and is used synonymously for elders. At times it is rendered overseers; at others bishop; and yet others have it elders. The term deacon is *diakonos*, and can also be rendered “officers”. This is to all intents and purposes the same system that was used in the Old Covenant where leadership was divided between the Levites and the officers.

- **Deuteronomy 31:28 HCSB** Assemble all your tribal elders and officers before me, so that I may speak these words directly to them and call heaven and earth as witnesses against them.

These are the only two formal offices commanded for God's people. Elders hold overall responsibility of the church but are specifically responsible for the doctrinal purity, emotional and spiritual well-being, and unity of spirit of the congregation. Deacons help meet the direct needs of the people in the church by handling the distribution of food and money (Acts 6:1-3).

- **Acts 6:1-3 HCSB** In those days, as the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint by the Hellenistic Jews against the Hebraic Jews that their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution. (2) Then the Twelve summoned the whole company of the disciples and said, "It would not be right for us to give up preaching about God to wait on tables. (3) Therefore, brothers, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and wisdom, whom we can appoint to this duty.

**Philippians 1:2 HCSB** Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Grace to you.** It was customary in Greek and Latin communities to give a similar greeting in letters. However, Paul gives the custom a uniquely Christian twist. I often use the same greeting today when communicating with fellow believers throughout the world. I feel that by

---

<sup>2</sup> Romans 1:1; 1 Corinthians 1:1; 2 Corinthians 1:1; Galatians 1:1; Ephesians 1:1; Colossians 1:1; 1 Timothy 1:1; 2 Timothy 1:1; Titus 1:1

using a greeting with which they are familiar (if they are reading their Bible!) it offers an immediate and spiritual bond.

In a couple cases, I was trying to communicate with brothers who did not share any language I spoke. So, I pointed to phrases in the Bible, they looked up the same passage in theirs and understood what I was trying to tell them! We all laughed out of delight in the means of communication that Hashem had provided for his polyglot children.

**God our Father.** This is a phrase that Paul uses often in his letters (Galatians 1:2-3; 1 Corinthians 1:3; Romans 1:7).

- [Galatians 1:2-3 HCSB](#) and all the brothers who are with me: To the churches of Galatia. (3) Grace to you and peace from God the Father and our Lord Jesus Christ,
- [1 Corinthians 1:3 HCSB](#) Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
- [Romans 1:7 HCSB](#) To all who are in Rome, loved by God, called as saints. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
- [Philemon 1:3 HCSB](#) Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

**Lord Jesus.** Paul emphasizes Jesus' authority and power, something that is woefully missing from many Culturally Christian churches. The word is *kyrios*, and its other principle rendering is "master". For example, the word *kyrios* was used in the Romans' days for the Caesar and implied his absolute monarchical power. Again, the biblical view of disciples is that we are Yahweh's slaves and He is our master. We are the subjects; He is our Lord and King. So, "Lord" should be understood as Jesus' royal title and should not be uttered lightly or irreverently.

Lord is also often used as a synonym for "Messiah" ("Christ" to the Greeks), another of Jesus' royal titles.

- [Acts 2:36 HCSB](#) "Therefore let all the house of Israel know with certainty that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Messiah!"

[Philippians 1:3-4 HCSB](#) I give thanks to my God for every remembrance of you, (4) always praying with joy for all of you in my every prayer,

**I give thanks...for you.** Paul often expressed such gratitude for those who were either his converts or his supporters (Romans 1:8; 1 Corinthians 1:4; Colossians 1:3; 1 Thessalonians 1:2; 2 Thessalonians 1:3; 2 Timothy 1:3; Philemon 4).

- [Romans 1:8 HCSB](#) First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you because the news of your faith is being reported in all the world.
- [1 Corinthians 1:4 HCSB](#) I always thank my God for you because of God's grace given to you in Christ Jesus,
- [Colossians 1:3 HCSB](#) We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, when we pray for you,
- [1 Thessalonians 1:2 HCSB](#) We always thank God for all of you, remembering you constantly in our prayers.
- [2 Thessalonians 1:3 HCSB](#) We must always thank God for you, brothers, which is fitting, since your faith is flourishing, and the love of every one of you for one another is increasing.
- [2 Timothy 1:3 HCSB](#) I thank God, whom I serve with a clear conscience as my forefathers did, when I constantly remember you in my prayers night and day.

- [Philemon 1:4 HCSB](#) I always thank my God when I mention you in my prayers,

This is something that the elders and those among us who serve as ministers outside the walls of this meeting place should take to heart. It is important to express gratitude for your people. You often have to rebuke them for their sins. You often have to correct their mistaken doctrine or help them clean up their messes. Be sure that that is not the only side of you that they see. Be sure to thank the volunteers for their service. Be sure to thank someone who performs some mitzvah. Express appreciation for the fact that they take time from their busy schedules to come and hear you speak. We often teach them the importance of gratitude. We must demonstrate that importance by being models of gratitude.

The Hebrew concept we're discussing is *hakarat hatov* - the Hebrew term for gratitude. In the image the Hebrew is read from right to left. *Hakarat hatov* can be defined as "recognition of the good [another has done for you]."

- [Deuteronomy 28:45-47 HCSB](#) "All these curses will come, pursue, and overtake you until you are destroyed, since you did not obey the LORD your God and keep the commands and statutes He gave you. (46) These curses will be a sign and a wonder against you and your descendants forever. (47) Because you didn't serve the LORD your God with joy and a cheerful heart, even though *you had* an abundance of everything,

To paraphrase Moses, every one of life's curses stems from ingratitude and every one of life's blessings comes from *hakarat hatov* – grateful joy. I have repeatedly taught that pride is the root of every sin and humility is the basis of every good. Let me formally make the connection here for you. Pride leads to ingratitude, and humility leads to its opposite.