



First Baptist Church At The Villages

Series: REJOICE! In The Lord • Study Title: The Advance of the Gospel •
Philippians 1:1-2 • For Use by groups 9/08 through 9/14/2019

Main Point

A life centered on the gospel is a life of grace and peace.

Introduction

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

Spend a few minutes discussing the various titles people use to distinguish themselves. What titles come to mind? (For example: doctor, reverend, professor, or lieutenant) Why do we like to have titles associated with our names? What do these titles tell other people about us?

What title did Paul go by in his greeting to the church at Philippi? What does this title communicate? What other titles could he have chosen from?

People like to be introduced with titles of distinction, but in his letter to the church at Philippi, Paul introduced himself as a servant of Jesus Christ. From the beginning of his letter, Paul set the tone of humility and selflessness that he would encourage the Philippian believers to demonstrate, an attitude modeled by Christ Himself.

Understanding

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| Ask a volunteer to read Philippians 1:1-2.

How are the Philippian believers described in verse 1?

As Christians, we are saints, set apart for God's service and living in the sphere of Christ's

love and grace. “Saints” doesn’t refer to an elite category of super-spiritual believers but to all people redeemed by grace through faith in Christ—people set apart for God’s service and for living by His lofty standards. We may not feel saintly now, but this is how God views us because we have been justified through Christ.

In contrast, how did Paul describe himself and Timothy in verse 1? What did this title imply?

Ask volunteers to read the following statements from the introductions to some of Paul’s other New Testament epistles: Romans 1:7, Galatians 1:3, 1 Corinthians 1:3, and Ephesians 1:2. Why do you think Paul consistently used the same greeting in his letters to churches?

In your own words, define grace and peace. What is the source of “grace and peace” for the Christian?

Grace is God’s undeserved favor—His love in action. Peace is wholeness or soundness under His rule. Paul never varied the order of the terms; only on the basis of God’s grace is wholeness possible.

Why are grace and peace important elements in church fellowship? How are they evident in our church?

Paul established the church in Philippi during his second missionary journey, which is written about in Acts 15–18.

| Have a volunteer read Acts 16:11-18 and Acts 16:27-30.

What do we learn about Philippi in Acts 16:12?

How would you describe the religious climate of our city? Do you think it is similar to or different than Philippi? What general observations can you make about our community regarding what people believe?

Who are the three individuals who interacted with Paul in these verses and what were their occupations?

What do their backgrounds tell us about the scope of Paul’s ministry?

As we’ll see, one of the issues facing the church at Philippi was disunity. What impact do you think the social make-up of the church had on the disunity they were battling?

What does Acts 16:14 reveal about how Paul approached his responsibility to

share the gospel? What does this verse say about God's role? How do these truths impact your feelings toward evangelism?

Application

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

What is the priority, the main focus, of a slave? In light of this, what should be the priority of someone who is a slave to Christ?

With genuine humility, Paul described himself and Timothy as slaves of Christ Jesus. The Greek word translated slaves literally means "bondslaves." The noun probably comes from a verb that means "to tie" or "to bind." A bondslave was totally subservient to his master's will. Paul and Timothy were at their Lord's disposal.

In what ways are you fulfilling your servant role as a Christian? What could be your next step in this role?

How does your position as a saint motivate you to live as a slave to Christ?

As Christians, we are not only saints, we are also slaves of Christ. As such, we are to live fully given over to Jesus and the spread of His gospel. One of the great paradoxes in the Christian faith is that only through slavery to Christ do we find true freedom. This is a recurring theme in Paul's letters. One of the other themes we'll see in Philippians is Paul's whole-hearted belief that the gospel is more important than everything else in life, whether that be imprisonment, sickness, struggle, relationships, and so on.

Can you pinpoint anything in your life that is more important to you than the gospel? What comes to mind? How can you move toward surrendering that thing and replacing it with the gospel?

As a group, what can we do to pray for and reach out to people in our community who don't know Christ?

Pray

Close your group time in prayer, thanking God for the love He shows us by making us into His saints. Pray also for the strength and courage to live as slaves for Him this week. Pray that your group members will be reminded of God's grace and peace as they strive to live a gospel-centered life.

Commentary

| Philippians 1:1-2

Paul was in prison in Rome, probably about A.D. 63. The Philippian believers had learned of his location and had sent a church member, Epaphroditus, to deliver a gift to him and to stay with him. Epaphroditus had become gravely ill but had recovered, so Paul sent him back with a letter that explained Epaphroditus' early return and gave information about his situation, addressed problems in the church, and expressed appreciation for the Philippian believers' support.

Paul identified himself and greeted the Philippian believers. His including Timothy in the greeting does not indicate Timothy co-wrote the letter; rather, Timothy was Paul's valued coworker who had been with the apostle in Philippi on the second missionary journey (see Acts 16:1-12). The Philippian Christians knew and respected Timothy (see Phil. 2:22). With genuine humility, Paul described himself and Timothy as slaves of Christ Jesus. The Greek word translated slaves literally means "bondslaves." The noun probably comes from a verb that means "to tie" or "to bind." A bondslave was totally subservient to his master's will. Paul and Timothy were at their Lord's disposal. The phrase Christ Jesus identified Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah and Savior.

Paul's letter was addressed to all the Philippian believers. He used the word all nine times in his letter—perhaps to stress that he excluded no one from his deep love or from his gratitude for the church's expression of care for him. He also may have wanted to underscore at the letter's beginning that the congregation was to be united. The word saints should be understood as a synonym for Christians. All Christians are in Christ Jesus—they live in the sphere of His lordship. Paul's phrase in Christ was another way to designate people committed to Christ.

Paul included the church's overseers and deacons in his greeting. At this time in church history, these terms primarily designated functions, not offices. Overseers probably were elders—older men with leadership responsibilities. Deacons were involved in ministering to church members' needs. Paul may have mentioned these church leaders in particular because they had recommended and supervised the collection of the church's gift to him.

Paul's consistent prayer for recipients of his letters was grace and peace. As Christians' Father in the best possible sense, God provides grace and peace. Through faith in Christ, we become members of His family—His children. We live in His compassionate care. Paul's full designation the *Lord* (Deity) *Jesus* (Savior) *Christ* (Messiah) emphasized the Son's role in supplying grace and peace.

