

Is This Letter Addressed to You? (Part 2)

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[0:00] Take your Bibles, would you, and open them to the New Testament book of Philippians.

I've got a little better voice this morning than I did last Sunday morning, but just only a little better. I hope it doesn't give out on me. But Philippians chapter 1, and I want to read verses 1 and 2 once again.

And we will get past 1 and 2 pretty soon as we move our way through this letter. I have a couple more things to say about these two verses. They're really very crucial, very important for us as we really are launching out into the study of this book over the next several weeks.

The first two verses need to be dealt with, and we need to consider something very important about them. Here's what Paul wrote.

Now, as I pointed out last Sunday, if you will remember, if you were here last Sunday, and I think many of you, probably most of you were.

[1:30] However, we would be right in saying that the book of Philippians is a love letter. Really unique among all of Paul's letters.

It's a love letter. Paul doesn't deal with any doctrinal issues that the church of Philippi were having a problem with. But there's very little here in the way of admonition, if anything, in the sense of rebuking them for heresies or wrong practice or anything like that.

It's a love letter. Very clearly it is that. As one theologian put it, Philippians is the Apostle Paul's epistle of the heart or letter of the heart.

And this is the way that I chose to begin our study of the book of Philippians, and it was by asking a question. A very important question, I think.

One that maybe you've not considered, really, as you have begun to read any of Paul's letters. A very important question. I think a very serious question. A very personal question.

[2:37] And here's the question. Is this letter addressed to you? It's a good thing to read letters that are addressed to you. It's not a good thing to read a letter that's not addressed to you.

And so I'm very serious about that. Is this letter, this love letter, is it addressed to you? This letter, this love letter, as I've called it, is addressed to a specific group of people very clearly.

And based on the opening verses of the letter, verses 1 and 2, and considering how Paul very clearly identified his intended readers based upon these things, can you say with complete confidence, all assurance, this letter is for me?

That is, everything in this letter, it's all for me. Can you say that with all confidence and assurance? I think you would agree that is a pretty good way to enter into the reading and studying of this letter.

That question has to be answered. Is this letter written to you?

[3:51] Now, you can say that, you can say yes to that with full assurance if you can answer yes to the following questions.

We looked at one of them. There are three questions. We looked at the first one last Sunday. Let me review just a little bit. Here's the first question that you ought to be able to answer yes to, and then you'll know that this letter was written to you.

The question is, do you share the same eternal relationship with those to whom Paul originally wrote? Do you share the same eternal relationship?

Paul opened the letter this way in verse 1. He identified himself and then identified his readers, but really in his identification of himself, he is also identifying his readers.

And he said, Paul and Timothy, Timothy was with him. Luke also was with him. But Paul and Timothy bond servants, doulos, slaves of Jesus Christ to all the saints in Christ Jesus.

[4:56] And so you see, the addressees of Paul's letter possessed a very important, very special relationship with Christ. It was an eternal relationship.

And two words describe that relationship. Slaves and saints. We covered this ground last week. Slaves and saints. And it's very clear from here and also other letters written by Paul that Paul viewed every true born-again follower of Christ as a slave.

A slave. Now that kind of bothers our sensibilities. But listen, slavery is a bad thing unless it's slavery to Christ. That's a good kind of slavery.

And Paul's original readers of this love letter were slaves in Christ, he said. That is, he owns them. That's what slavery means. You're owned by a master.

And that was true of these original readers. He owned them. And that was their eternal relationship. And the other identification was the word, or is the word, saints.

[6:07] Slaves and saints. Saint meaning one who is set apart. One who is consecrated. And so the idea is, again, that believers in the Lord Jesus Christ are set apart by God for himself.

For himself as his own personal possession. That's what it means to be a saint. So born-again followers are, or born-again believers are, holy saints.

That's really redundant. Because the same word, *hagios*, that's translated saints, is also translated holy ones in other parts of the Bible.

So, maybe a little redundant, but this is what we are. Holy saints. Both in the sense of positional holiness, as well as practical holiness.

Positional holiness, that is in the sense of who we are in Christ. And practical holiness, in the sense of how we're to live as saints.

[7:18] How we're to live every day in Christ. And let's not forget what we said last week. All those who are positionally holy are expected by God to also be practically holy.

The two go together. So, as soon as we are called saints through the new birth, we are called to be saints.

To be saints. To be what we are. To live out what we are. As Ephesians, again, Ephesians 5.3. To live in such a way as is fitting for saints.

That carries with it the idea of conspicuous holiness. Conspicuously holy in the eyes of those who observe us. And really, much deeper than that, we are holy even in our own private lives.

Who we are when no one's looking. So, positionally and practically holy. And so, is this letter addressed to you right off the bat? We need to answer that question. Does the word slave identify your eternal relationship with Christ?

[8:22] And does the word faint identify with your eternal relationship with Christ?

He owns you. He has set you apart for himself. And your relationship with Christ is conspicuous to all who observe.

Now, there's the first question that needs to be answered. Here's the second question this morning. Do you share the same eternal residence with those to whom Paul originally wrote?

My pulpit is on a little. I thought, this thing is moving, isn't it? Let's hope it doesn't just move on down there. All right, let me restate the question.

Do you share the same eternal residence with those to whom Paul originally wrote? Where do the addressees of Paul's letter reside?

[9:26] That's the question. Where do they reside? What is their residence? Well, Paul does address the letter this way. He says to all the saints. He's addressing the letter. This is to you.

To the saints in Christ Jesus. We've already covered the ground of saints. Who are where? In Philippi. Philippi. That's why the letter is called Philippians.

The Christians at Philippi. He's addressing it to those who are in Philippi. And then he adds with the bishops, *episkopos*. That's the word for overseer.

It's an office within the church. Another way of referring to elders. So he's writing to all the saints. They're at Philippi. Along with all the *episkopos*.

The elders. And the *diakonos*. The deacons. The servants. In the church. But where did these saints live? In Philippi.

[10:24] That's where they lived. In Philippi. Now, the question is, what can we learn about the residents of these first readers of the letter? And more importantly, what might this tell us about whether or not this love letter was addressed to us?

Whether or not it was addressed to you. And you. And you. And this is the question we need to answer. Well, first, geographically speaking. Geographically speaking.

Philippi is a fairly well-known New Testament city located in Macedonia. In Greece. Present-day Greece. In fact, there is a city still there.

Very near the ruins of Philippi. It goes by the name of Philippoi. Very similar. And so, geographically speaking, Philippi.

Very well-known city. And it was founded, by the way, by Philip II. The father of Alexander the Great. And Philippi's main street was very famous.

[11 : 27] It was the famous Via Ignatia in the Latin. The Ignatian Way. Which, by the way, was just a Roman road. Very important artery in the Roman Empire.

It was the artery that ran east and west. Ran from Rome. And then east on into Asia. From Europe to Asia. It connected the two continents.

In the known world of the day. It was a Roman road. A military road. Very important. For trade. For military purposes. A very important road.

And it ran right through Philippi. And so, the location of Philippi was strategic. For a number of reasons.

But, in relation to Paul and Paul being sent there. It was strategic for the spread of the gospel. That's why the Holy Spirit sent Paul and Silas.

[12 : 25] Or Timothy and Silas and Luke. Why he sent them there. Because it was strategic for the gospel. It would be the way, ultimately, to connect the gospel with Rome.

I mention that because this letter, in a sense, was written to people just like you. And me. Here today.

We live, of course, in a particular geographical location. Our city. Our individual homes. Even our individual persons are potentially strategic for the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

So, we kind of fit there. We kind of identify with the original readers, addressees of this letter. But let's consider something else about the residents of Paul's original readers.

Biblically speaking, it was at Philippi that Paul planted the very first church, the very first Christian church in Europe. The very first one.

[13 : 33] The seed of the Western church. Ultimately, the church in the West in America, because of our European Christian settlers, ancestors.

So it's very crucial, right? And you might remember the story recorded in Acts, in Acts chapter 16. When Paul arrived at Philippi, there was no Jewish synagogue, if you remember the story.

That was Paul's normal kind of way, his strategy. When he would enter a new city, he would go first of all to the synagogue, and he would connect with the Jews there, and then go out from there to connect others in the city, including Gentiles.

But in Philippi, there was no synagogue. Because the Jewish population was very small. And so Paul went down to the river and found a group of women who were having a prayer meeting. And he connected with them. And one particular woman, Lydia, a seller of purple, a very influential, very wealthy businesswoman.

[14 : 39] And Paul led Lydia to Christ, remember? And so Lydia was the very first convert to Christianity in Europe, at least according to the record of Scripture.

But it didn't end there. Of course, she was not the last convert to Christianity. Very soon, Christianity blossomed in the city of Philippi. First starting with Lydia, because Lydia was very aggressive in her sharing the gospel.

She first shared the gospel with her family and led her entire household to Christ, and then led all of her servants to Christ. And so here was the beginning of Christianity in Philippi, from Paul to Lydia to her whole household.

And very quickly, the church there in Philippi became an interracial church, a multi-kind of cross-cultural church.

It began with Lydia, who was a Jew, one of a few Jews in the city. A little bit later, again, according to the record in Acts, Paul would meet a young slave girl who was possessed of demons.

[15 : 46] And because of her kind of demonic possession, she was somehow able to tell fortunes and brought a lot of money to her masters. And Paul, of course, shared the gospel with this young slave girl.

And God was gracious to save her. And obviously, because of the loss of revenue, this didn't said well with her masters. And so her masters had Paul and Silas arrested and beaten and thrown into prison.

But at midnight, they had a little praise and worship service. That is, to us older Baptists, they were singing hymns there in the prison. And an earthquake came and set them free.

Remember the story? It's an amazing story. Well, there was a jailer there, of course. And assuming that the prisoners had all escaped, he was about to take his own life.

And Paul prevented him, intervened, and led the jailer to faith in Christ. And through him, he led his entire family to Christ.

[16 : 52] You see, what an amazing beginning for a church there in Philippi. First a Jewish woman in her whole household. Then a Gentile slave girl.

And then specifically a Roman jailer. All led to Christ, including his household and many, many others. Quite a mix of people in the church at Philippi at its beginnings.

And so we could say that Paul's letter was written to people just like many of us here today. In this sense. I mean, you know, different backgrounds.

Different socioeconomic levels. Different ethnicities. Different educational levels. And on and on we could go. Because the gospel is for everyone. For everyone.

Regardless of who you are ethnically and any other way. For everyone. This love letter, this letter of Paul, was written to people of every conceivable kind.

[17 : 57] People just like you. Just like you. Let me give you a third way to identify the readers of this letter from Paul. Evangelistically speaking.

Evangelistically speaking. It was a gracious, sovereign God. Who brought the good news of Jesus Christ to the people of Philippi.

God did this. Do you remember how this happened? It too is recorded for us in the book of Acts.

And it's quite interesting. Do you remember from Luke's record in Acts.

How God directed the spread of the gospel from Asia on into Europe. Well, in Acts chapter 16. In fact, I want to read this to you.

You can turn to it if you want to. Acts chapter 16, verse 6. Listen to this. It's very interesting. The Bible records here. Now, when they had gone through Phrygia.

[18 : 54] Now, this is in Asia. They're in Asia. Asia Minor specifically. And Phrygia is kind of to the east of them. When they had gone through the region. Then it says the region of Galatia.

That would be right to the west of them. And they were forbidden, the Bible says, by the Holy Spirit. To preach the word in Asia.

Now, can you imagine? And we don't have time to get into all the speculation of that. The intrigue of that. Here they are, you know, going through these regions in Asia Minor.

And God has prevented them from staying put anywhere. And spreading the gospel. Preaching the gospel. And so, Luke goes on. After they had come to Mysia.

They tried to go into Bithynia. That would be the extreme north of Asia Minor. And again, the Spirit did not permit them. Did not permit them.

[19 : 54] So, passing by Mysia. They came down to Troas. That would be right on the coast of the Aegean Sea. Right there to the extreme west.

And here's what happened. A vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him saying, Come over to Macedonia and help us.

Now, after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them. Therefore, sailing from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace.

And the next day came to Neapolis. And from there to Philippi, which is the foremost city of that part of Macedonia, a colony. And we were staying in that city for some days.

Interesting, isn't it? And there's a lot to the story that is left blank for us. We have to kind of speculate about how all this happened, the vision and all of that.

[21 : 04] But the point is that God led them, constrained them, prevented them first from going to particular areas that no doubt needed the gospel.

Now, Paul would later go to these places. But he constrained them from going there and led them deliberately, ultimately, to Philippi. And so God is in charge of this.

And so there are people here today, by the way, right here this morning, who are just like these dear saints in Philippi.

In fact, in a sense, every born-again believer can identify with this because God has sovereignly, savingly, directed the good news of Jesus Christ into your life, possibly through a family member,

maybe through a dear friend who is a believer, maybe a preacher faithful to His calling, maybe just a total stranger whom God allowed to intersect your life at just the right moment.

And you were saved. You see, so we can identify with the people. In a sense, many of you, hopefully all of you, can identify here with those to whom this letter was written.

[22:30] This letter could easily be addressed to you. Every one of you. And in several senses, each of us shares the same residence as those to whom Paul originally wrote this letter.

But let's go back to the original question one I asked a moment ago. Remember, this letter is addressed to you only if you can answer yes to this question, do you share the same eternal residence with those to whom Paul originally wrote?

Eternal residence. Does Paul give us any indication about his readers' eternal residence? Yes. Does he? Yes. Yes. He does.

Do you see it there? He gives a very significant one that we'd better not miss. And so that leads us to a fourth way to identify, and I would say the most important way to identify, the residence of Paul's original readers, spiritually speaking.

Spiritually speaking, Paul says they are in Christ. In Christ.

[23:50] This is where they reside. In Christ. And by the way, in Christ was one of Paul's favorite expressions to refer to the spiritual union that exists between the believer and the Lord Jesus Christ.

As a matter of fact, the expression appears 79 times in the New Testament. And guess what? 76 of those 79 were penned by the Apostle Paul.

This is one of his favorite expressions. Luke used it in Acts, but there it was in connection with Paul and Paul's ministry. Luke traveled with Paul. And then Peter used it two times in his first letter.

But by far, clearly, Paul owned this expression. This expression in Christ is a Paulinism. Clearly. That said, it is the meaning of this expression that is most important. What does it mean? Its meaning is rich. Rich.

[24:56] Now, Paul used the expression a number of times as addresses in his letter, as salutations, greetings in his letter. And that, of course, is the case here in Philippians.

But by far, Paul used in Christ in a theological sense. He used it to convey a very important doctrinal truth.

It is the truth concerning the believer's union with Christ. And it's a great doctrine.

And this is such a rich doctrine, it would be impossible for us this morning to plumb the depths of it. In fact, I would say to you that it is impossible for us even in this life to plumb the depths of this great doctrinal truth.

Not because there's not enough time to do it, but because we can just go so far with it in our understanding what it means, fully means, to be in Christ.

[25:58] But let me take you to one passage that perhaps declares this doctrine more clearly than any other that I know. And it's Ephesians chapter 2, starting with verse 4.

And I'm going to quote it. You can turn to it if you want to, but you're going to be a little confused when I read it because I'm going to quote it from a paraphrase. I think a very good paraphrase, the J.B. Phillips translation, because it brings out the fullness of the meaning here.

So listen very carefully. We're talking about the union, the spiritual union between the believer and Christ. What it means to be in Christ.

Now listen to this translation very carefully. But even though we were dead in our sins, and we were, you know, God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love He had for us, gave us life together with Christ.

It is, remember, by grace and not by achievement that you have been saved. And He has lifted us right out of the old life to take our place with Him in Christ in the heaven.

[27:17] Now that's a mouthful. Where does the believer reside then? with God in Christ in the heaven.

That's where the believer resides. Not someday. But in reality, in a spiritual reality that is more real than anything here, that's where we reside right now.

With God. In Christ. In the heavens. You see, everything Paul said in this verse in Ephesians 2 is past tense. It's all done.

We were dead in sins. He gave us life together with Christ. We have been saved. He has already, has lifted us right out of the old life and placed us in, with Him in Christ in the heavens.

It's all past tense. It's all done. But let me go a little further with that passage. Thus, Paul goes on to say, thus He shows for all time the tremendous generosity of the grace and kindness He has expressed towards us in Christ.

[28 : 42] It was nothing you could or did achieve. It was God's gift to you. No one can pride himself upon earning the love of God.

The fact is that what we are, we owe to the hand of God upon us. We are born afresh in Christ.

There's that expression again.

Born afresh in Christ. And born to do those good deeds which God planned for us to do. It connects to our life here as temporary residents of this world.

But in reality, our residence is with God in Christ. Our lives are in Him. In the heavens. D. Martin Lloyd-Jones said this of this passage and I quote, he said, this is the very essence of Christianity and nothing less than that.

It is what God has done to us and for us and not primarily anything that we have done. Christianity, in other words, does not just mean that you and I made a decision.

[29 : 52] People can decide to stop doing certain things and to start doing other things and that is not Christianity. People can believe that God forgives them their sins, but that is not Christianity in and of itself.

The essence of Christianity is the truth we have here in this passage. This is the real thing. The real thing. And nothing less than this is the real thing and it is true of every Christian.

We are Christians at... We are not Christians at all unless you are joined to Christ and in Christ.

This is a rich doctrine.

Now, it is true then that the mailing address, the physical address of Paul's readers was a physical place. It was Philippi, the principal city of Macedonia.

But their real residence, the only residence that really matters, their spiritual address was in Christ.

[30 : 59] In Him and in the heavens. Paul's going to later say in Philippians 3, verse 20, for our citizenship, that is, our real residence, our citizenship is where?

Do you remember that verse? In heaven. That's our citizenship. It's in heaven from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ.

So, do you share the same eternal relationship as those or with those to whom Paul originally wrote? Slaves of Christ? Saints in Christ.

And, do you share the same eternal residence with those to whom Paul originally wrote? In Christ. In Christ. A spiritual, eternal, vital union with Christ.

this is a love letter addressed to a specific group of people. Has it been addressed to you?

[32 : 01] Then there's one more question. Do you share the same eternal reward with those to whom Paul originally wrote?

The same eternal reward. Look at verse 2 again. grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace and peace. Now, on the one hand, this is an appropriate way for Paul to address his readers. I mean, you may not know it, but grace is the, was the standard greeting for letters written to Greeks, Greek letters.

and peace was the standard greeting for Jewish letters. Isn't that interesting? Paul brings both of them together. He did this in a number of other letters as well.

And so it's appropriate for Paul to greet them in this way because in Philippi, the church of Philippi was made up of both. Greeks and Jews, Gentiles and Jews.

[33 : 08] So very appropriate, but there's more to it than that. Because on the other hand, when the Holy Spirit led Paul to write his letter and to address it in just this way and to choose his letter, his words just this way, his intent was far more than just writing style, formal writing style.

We know that because of what Paul tells us about the origin or the source of this grace and peace. And what is the source of it? He says, God our Father.

and the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace and peace are the eternal reward of a loving Savior, a loving Redeemer.

Grace and peace. And what are we to understand about these? Well, in the first place, grace, we think we know a lot about grace, don't we? That's a very important word, a very key word, a very significant doctrinal word in the faith.

Grace, we could say, is the ongoing, the continuous cause of our salvation from start to finish. Starts with grace, continues with grace, and goes on ultimately in grace.

[34:24] Grace is the continuous cause of our salvation from start to finish. And we might remember it this way. First of all, grace is the attitude of God toward us. grace. The Bible says in Ephesians 2, verse 8, for by grace you have been saved through faith.

And so grace is the attitude of God toward us. He graced us. And then secondly, grace is the activity, the ongoing activity of God in us.

In us. 1 Corinthians 15, verse 10, but by the grace of God I am what I am. This is Paul speaking, but every believer can join in and say the same.

Paul says, I am what I am by the grace of God. And His grace toward me was not in vain, but I labored, I labored, I worked more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

So grace is the activity of God in us. And thirdly, grace is the accomplishment of God through us. Through us.

[35:35] Acts chapter 4, verse 33, And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ and great grace was upon them all.

And we can say amen to that as well. It's true of us as well. The grace of God is upon us and operating through us so that we can do the ministry of the gospel.

So grace is the continuous cause of our salvation from start to finish. It is the work of grace. It's all of grace. But what about peace? What about peace?

Well, peace is the continuous reward of grace. peace. Peace is the continuous ongoing reward of God's grace directed toward us.

Peace. So we put the two together. Grace is the supreme divine gift of God and peace is its greatest reward above all other rewards here in this life.

[36:45] Peace. peace. And here is the reward of peace. Because of the grace of God toward us we have peace with God. That is, there is no condemnation before God.

Now no more condemnation to those who are in Christ. Romans 5.1 Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God. Peace with Him.

Apart from Christ, you have no peace with God. You are an enemy of God and at enmity with God. But through Christ and the grace of salvation, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, Paul said.

We have peace with God. Also we have peace in our conscience. Peace of conscience. There is no controversy with God at all. Hebrews 10 verse 22 Draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. Peace of conscience. Also peace of heart. Philippians 4.7 We will get to this way on down the road sometime where Paul says and the peace of God which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus.

[38:07] Peace with God. Peace of conscience. Peace of heart. Peace of mind. Also the Bible says in Romans chapter 8 verse 6 for to be carnally minded is death but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.

Peace. And one more peace in your relationships. The Bible says in 2nd Corinthians chapter 13 verse 11 become complete. Be of good comfort.

Be of one mind. Live in peace and the God of love and peace will be with you. So grace and peace is our reward.

Is it your reward? The grace of God toward you, in you, through you?

and do you know the peace of God that passes all understanding in your life?

[39:13] You see, before we go a step further in our study of this jewel of a letter, this letter to the Philippians, this love letter, before we go a step further with it, you need to answer the question, is it addressed to you?

Is it? It is, if you answered yes to those questions. And if you could not answer yes, it can be addressed to you.

The list of addressees has been growing ever since Paul first wrote this letter. And it can grow today if you will repent of sin.

you have broken God's laws. You have violated His command. You have assaulted the very nature and character of God.

Repent. If you will repent, turn from your sin and place your faith and trust in Jesus Christ and Him alone as your Lord, as your Savior, then your name can be added to the addressees of this letter. [40 : 42] And all of the wonderful things that Paul writes are for you. Specifically for you. Thank you.