

***‘Word on the Web’ – a Bible Based ‘Thought for the week’***  
***PHILIPPIANS Ch. 1v.1-6 (NIV)***

**Dear Friends**

**Greetings in the strong and precious Name of Jesus**

**This week I’d like to begin looking at Paul’s letter to the Philippians – it is my intention to share some reflections from Philippians each week, to which I invite you to add your own prayerful reading and reflection. We begin with Philippians Ch. 1v.1-6, NIV.**

**The letter starts, as was 1<sup>st</sup> century custom, by stating who it was from. Paul graciously includes his younger co-worker Timothy in his greeting – both Paul and Timothy would be well known to the Church in Philippi. They are described as being “servants of Christ Jesus” – that’s important! Paul, Timothy and all believers are “servants of Christ Jesus”. That means we are owned by our Master, for we have been “bought with a price” – 1 Corinthians 6v.20. Peter writes – in his first letter Ch.1.v18 – “For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you by your ancestors, but with the precious blood of Christ, a Lamb without blemish or defect”. We belong to him, so we no longer live for ourselves but for him who loved us, freed us from sin’s penalty and power, paying the price for our sin and thus bringing us back to the place we belong – as relationship with the living God as sons and daughters of the King. So as the song puts it “Let us learn how to serve and in our lives enthrone him”.**

**Then Paul specifies that the letter was sent to “all God’s holy people”. This can also be translated “To all the saints” ... the word literally means “set apart for God”. If we have placed our faith and trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, who died and rose again for us, then we are set apart for God and his purposes, and note “To all God’s**

holy people in Christ Jesus” – that’s the “spiritual location” of the recipients of the letter ... that’s our “spiritual location” – we are “in Christ Jesus”. As to their “Geographical location” – they were “at Philippi” and we are wherever God has placed us. Let’s look at these two locations a little more ...

*The “spiritual location”* – the words “in Christ” are extremely important. All those who have received Christ as their personal Saviour are now “in Christ” wherever and whoever we may be. There’s a wealth of meaning in those words, including the wonderful truth that we are utterly secure in Christ come what may. Let us remember and rejoice in that in these challenging times. The Lord Jesus, speaking of his sheep said “I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, no one will snatch them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all; no one will snatch them out of my Father’s hand. I and the Father are one.” John 10v.28-30.

*The “geographical location”* – they were “in Philippi”. Philippi was the first city in Europe to hear and receive the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ and was located 800 miles from Rome. You can read how the Gospel first came to Europe – the first converts, the first conflict, the first imprisonment and miraculous escape from prison in Acts Ch 16v.6-40. A wonderful account of God at work, and the Gospel is still the “power of God for the salvation of all who believe” – Romans 1v.16.

Interestingly Paul wrote this letter while he was again deprived of his freedom, in prison in Rome. The date is around AD 61-63. It’s one of his “Prison letters” – the others from this time being Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon. He used his time wisely and we 2,000 years later are still encouraged and challenged by what he wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. What a legacy! What

**a blessing! We are currently living in days where our freedoms are significantly curtailed. May we seek God that we may use this time wisely to the blessing of our own souls, and for the blessing of others.**

**The Greeting goes on “together with the overseers and deacons”. Overseers and Deacons are an expression of Christian leadership. The Overseers were responsible for the ministry of the word and spiritual needs of the local Church. The Deacons were responsible for the physical and material needs of the local Church, but all were and are called of God. Let us pray for all in leadership in both Church and State at this time.**

**v.2; “Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ”. Paul never ceased to be amazed at God’s salvation by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone. He knew he didn’t deserve it – none of us do – rather he deserved condemnation, once describing himself as “the chief of sinners”. He marvelled that God loved him so much that he sent his son to die in his place as his – and our – substitute, sin-bearer and saviour. The word “Grace” emphasises God’s unmerited, undeserved favour to all his people. Salvation is of grace; it cannot be earned only received (Ephesians Ch. 2v.8-9). And the result of responding to the grace of God is “Peace” – peace with God through the blood of Christ shed on the cross, leading to peace within ... more about that in a later message! And the origin? ... “God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ”. Philippians is often called “The Letter of Joy” – may we rejoice in all that God in Christ has done in our lives, never forgetting that part of the fruit of the Spirit is Joy.**

**It’s time to draw to conclusion. Let us briefly look at v.3-6.**

**v.3; “I thank my God every time I remember you” – Paul was grateful for the believers in Philippi. It had been about 10 years since he had first visited them, and yet every memory of them brought a sense of gratitude to him. He thanked his God – the word for “thank” in the original has the sense of continual action or practice ... yes there were some hard times as Acts 16 details, but his overwhelming though was gratitude. Seeing these people accept Jesus Christ as their personal Saviour, bowing to him as Lord more than compensated for what Paul endured to get the Gospel to them. May we cultivate the attitude of gratitude and thanksgiving to God, not least for the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ.**

**v.4; “In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy”. Note the repetition of “all” – in all his prayers, for all of them - none are left out. There’s a great challenge here to pray for one another. I heard of a Church pastor in Italy, who, when it was first announced that the congregation could no longer congregate together e mailed his congregation asking them to send a photo of themselves to him. On Sunday he put the pictures on all the seats where people normally sat and then sent a picture of the seats with pictures on to all the congregation as an encouragement to pray. May be in our minds eye we can picture those we normally see and pray for them as the Holy Spirit leads us. Then Paul says he prayed “with joy”. As mentioned, Philippians has a lot to say about Joy as we’ll see later.**

**Lastly v.5 and 6. v.5 gives the immediate cause for his joy – “I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from this day until now.” I love that phrase “partnership in the Gospel” – we’re not a one man or one woman band! ... as believers we are all partners in the Gospel and Gospel work. The word can also be translated as “fellowship” – we have fellowship in the Gospel. The word means “a sharing of the same things” – that “God**

so loved the world that he gave his one and only son so that whoever believes in him will not perish , but have eternal life” – John Ch.3v.16 – that’s what truly unites us, and unites us with the Philippians all those years ago.... A golden chain of salvation down the centuries. Warren Weirsbe says this partnership fellowship is “the possessing of eternal life within the heart.” Alleluia!

Then v.6; “being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” – the day when he comes again in the glorious splendour of heaven, or when he calls us home. Paul was confident that the God who had begun his good work in the Philippians as evidenced by their salvation about 10 years earlier would bring it to completeness. He will keep them, guard them, bless them, continuing to work in their lives by his Holy Spirit to make them more like Jesus. As one Bible teacher has put it – “The good work not only included salvation but also the work that God was doing in their lives at the time Paul wrote to them” And the same is true for us. I saw a poster that said “God isn’t finished with me yet!” – He will not abandon us – he will bring his work in us to completion. There is progress! The same Bible Teacher continues – “Although God works through individuals to accomplish his will, his primary work in the believer is that he changes his or her attitudes and motives into those which please him”. As the author of the hymn Rock of Ages put it elsewhere, “The work which his goodness began, the arm of his strength will complete”. In the words of Charles Wesley, “Changed from glory into glory till in heaven we take our place”. May this be our story and our song too.

Don’t forget the “dual authorship” of the scripture – from Paul and Timothy, but ultimately from the living God himself (2 Tim 3:16). What a wonderful God! What a wonderful Saviour! What a wonderful message – Rejoice!

*Thank You for saving me;  
What can I say?  
You are my everything,  
I will sing Your praise.  
You shed Your blood for me;  
What can I say?  
You took my sin and shame,  
A sinner called by name.*

*Great is the Lord,  
great is the Lord,  
For we know your truth has set us free,  
You've set Your hope in me.*

*Mercy and grace are mine –  
Forgiven is my sin.  
Jesus, my only hope,  
The Saviour of the world.  
'Great is the Lord, we cry,  
'God, let Your kingdom come!'  
Your word has let me see,  
Thank you for saving me.*

*Great is the Lord ...*

*Thank you for saving me –  
What can I say?*

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**With all Best Wishes and Love and Prayers in Christ  
John Wiltshire**