

# PHILIPPIANS BIBLE STUDY

## Philippians 1:1-11 (a)

### Lesson #1

#### Introduction:

Give some background and then read verses 1-11. Begin systematic study verse by verse.

#### verse 2:

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

I want to briefly discuss the mysterious relationship between God as the Father and Jesus as the Son. Paul uses this distinction repeatedly and comfortably in his epistles, but we have some new Christian members who find this confusing, so I want to make a few comments on this subject specifically for their benefit.

I have a friend who keeps asking me the same question over and over. He says he is confused who to pray to. Does he pray to God the Father, or does he pray to Jesus the Son? I've tried to answer his question several times, but still it seems to remain a troubling question in his mind.

So, for the record, Jesus has come in the flesh to die and make an atonement for our sins, **so that** we might have access to God the Father in our prayers and in our daily life experiences. That is what was symbolized by the ripping of the thick curtain (veil) in the Temple separating the Holy of Holies from mankind. (Mt 27:51)

*And behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth shook and the rocks were split.*

The barrier that was erected by the sin of Adam, that had put a separation between God and mankind, had just been torn in half after a period of about four thousand years, and though it took place mostly in the heavens, it was so monumental that it also shook the whole earth by its consequence. (The act on earth, the barrier in heaven)

(Discuss the bubble of creation being polluted by sin causing a barrier by God)

Christ has not come simply to be a message bearer on our behalf, like a runner of those days would take a note and run to another town and deliver it to the recipient. but rather a mediator for us, that allows us to speak directly with the most Holy God of creation. (Jn 16:26-27) Unlike our catholic friends, and some others, who seem to see priests, and Mary, and dead saints as message carriers for them to get communications to God, we see Jesus as our "justifier" and our "access provider" who brings us into the very presence of God without being instantly vaporized for our immense audacity and unworthiness to stand in His presence. Therefore, Christ is not a replacement of, or substitute for, God the Father, but the means by which God and mankind may live in mutual presence without offending God's holiness or causing man's destruction. (Full discussion of Trinity is beyond scope of this lesson)

It might be said that Christ is like a beautiful robe of righteousness that allows us to commune with God, but only if we are wearing that robe at all times. To ever try to approach God without that robe on would be a grievous mistake for which one would likely pay with their life. This metaphor falls short though because Christ not only covers us outwardly with His righteousness, but also indwells us with His very life as well. So we are clean both inside and outside.

So, to answer the question of "to whom do we pray," we pray to God the Father; but with full knowledge and understanding that our only access to, and safety in, such communication is our being clothed with that robe of Christ's atoning righteousness at all times. Of course we pray to Jesus also to give Him thanks and show Him our affection and acknowledge our appreciation for His incredible love that He demonstrated in His self sacrifice on our behalf; which allows us to now be restored into direct fellowship with our loving God and Father, from whom all mankind had been separated and estranged for four thousand years. *Hallelujah - Thanks be to Jesus Christ for His incredible gift of atonement!*

**AND** Thanks be to God the Father for allowing His Son's righteousness to be applied (imputed) to our account, because, He has every right to insist that we do it ourselves or perish. But, He freely chooses, of His own sovereign will, to have mercy on some who don't in any way merit that mercy. Therefore, how should those who receive that mercy demonstrate their appreciation for such an indescribable gift? Especially when we clearly see that many, many others (the vast majority in fact) who were no worse than us, did not receive that mercy! (Rom 9:15-16; Lk 13:23-24)

**verses 3-5:**

3 I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, 4 always offering prayer with joy in my every prayer for you all, 5 in view of your participation in the gospel from the first day until now. Phil 1:3-5 (NASB)

Paul opens his epistle with a greeting and then offers his prayer of joy because of the Philippians participation in the gospel. I am sure that our immediate conclusion is that Paul is praising them for their evangelistic efforts of spreading the gospel message in their community. I looked at the comments in some of my study bibles and that was the conclusion of some, but John Calvin hit it right on. First, Paul does not say for your participation in spreading the gospel, or preaching the gospel but rather your personal participation in the gospel. What Paul is saying is that they have participated in the actual results of the gospel, obtained by faith alone, by their transformed lives and sanctification. The participation being spoken of here is a life style and heart attitude resulting in sanctification. And this is made absolutely sure by the next sentence out of his mouth which speaks of the good work that was begun in them being continued toward perfection until the day of Christ Jesus. Paul is acknowledging that they are living out the fruits of righteousness in their lives.

**verse 6:**

6 For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.

We don't want the grammar used in the NASB to trip us up. The term "will perfect it until" almost sounds like a contradiction in terminology to us. However, the intent isn't in any way obscure. Paul is simply saying that He who began a good work in the lifelong process of sanctification in our life, will continue to support that ongoing process towards perfection, which will occur at Christ coming and the reception of our new resurrected bodies that He will provide at that time.

Furthermore, the good work that Paul is speaking about with the little word "it" is that work of ongoing and progressive sanctification. Which is described in many ways in the scriptures. It is described as a renewing of our minds in Romans 12, and again in Ephesians 4. It is described as putting off the old way of life and putting on the new life, and ends with our conformity to Jesus Christ Himself (Rm 8:29-30) so that we may eventually be ready to take our place by His side and serve Him in His eternal kingdom. (Rev 19) Which is the final summing up of all things in Christ that is described in Ephesians 1:10 and the whole book of Revelation. Creation is all about God and Christ, and His predetermined plan to create a suitable mate as His love, His friend, His helper, and His worshiper, forever and ever.

However, I fear that much of evangelical Christianity has attempted to hijack His eternal plan for their own personal benefit and carnal pleasures. Much of Christianity really thinks that God's creation plan is all about us and not Him. We have made ourselves the focal point, and Him an accessory. We don't seem to think that we exist to serve Him, but that He exists to serve us, by unconditionally forgiving us all our sins and then seeing to our every whim and carnal desire of comfort and indulgence. (Jas 4:1-4) Oh yes, He's our helper in time of need, but we don't want Him interjecting Himself into our free expressions of self determination. Be there faithfully when I need you, but then go away quietly until I call you again, seems to be the contemporary idea of God's place in our lives. Save me when I'm in trouble, but then kindly get out of my way when I want to have fun. What an incredibly convenient God, too bad there isn't any such god taught in the Bible. Oh, That's okay says man, we'll invent our own, and he's been doing that non-stop since Nimrod began building that tower in Babylon which became the mother of an endless array of false religious systems that flood the earth to this very day. (Gen 11) If you can't destroy the real one, then give them so many choices they can't find the true one. And this has been Satan's strategy for the last 6000 years.

Ah, but saints, do not lose heart, Satan and all his false religions, and destructive devices, are simply a temporary disposable tool, knowingly ordained (that is orchestrated and implemented) by God to serve a specific function in the implementation of His eternal and omnipotent kingdom plan. When Satan has finally done his predetermined part, God will simply, and quite unceremoniously, throw him away like a used tissue, forever. (Rev 20:10)

This is one of the two parts of the ongoing work of God that Paul is speaking about in verse 6. The work of sanctification is ongoing in the chosen saints, and the work of Satanic disobedience is ongoing in the children of disobedience. The work of Christ will be complete on the day of Christ that is being described in this verse.

This is not talking about Christ's second coming to earth, but His snatching away of His believers on that day when the Father tells Him to go and take His bride into His presence, as described in 1 Corinthians 15:51-52 and 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 and most likely implied in John 14:3.

The great news is that just as it was HE who has begun the good work, likewise it is also HE who will continue to empower the perfecting of it until His return, **where He will absolutely complete it to perfection.** It is all HE and not we, who serves as the guarantee of completion. All the praise and glory in the process rightfully goes to God. And we, as His bride, are not quite ready to be with Him until we fully know and understand, and rightfully appreciate this marvelous truth.

Making herself ready involves both the sanctification of her behaviors and the total surrender of her heart into wilful submission to her beloved mate, until He holds the position of preeminence in her very existence. (Col 1:15-20)

He will return for the ones who have made Him their first love. No passion or love whatsoever, regardless of how noble, will be tolerated above our love for Him. Not for family, for children, for spouses, for feeding the hungry, for caring for the helpless, or for evangelizing the lost will be tolerated as acceptable first loves above Christ himself, and our making ourselves ready for His return. I did not just say we shouldn't do these things I just mentioned, I said they must never become our first love and life priority to the detriment of our passion for Christ himself and His glorious appearing. *We must never get so enamored enjoying the fruit that we neglect to water the tree on which it grows.* If we do we'll lose both.

### Verse 9

9 And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in real knowledge and all discernment,

This is a very interesting statement that Paul makes in this verse. When we hear someone speak of love abounding we almost automatically think in terms of kind words or kind actions as the method of display of love. And of course it surely is. But there is yet another aspect of love that we tend to overlook and often neglect. Genuine love desires full and accurate knowledge of the object of that love. In addition to acts of love there is heartfelt passion that is a characteristic of love. In other words, we want to know that person in the deepest and fullest way. We want to know everything about them. What they like and what they dislike. What pleases them and makes them happy, and what displeases them and makes them unhappy. Genuine love diligently seeks for the good of the recipient.

An abounding and genuine love demands real knowledge and all discernment, resulting in positive actions, or it's nothing but hype. (Jn 14:15; 1Jn 2:4) We say we love Jesus but we haven't prayed or read our bible in months. We cheerfully sing "Oh how I love Jesus" and then we go home and continue living in overt disobedience to His teachings. Or worse, we don't even try to learn what He teaches because we know we won't like it. But oh yes, we certainly do love Jesus. We love Him like we love our cell phone or computer, because these make no demands on us. We turn them on when we want them to do something for us and then we turn them back off when we're done. We love them because they serve our interests and make our lives more convenient. But we demand control over their application in our lives.

But is that really love? I think not, at least from the standpoint of the scriptures when they discuss the relationship of Christians to their Savior and to one another. The Greek language has multiple words for love that our language doesn't have, and this is one of those times that we miss some of the depth of meaning. The love that Paul is espousing in this verse is a love that is self sacrificing, not self gratifying. A love that puts the concerns of others ahead of oneself. A love that seeks to give rather than to receive. A love that is entirely antithetical to the contemporary concept and definition.

There is so much superficial love in our lives that we use the word instinctively. We say that we love our cars, we love our homes, we love our sports, we love our television, we love our burgers and soft drinks, and oh yes, we love our Jesus. We have made the word love almost meaningless by our casual use of it. And unfortunately it appears that we often put our love for Jesus in the same category as our love for our toys and comforts. He's just another nice commodity that we use when we have the notion. We have the latest model computer, the latest model cell phone, and the latest model Jesus. All custom tailored to meet the current post-modern trend. Of course we don't want to get too attached because they'll all be obsolete next month and we'll have to trade them in for the newest models.

On the other hand, and totally opposed to contemporary thinking, this verse directly ties genuine love to real knowledge. Today's love of instant and fleeting gratification actually doesn't want any knowledge or discernment, because that opens the risk to responsibility, and we certainly don't want any of that. What was once clearly called lust is now comfortably called love. And the love that once meant responsibility and self-sacrifice now means personal gratification. We use the same terminology but we have changed the definitions. Our cultural evolution has influenced our language as well as our virtues and values.

However, our post-modern enshrinement of ignorance, and fascination with mystery is doomed to a short life I suspect. Because our present day lifestyle of information technology and instant google searches doesn't lend itself comfortably to unanswered questions. The post-modern fascination with the idea that everything concerning truth and godliness is a mystery to be celebrated, and man can't really figure life out so he shouldn't even try, will not satisfy us for very long, and we will find (rendered invent) something to fill that void before very long.

God created man to be a loving and caring creature that longed for fulfillment in a relationship first with his creator, and then with his fellow man, but by intentionally rejecting that relationship we have severed ourselves from the only means that we have for a meaningful life and rational reason for existence. Everything we have tried has come up short and we can't figure out why life is so fleeting and shallow and pointless. Nonetheless, we'll surely find something to replace our post-modernism pretty quickly, but I can assure you, it will be just as fruitless as everything else before it. Because, while the alternatives may be endless, the real solution to a fulfilled life is singular, and rests in a meaningful and obedient relationship with our creator God.

Unless we learn how to rewrite our DNA sequencing and brain wave patterns, we will remain creatures made by God for His purposes, no matter how hard we try to resist. But like the Borg said in the Star Trek Series "resistance is futile" so we must prepare to be assimilated into God's higher kingdom plan. Whatever that might encompass.

Paul tells us in this verse that genuine love abounds in the real knowledge and all discernment of our boundless and omnipotent God. The pursuit of a loving relationship with Him is what defines the purpose of mankind, and the pursuit itself is part of the joy. Every new aspect of His nature and character, of His affection and mercy and righteousness and judgements that we discover, as we search and examine His word, is a small piece of an unending treasure that He desires us to seek after, and find, and behold.

The scriptures are like a trail of breadcrumbs, left intentionally by God to eventually lead us to where and Who He is. So that following that trail carefully, with all discernment, not missing a single crumb, becomes the priority of life, because we know where it eventually leads and Who it is at the end of that trail. This is not a trivial pursuit. It isn't about instant gratification, though it is certainly a joy, but it is a lifelong journey and there are no shortcuts. This journey will only be undertaken by those who understand the agape (self-sacrificing) love of God, and seek Him above all else in life.

So, abounding love finds its substance and expression in real knowledge and all discernment. The purity of any love is dependent on the truth of the object of that love. To love that which doesn't exist is fantasy, regardless of the sincerity. Jesus told the Samaritan woman that those who truly worship God must have both the right spirit (heart attitude) and the truth (about the God that they worship). (Jn 4:22-24) Sincerity alone is neither a suitable nor acceptable substitute for truth. And truth isn't simply intuitive. To know God in truth, and be a suitable, acceptable worshiper, everyone must search the scriptures diligently and meticulously and continuously. God designed us with eyes so that we might see (read the scriptures) and He gave us ears so that we might hear (the teachings of scripture) so that we might have life eternal and become His worshipers, for **God seeks** such to be His worshipers. (Jn 4:23) Without question God eventually gets what He wants, the only question is do we want what He wants, or do we want what we want? Who is our FIRST love?

I would dare to say that how a person reacts to the scriptures is the most true and accurate answer to this question. One cannot truly love God and not love and desire His scriptures, because it is they alone that testify of Him. (Jn 5:39) If you really believe that you love God, then ask yourself whether you love the holy scriptures. Again I will dare to say that no one who truly loves God can be indifferent, let alone hostile, to the hearing of scriptures. What God is in all His majestic holiness is displayed to us exclusively through His holy scriptures, as they are brought to vivid life by the indwelling Holy Spirit. God is the Word, and the Word is God. (Jn 1:1, 14) Can a person really love one and be indifferent to the other, when they are themselves one and the same? Would that not be a clear contradiction?

The most rational conclusion to the revelation of scriptures would suggest that loving God in truth is the very same as loving the Word of God. Is it really possible to love God and not love His word equally? I challenge anyone and everyone who claims to love God and his Son Jesus, to measure that love by their reaction to the holy scriptures, and then act accordingly. Self deception here will prove disastrous and even deadly.

If the word of God is sweeter to you than honey, and more precious than much fine gold, then you have solid ground to substantiate that you really do love God in spirit and in truth. But if this doesn't really describe your condition then confess that to God, and ask Him to forgive you your sins and change your heart and mind into conformity with His, so that you may be able to taste and see that He alone is good.

Narrow Gate Baptist Church  
Robert Andrews, Pastor