



BELIEVERS CHAPEL

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The Sermons of Dan Duncan

Philippians 1:1-2

2013

"Grace And Peace"

TRANSCRIPT

Thank you Mark, and good morning. We are starting the Book of Philippians, so turn to Philippians and we'll look at the first two verses,

1 Paul and Timothy, bond-servants 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.

Philippians 1: 1-2

That is a brief passage but it is filled with substance, and we'll consider it in the hour to come. Let's pray,

Father, we thank You for the time we have to be together as Your people, as Your "saints" as Paul called the Philippians, and as we all, as believers in Jesus Christ are. What a privilege that is, to be a saint, to be a saint in Christ Jesus. —That's the key; that's the means of great blessing, eternal blessing. And so LORD, as we consider that and other things this morning and just these two verses, we pray that You would bless us, build us up in the faith, gives us a great appreciation for Your grace, and for the peace that we have in Your Son, peace with You, peace with one another, peace with the circumstances

of life that can come from no other source than a divine source, than You, our Triune God. And we thank You that we have it. It's not a hope or a wish, it's a reality. And the more we learn about You, the more we know Your Son, the more we experience it.

So LORD, may that be the fruit of our time together this morning, but also throughout our studies of this great Book of Philippians in the weeks to come. Build us up in the faith in this hour, and prepare us for the week to come, with the challenges that we will have. Equip us through Your Word for that, and simply for having fellowship with You, walking with You, growing in our faith and our knowledge, our relationship with You.

LORD, You are the One in control and the One who blesses; and so LORD encourage Your people and build them up in the faith. And I pray that would be the result of our time together this morning; that we would be built up in the faith, we'll know You better, we will rejoice in Your grace and all that we have in Christ for we're rich in Him. Thank you for Him, and it's in His name we pray. Amen

(Message) Sometime around the year 61, Paul was in a Roman jail chained to a Roman soldier awaiting trial before Cesar, when he took up his pen and wrote a letter to some friends in the east. He wanted to thank them for a gift that they had sent to him. They were a small group of Christians, living in the city of Philippi, located in Macedonia on the Greek peninsula.

After writing his name and addressing them as "saints", he greets them with the words, "Grace and peace." That's what he wanted for them—and what he had, which is astonishing. He was a prisoner in chains, sitting in jail, facing a trial before Nero, the fiend—and yet he was calm, confident, even joyful. In fact, from the beginning to the end of the letter, it is full of joy and contentment. "In this I rejoice" (1:18), he writes. "Rejoice always. Again I will say rejoice." (4:4), "Be anxious for nothing." (4:6).

If the Book of Philippians is anything, it is happy and calm—the very thing we Americans aren't. Even with our freedom and our 'stuff', we worry a lot. And that's

harmful. I read something about that, not all that long ago, that anxiety and stress result in insomnia, high blood pressure, chronic disease, and early death. But maybe a man who can write about peace from a jail can teach us something about peace and joy.

The Book of Philippians unlocks the doors to all of that, the doors to contentment and calm and peace, with a single key. It's given in the little statement, 'in Him', "in Christ Jesus". That's where we find peace. That's the only place where anyone can find peace. Now I can imagine that someone, probably not any of you, but I can imagine that someone would be saying in their mind, 'Oh, come on, now. Let's get practical. What about pills and breathing exercises and occasional vacations? Won't that help worry and stress?' And maybe. I'm sure it does relieve the symptoms, at least.

But to get to the root, to have the remedy, we must come to Christ. And not just come to Christ but grow in Christ. That's the solution that Paul gives, and he has some credibility. Peace and joy increase as we know Christ. That's what the apostle encourages the Philippians to do. All through this letter, he encourages them to know Christ, to increase in their knowledge of Christ. That's what he wanted for the Philippians.

But who were the Philippians, these people so treasured by the apostle? Part of the answer is in the letter itself. Paul mentions a young man named Epaphroditus, and two women, Euodia and Syntyche, but part of the answer, a large part of the answer is found in the Book of Acts. In chapter 16 Luke recorded Paul's second missionary journey when he first visited Philippi. That's a good place to begin our study, a place to introduce us to the book, a place that, well, as we look at chapter 16, a study that begins with some doubt and anxiety but quickly becomes a story of providence and power.

Paul left Antioch on his second missionary journey and left to visit the churches that he and Barnabas had established on their first missionary journey. This time he took Silas. They picked up Timothy in Lystra and had a good doctor with them named Luke, who was the chronicler of their travels. The plan was to visit the churches of southern

Asia Minor, which is modern day Turkey. Then, they planned to go west to Ephesus, the greatest city of Asia. But they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the Gospel in Asia, so they instead moved north. They traveled the length of continent and came to Bithynia and were planning to go into that region, which is along the coast of the Black Sea—but again, the Spirit stopped them.

They were sort of shut up, hemmed in as it were, to one direction, and that was west, the only path open to them, so they took it. They went to Troas, a town on the Aegean coast, near the ancient city of Troy. And there they waited, wondering why they were there, and wondering if, perhaps, they'd made a miscalculation, a mistake in their decision. And then, one night, everything became clear; Paul had a vision. He had a vision of a man in Macedonia calling to him saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." (Acts 16:9). A. T. Robertson wrote, "It was the cry of Europe for Christ."

So Paul and his companions sailed for Macedonia and then traveled inland ten miles to Philippi. It was an ancient city, named after Philip II, father of Alexander the Great. It was also an historical city, where the forces of Octavian defeated the armies of Brutus and Cassius. Octavian later defeated Marc Antony, and then took the title 'Caesar Augustus.' He named the city Philippi and made it a military outpost on the eastern border of the empire—and gave Roman citizenship to those who settled there.

So Philippi was a very Roman town, full of military people. In fact, it's been described as a miniature Rome. It was pagan. And no one there seemed to be clamoring for the Gospel and Paul's help. Luke wrote that they were there for some days before they went down to the river. The Gangites River was just outside of town, and the place where a small group of women met. There were not enough Jewish men in Philippi to form a synagogue, so some women met there for prayer.

You can imagine how puzzled Paul must have been by this. His journey to Philippi was in response to the invitation of a man—and there were no men around. But women need saving just as much as men do, so he saw this as an opportunity and he took it. He preached the Gospel: He sat down with these ladies and he began speaking.

One of the women there was Lydia, a fascinating lady. She was a Gentile. She was a proselyte, a Jewish convert from Thyatira in Asia—and a businesswoman, a seller of purple fabrics. It was a lucrative business and she was very successful at it. She was listening to Paul when Luke writes, in verse 14, "The LORD opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul." (Acts 16:14b). She believed because God opened her heart. Is that not clear? This is sovereign grace. That's how salvation happens. It's the only way that it can happen. God must turn our hearts to faith. He must give us a new heart.

That's what Ezekiel promised that He would do in Ezekiel 36, verse 26, "...I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh." —a living heart. From a dead heart to a living heart. That's what He did with this woman. And that's what happens when the Gospel is given. The Holy Spirit works through the preaching of the Gospel, through the teaching of the Gospel, through you speaking to your friends or acquaintances the Gospel. And through that He uses, He works, to regenerate the listener—and the result is faith.

Lydia actually believed. She used her mind and her will. It all responded, but only by the grace of God, only by the work of God, because God "opened her heart" to respond. So by grace she believed. And so did her household, which may have been the rest of the women. They were baptized there in the river, and so a church was established in Europe.

That was when the trouble started. The Gospel can't go out without opposition. Satan doesn't give up his strongholds without a fight, and there was a very satanic fight that followed very quickly. Luke writes in verse 16 through verse 18 that a slave girl began following them through the city saying, "These men are bond-servants of the Most High God, who are proclaiming to you the way of salvation." That was true. In fact you might think, 'What a good thing. She's speaking the truth. She's advertising the ministry of these men.'

But there was a problem. The problem was not with the message, it was with the messenger. She was demon possessed. Luke says she had "a spirit of divination", literally it's a "spirit of Python." She was a fortune teller and she made a lot of money for her owners. Wherever Paul and his friends were, she was there, announcing that they had words of salvation. She kept it up.

It wasn't long before it became very distracting and bad publicity—the apostle didn't want to have the Gospel associated with an unbeliever. The apostle didn't want to have the Gospel associated with the occult, so he finally put a stop to it—he cast out the demon.

Now Luke doesn't say this, but it seems likely that this young slave girl was converted; she was delivered from the domain of darkness and transferred into the kingdom of Christ, the kingdom of light. It was a powerful work of grace. And a blessing, the church grew, another female was added to this little assembly of women.

Not that there's anything wrong with an assembly of women, but where were the men? A man had called them over to Europe, seeking their help. Where was he? Where were the men?

The men were angry. They weren't interested in Paul's help. At least those who owned the slave girl weren't. Paul had cost them their business and so they got even. They went to the chief magistrates, the city leaders, and they complained. They said, "These men are throwing our city into confusion, being Jews." (vs20). Now this was a Gentile town, hostile toward Jews, and they played on the antisemitism. And you can sense that in the emphasis they put there on the "Jews", 'these men being Jews.'

But it's interesting how they described the work of the Gospel: It "was throwing our city into confusion." In the next chapter, chapter 17 of the Book of Acts, the Jews of Thessalonica opposed Paul and his companions. They called them, "These men who have turned the world upside down." (vs6).

"Thrown the world into confusion", "turned the world upside down", well, that's what the Gospel does. I think, without realizing, they gave a great description of what

this message does because this is a supernatural message. The Gospel is the Gospel of the Lord God, and when it is proclaimed, when we speak light into darkness, darkness disappears. It does have an effect. It, as they said, "turns the world upside down." 'It shakes things up.'

Actually, it sets things in order; it puts things right side up. But the world, Jew and Gentile alike, doesn't like that and Paul and Silas were arrested. They were beaten brutally. They were put in chains and they were thrown into the deepest, darkest part of the dungeon.

It was around midnight in the pitch dark that the other prisoners heard Silas quote Pliable from *Pilgrim's Progress*, "Is this the happiness you told me of?"... No. What they heard was Paul and Silas singing, praying, and singing hymns. They had perfect peace and were full of joy. And Luke says the prisoners were listening. They had turned the jail cell into a church service.

Now that's providence; that's the providence of God. God puts you where you are to be His ambassador—and sometimes that is in very dark places. Everything is providence and we don't understand it all. But we do know this by faith, that for God's people, every providence is somehow, for our good; and it's an opportunity for us to do good. And we see that here. Here they are in the midst of a dungeon and you'd think it would be place of despair—and yet they're singing and praying.

And suddenly, as they're doing this, as the two are singing along together, the world moved; the jail rattled; there was an earthquake. And the chains fell off the prisoners and all of the cell doors opened.

Well it shook the chief jailer, shook him out of his bed, and he quickly went down to the dungeon. When he saw the doors opened, (and it was dark in there and all he could see was these jail doors open), he despaired; thinking that the prisoners had escaped. He was about to fall on his sword when Paul and Silas called out to him, "Do not harm yourself, for we are all here." (Acts 16:28).

The jailer grabbed a torch, rushed in trembling, and asked the greatest question ever asked, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" (vs30). And they gave the simplest

answer there is, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved, you and your household." (vs31). He believed right there in that dungeon and was saved on the spot. (And maybe, in the torchlight, Paul recognized his face as the one that he had seen in that dream.)

Well, if anyone ever helped a person it was Paul helping this jailer and his family. They, too, believed. The jailer had taken them up to his house. He washed Paul and Silas's wounds. Then he and his family were all baptized. So now the church has grown even more, perhaps doubled in size. It's no longer an assembly of women only, but of men, women, and families.

The next day, Paul and his companions were released when the authorities learned that Paul was a Roman citizen and they knew they had violated the law. They had treated a Roman citizen as though he were not one—and they were terrified because they knew there could be legal problems for them. So they pleaded with Paul that he would leave the city, which he did. But before he and Silas and the others left they went to Lydia's house, (now the location of the church), and Luke says in verse 40 that he "encouraged them."

Years later, Paul was encouraged by them. He was again in prison, this time in Rome, when Epaphroditus visited him from Philippi, bringing a gift from the church to help support the apostle in his great need. So Paul wrote a letter to thank them and inform them of his situation—that even though he faced trial and an uncertain outcome he had joy and confidence. And that he had peace.

That's how he begins the letter, greeting them, "Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including overseers and deacons."

So this is now a well-established, well-developed church. It has elders and deacons, which are two of the three offices of the church, (the third being believer-priests, which all believers are, all of us occupy at least that office in the church).

This is an important verse for understanding the structure of the local church. Paul, you'll notice, didn't mention 'The Pastor', because pastor isn't an office. All the elders are pastors, they 'shepherd the sheep'. They are actually the 'under shepherds', the 'under pastors'. The New Testament doesn't teach one man rule or 'The Pastor' as a first among equals with elders. Elders govern as equals and as a group under Christ, who is the chief Shepherd—He is the pastor of the church.

It's always a plurality of elders. The Proverbs repeatedly teach that there is victory in an abundance of counselors. That's how God has structured the local church. He hasn't invested the authority in one man, but in a plurality of men. The word that is used here for elders is instructive of the office. It's the Greek word *episkopos*, *epi-skopos*, two words in one.

The Greeks liked to have compound words in which they placed a preposition before the noun and put them together; sometimes to intensify the meaning and sometimes to give clarity as to what is being described here. And you see that in this: *Skopos* is the word for 'view'. We get our word *scope* from that, 'to look at'. *Epi* means *upon* or *over*. So putting the two together, they are 'over seers'. They 'look upon'. They 'look over' the church, like a shepherd looks over his flock. They protect the local church from error. They provide it with spiritual nourishment, teaching, counsel, direction—like a shepherd.

Deacons attend to the material needs of the church. This is the only time that Paul, in any of his letters, links the two together like he does here in the introduction. So these are the 'offices of the church'. There is a plurality of both. And we can assume that one of the men to whom Paul was writing here was that Philippian jailer—at least I like to think that he was one of those, (and probably an elder). —And maybe one of the former prisoners, (that had been in that jail the night that Paul and Silas were singing their hymns), had also been brought to faith and was in that church and, perhaps, is now one of the elders or deacons.

Then, notice how Paul describes himself and the Philippians. He and Timothy are “bond-servants of Christ Jesus”: which means, quite simply, they are slaves of Christ Jesus. That doesn't sound very nice but that's what we are. We're slaves, yet we have a benevolent master, whose yoke is easy and burden is light. He is someone we should want to serve. And when we understand who He is and when we understand all that He has done for us, it instills within us the kind of affection for Him that moves us to *want* to serve Him, and *to* serve Him—and to be glad to give up all the pleasures of life to do that.

And this knowledge of Him, this love for Him is a compelling power. That's what Thomas Chalmers described as “the expulsive power of a new affection.” When we have that within us, that affection for Christ, it crowds out the other things: the love of the world, the love of self, all of that. We have a love for Him that dominates our thoughts, our actions. We're glad to be slaves of Christ. We know that that's a great badge of honor, that's a great privilege.

But we're also “saints”. And that really is amazing: Sinners are saints! Not an elite group of super Christians, canonized by the church for doing a miracle, or making exceptional sacrifices—that is not the New Testament meaning of ‘saint’. All believers are saints.

In Acts chapter 9, the words *saints* and *disciples* are used interchangeably. Read it—you'll see that; that a saint is a disciple, a disciple is a saint. What's a disciple? He's a follower of Christ. He's a believer in Jesus Christ. So that's what saints are. *Saint*, the word simply means ‘*sanctified one*’. It's a person who has been ‘set apart for God’; for His service and for His blessing. They are *consecrated* to God.

That meaning is clear from 1 Corinthians chapter 1, verse 2, where Paul calls the Corinthians “saints”. Now, you know something about the Corinthians; and what you know about the Corinthians is that they were not very ‘saintly’. They were carnal and confused. —That's what characterized that congregation. But Paul calls them saints; that's how he begins his letter to the Corinthians.

They were not saints due to great achievements on their part or high character, or because they had become sinless individuals. Far from it...Far from it!

Paul gives the reason that they were saints: The Corinthians were "saints by calling", he says. God had chosen and called them and made them saints. He did that. That's what God does. And they became that at the moment of faith. The Philippian jailer was at one moment on the verge of suicide, and the next moment saved and among the saints. Just that simple, just that quickly, because he was a believer.

Well here Paul calls the Philippians "saints in Christ"; meaning they were saints, they were people set apart for God because they'd been joined to Jesus Christ—joined to His death, His resurrection, and joined to His supernatural life.

H. A. Ironside was a popular teacher, preacher in the first half of the 20th century and for years the minister of the Moody Church in Chicago. He taught all over the country, all over the world, and told a number of amazing stories from his life. He was a man who had a number of experiences. He even put them in a book where he told one story of traveling by train to the west coast—and the trip took four days one way.

So on this trip he was traveling with some nuns. After a while he spoke to them and became friendly. He would read to them from the Bible and they enjoyed that very much. About the third day he asked them if they had ever seen a saint. They said, 'No, they'd never seen a saint.' Would you like to? 'Oh, yes, they'd like to see a saint.' Then he shocked them. He said, "I'm a saint. Saint Harry." And then he opened the Bible, he may have opened it to this very passage, I don't remember, but he showed them that God doesn't make us saints based on the great things that we have done for him, but on the great things that He's done for us through His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ.

We *receive* blessing from God. We *receive* it—we don't 'achieve' it. We receive it through faith alone in Christ alone by grace alone. A saint is a person who is in Christ. He or she is born again, united to Jesus Christ, placed in Him by the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit is within him or her—and is transforming that person. We are positionally saints; and we're being made increasingly saintly by the work of the Holy Spirit. And again, all of

that by the grace of God—which is what Paul wished for these Philippians: "Grace to you and peace." That was Paul's hope and prayer for the Philippians.

Grace we can define very easily. We define it this way often as, 'undeserved, unmerited favor', which is based solely on His 'unconditional love, which is eternal.' And that is the reason we, who are saints, are saints—because God has an unconditional love, which is an eternal love. And as you study it through the Scriptures, you realize it is a love for us that was, "before the foundation of the world", (Eph 1:4), that elected us from all eternity. That's His love. That's what draws us to Him. That's what brings us into this great position of being a saint.

This is really, as you think about it, the only thing that can explain the man who's writing about all of this—Paul, who's writing about 'grace and peace' and being 'a saint' and being 'in Christ'. What else can explain the *apostle* Paul, formerly Saul of Tarsus. A fanatical rabbi who was determined to snuff out the very mention and name of Jesus Christ; who went throughout Palestine and that part of the world imprisoning saints and putting Christians to death; and who tried to destroy the church? What can explain him?—except the sovereign grace of God? For in a moment of time...in a *moment* of time, while he was an implacable enemy of Jesus Christ, in a blinding light from heaven he was struck down by the brilliance of Christ who called him to Himself on the Damascus road.

Now that was powerful grace—wholly, completely undeserved. I don't think Paul ever forgot the fact that he had been a persecutor. I don't think he ever forgot the fact that he killed Christians, his brethren, that he made children orphans and he made wives widows. And yet, God saved him—and forgave him everything. And even made him an apostle to the Gentiles!

Paul would have been happy to be a doorkeeper in the house of God, and considered it an amazing privilege, (which it would have been). But He not only saved him and brought him in to His family, He made him the great apostle. And he never,

never stopped marveling over that fact, and marveling over the grace of God. His Grace, has never stopped being amazing to him.

Now, if you and I don't have that sense of amazement, I would suggest it's because, as the old Medieval theologian Anselm said, "You have not yet considered what a heavy weight sin is." Sin is a **heavy** weight. Sin makes us all absolutely undeserving of goodness—and deserving of wrath. And yet, grace lifts it all!—lifts the weight, saves us, and constantly supplies us with blessing and supplies us with understanding and strength.

So this is what Paul prayed for these Philippians. They'd been saved; they were children of God; they were saints; they were in Christ. But he wants them to grow; he wants them to continue to develop. He wants them to see their absolute dependence upon the Lord God and His grace.

And secondly he prayed that they would have peace: they had peace with God; that is what Christ has obtained for every believer. He has reconciled us to God. We're no longer at war with God. There is peace between the heaven and earth. It's what's been described as *vertical* peace, peace between man and God. We have that. The war is over. We are His children. He's our Father!

There is a second peace. It's what we could call *horizontal* peace, peace between men. And then there's a third peace. It's an *inner* peace, which is personal peace. It's those second two that Paul wanted for them. They had this peace with God but he wanted peace in the church among their members and peace in their heart; he wanted them to have contentment.

He had both. He was wrongly imprisoned; his life was in peril; but he was not bitter. He rejoiced in his circumstances. He'll do that later in the letter. He sees it all working out to the glory of God, and for the progress of the Gospel. He rejoiced in these very difficult circumstances. He was at peace—peace with those around him, believer and non-believer; and peace within himself And he wanted that for the Philippians.

All was not well in that little church. There were some divisions. So this letter was written, not only to thank them for their generosity and their kindness to him, but also to deal with a problem that needed to be fixed, this division in their church. They needed peace among themselves. They needed peace within themselves.

We have that in Christ. But to experience it, and to apply it to every situation, we must live by faith in Christ. And to live by faith and rejoice, rejoice always, we must know Christ better and more deeply. That's what Paul urges in this letter; and what he will teach. Some of the loftiest teaching on the person and work of Christ is given in this brief letter to the Philippians. And those who learn it, those who learn more and more about Christ, have contentment in this world. It is a peace that the world cannot give.

The world promises us much: promises us satisfaction, contentment. It cannot give it. It doesn't give it; it cannot give it. The kind of contentment that allows us to sing in a dark dungeon and talk about joy from jail is the peace and the joy and the satisfaction that only the Lord God Himself can give.

And after all, if God has made us saints, and sons and daughters, what can the world ultimately do to us? What can it ultimately take away from us? Our future is certain. Our present is secure. The Lord God has forgiven us—and is for us. We are in Christ forever. That's the remedy for anxiety and stress. It is the source of grace and peace. It's the key to joy and contentment. And that should be our prayer for ourselves, that should be our prayer for one another.

But are you in Christ? Are you united to Him? Have you joined yourself to Jesus Christ, the eternal Son of God, and Savior of the world? I look out over the audience and I think, 'Yes, I think most all of you have.'

I hope all of you have. But if there's someone in here who has not, we invite you to come to Him, to believe in Him: Recognize that you're a sinner—we are all sinners. And we're only saved by grace—but recognize that you have a need.

That Philippian jailer recognized he had a need; God had brought him to the end of himself in order to bring him to Himself. And He does that; but you need not come to

the end of yourself. Recognize your need; come to the Savior; He receives all who do. And the moment you do, the heavy weight of sin falls off. He's paid for it all. You're justified, a saint in Christ with eternal life.

So may God bring you to Himself; and may God give all of us the joy of knowing what we have in His Son. Let's pray.

Father, we give You thanks for the power of Christ. We thank You for the power of the Gospel, power of Your love that brought us into Your family, that opened our hearts to respond to the message that we heard at some point in our life.

Thank You for making us what Paul says we are, "saints in Christ" with a glorious future and a secure present.

We thank You for that and we give You all the praise. And it's in Christ's name we pray. Amen.

(End of Audio)