

Phil 1:1 Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:

We are first introduced to Timothy in Acts chapter 16:

Acts 16:1 Then he came to Derbe and Lystra. And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a certain Jewish woman who believed, but his father was Greek.

Acts 16:2 He was well spoken of by the brethren who were at Lystra and Iconium.

Acts 16:3 Paul wanted to have him go on with him. And he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in that region, for they all knew that his father was Greek.

Acts 16:4 And as they went through the cities, they delivered to them the decrees to keep, which were determined by the apostles and elders at Jerusalem.

Acts 16:5 So the churches were strengthened in the faith, and increased in number daily.

Throughout much of the New Testament we find Timothy right at Paul's side—learning from the apostle the things of Christ through word and example. Paul was the mentor and Timothy was the mentee. Kind of like the old television series Kung Fu where we find the master and his student, Grasshopper.

When it comes to the discipleship that should be going on in the church, you should be either a “Paul” or “Timothy.” There should be someone in your life that serves an encouragement to you in the things of Christ and there should also be someone in your life that you are taking under your wing and tutoring in the things of Christ.

In verse one of our text we find Paul referring to both he and Timothy as “bondservants.” This is the Greek word, *doulos*, which literally means *slave*. In fact, wherever you find the word *doulos* in your New Testament, it is better that you scratch the word servant or bondservant and put the word *slave* because that is a better translation.

Paul was saying that he and Timothy were “*slaves of Christ*.” The word “slave” conjures negative images especially if you are an African-American but this is still the word the Holy Spirit chooses to use to describe the Christian's relationship to Jesus Christ.

The Christian is a slave to Jesus Christ.¹ Whatever He says for us to do, we are to do--with no backtalk, no bad attitude—instant compliance. A slave owns nothing—everything belongs to the master. Even the children of the slave belonged to the master.

But the difference between the slavery of days gone by and what Paul is writing about is that the Christian serves an infinitely loving Master who has his best interests in heart. In fact, God cares more for us more than we care for ourselves.

So Paul was saying that he and Timothy were “*slaves of Christ*.” Later in verse seven Paul lets his readers know that though he is in chains, his chains are in Christ.

We normally praise God for “setting us free” from the slave market of sin (Gal. 5:1).

¹ <http://www.biblebb.com/files/MAC/80-321.htm>

The Christian praises God for “liberty” and “having a personal relationship with Him” and even walking in the prosperity of God but how often do you hear the Christian proclaim that he or she is a *slave* of Christ and a *prisoner* of Jesus Christ?

Paul was in prison for preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. But as we find here, he wasn't a prisoner of Rome, He was a prisoner of Jesus Christ.

The church at Philippi in ancient Macedonia was the first European church founded by Paul and represented the first major penetration of the Gospel into Gentile territory.

The believers in Philippi loved Paul and he loved them—their mutual affection comes out in this epistle. With this letter Paul was assuring the church at Philippi that He was ok because he was in the care of the Lord, no matter what his circumstances.

Later in chapter 4 Paul would commend these believers for their love for him and the Gospel ministry as evidenced in how they supported him financially. Listen to what he writes in verses 14-16:

Phil 4:14 Nevertheless you have done well that you shared in my distress.

Phil 4:15 Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only.

Phil 4:16 For even in Thessalonica you sent aid once and again for my necessities.

So this church loved Paul and were distressed when they heard that he was imprisoned. Paul wrote this letter to let them know that even though he was in chains, the Gospel is not chained:

Phil 1:12 But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel,

Phil 1:13 so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my chains are in Christ;

Phil 1:14 and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.

This letter is one of encouragement to believers that no matter what your circumstances, you can still rejoice as you obey the Word of God. Paul was able to look around and find something to rejoice and praise God for even in the direst of circumstances.

In chapter three, verse one Paul would write, “*Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord!*” In chapter four he pens the words, “*Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near!*”

- That's hard to do when you don't have a job and you're wondering how your bills are going to get paid.
- It is hard to “rejoice” when you have a spouse who's been unfaithful or a child who is rebellious.
- This is difficult counsel for those with a dreaded illness.

J. Vernon McGee lets us know in his commentary that “*This letter deals with Christian experience at the level in which all Christians should be living. It's not a level on which all of us are, but it is where God wants us to be.*”

Paul opens his letter with the words, “*Paul and Timothy, slaves of Jesus Christ.*”

He then continues with the words, “*To all the saints in Christ Jesus...*” Paul goes on in his greeting to address his letter to “*all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi with the bishops and deacons.*”

You may remember the word “saints” is the Greek word, **hagios**, hag'-ee-os. This is the same word used to translate into our English word “holy.” Paul could have easily written, “*To all the “holy” in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi...*”

The word “holy” means “set apart” and refers to the truth of Scripture that teaches us God’s “setting apart of the believer to Himself for His own special purposes.” Just like the articles of gold and silver and the furniture of the tabernacle were “set apart” for a special use, believers are set apart to be used by God.

1 Pet 2:9 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;
1 Pet 2:10 who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.

The “saint” is one who is “dedicated,” “separated” and “set apart for God.” The “saint” is also one who is purified—that is, his character conforms or lines up with his state of dedication.

If you are a Christian, God has saved you and set you apart from the people of this world. You are to live a separated life. This means that while you are in the world you are not to be of the world. You are to be a vessel of honor, fit for the Master’s use.

2 Tim 2:19 Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity."
2 Tim 2:20 But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor.
2 Tim 2:21 Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.
*2 Tim 2:22 **Flee** also youthful lusts; but pursue righteousness, faith, love, peace with those who call on the Lord out of a pure heart.*
*2 Tim 2:23 But **avoid** foolish and ignorant disputes, knowing that they generate strife.*

Paul not only greets the “saints” in verse one, he greets the “bishops and the deacons.”

By the way, in order to be an elder you need to be qualified according to 1 Timothy chapter three and Titus chapter one. The qualifications for a deacon are found in 1 Timothy 3 and some have used Acts 6:1-7 to list the spiritual character qualities that are to be found in the deacon.

If you come to the elders of GraceWay Church saying that God is calling you to be a pastor, you can be sure that we will measure your calling against these passages of Scripture.

Grace and Peace...

Phil 1:2 Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul uses this greeting in all of his epistles with the exception of 1 and 2 Timothy, which has “grace, mercy, and peace.”

What Paul does in this greeting is blend both the typical Greek and Hebrew greetings of his day.

- The normal Greek greeting was *chairein* (the present infinitive form of *chairo*, “welcome”, “good day”, “greetings”).
- The Hebrew form was *shalom*, “peace.” But the use of *charis* in place of *chairein* denotes a significant Christian shift that is biblically significant. As William Barclay put it, “*When Paul took and put together these two great words, grace and peace, (charis and eirene), he was doing something very wonderful. He was taking the normal greeting phrases of two great nations and molding them into one.*”

These two words were taken by the Holy Spirit and amplified and deepened in their meaning. Alone, each was missing something but in Christ both grace and peace are brought together and used in a new way.

Paul says, “*Grace to you...*” “*Grace*” is God’s unmerited favor. It is when God gives us what we don’t deserve.

- Ephesians 2:8-9 tells us that we were saved by God grace, not by any works that we have done.
- Ephesians 1:7 says that “*In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace.*”
- The Bible says in Romans 5:20, “*...where sin abounded, grace abounded much more...*”

There is no sin too big for God to cleanse it by His grace. If we had to work for forgiveness we’d still be working and working and working, never able to pay the infinite cost of salvation.

When it comes to receiving God’s forgiveness there is nothing that we do. He does it all. If you come to God as a prince, He’ll send you away as a beggar. But if you come to God as a beggar, He’ll send you away a prince.

When you come to God and say, in my hand no price I bring; simply to thy cross I cling, then you will be saved as you trust him and receive the free gift of salvation by God's Amazing Grace.

“*...and peace...*”

When God saves a person by His grace, He imparts to them His righteousness which yields the byproduct of *peace*.

- There is “peace with God”—no more running; no more warring; no more hiding—you become a forgiven-friend of God and even better, His child.
- There is also the “peace of God”—that quietness of spirit that comes when you trust and firmly believe that God has everything under His control.

“*Grace and peace...to you...*”

Paul says, “*grace and peace... to you.*” In the Greek grammar Paul is employing use of grace and peace in his greeting to indicate his concern and desire for his readers. He knows that everyone of us are in desperate need of God’s grace and its fruit, peace.

Isaiah 57:20-21 says, “*But the wicked are like a surging sea that is unable to be quiet; its waves toss up mud and sand. “There will be no prosperity (or peace, shalom),” says my God, “for the wicked.” “But the righteous,”* Proverbs 11:28 says, “*will flourish like the green leaf.*”

Have you received God’s grace? Are you experiencing His peace? This is why Jesus Christ came, so that your sins can be forgiven at no charge to you—they were paid in full by the death of Jesus Christ.

Paul’s Prayers for the Philippians

Phil 1:3 I thank my God upon every remembrance of you,

Phil 1:4 always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy,

Let me tell you what Paul is not saying in verse 3 and 4: He is not saying that every time he thinks of the Philippians he prays for them—this would be great thing for him to do and very time-consuming as I imagine was Paul thinking about this church quite a lot.

Paul is saying in this passage that each remembrance of the Philippian church is an occasion to give God thanks. In other words, their church formed the basis for Paul’s thanksgiving.

Paul loved this church and they loved him. They were obviously doing the will of God and this was something to thank God for. Paul had no regrets in his relationship with this church. Unlike the church in Colossae, there was no false doctrine Paul had to refute. We have two letters that Paul had to write to the church in Corinth because of all the factions and sin that was going on, but not with the Philippians.

Verse four tells us he could pray for them with joy in his heart. In verse five Paul thanks God for the fellowship in the Gospel He had with the Philippians.

Phil 1:5 for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now,

The word “fellowship” is the Greek word *koinonia*. Koinonia means “a joint-participation in a common interest and activity.” In fact, the word *participation* in the place of the word fellowship might make verse five clearer to you.

The Philippian believers, though not on the mission field with Paul, were participating with him in the Gospel because they financially supported his work.

They had sent earlier financial gifts and had recently sent a gift with Epaphroditus and Paul acknowledges this gift as proof of their participation in the Gospel.

He lets his readers know in verse six that they can be, “*confident of this very thing, that He who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ...*”

Now many quote verse six outside of this context. Paul is undoubtedly referring to the “good work” of financially supporting the Gospel and it was God who put this desire in their hearts. In other words, if you are walking with the Lord He will place it in your heart to do “good works.”

This is what we are saved to do...”good works.” Paul writes in Ephesians 2:10, “*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.*”

God, who moved in their hearts to participate or to fellowship with Paul in this way, will bring their giving to a successful conclusion right up to the day of Jesus Christ (“day” i.e., the Rapture).

In other words, when you invest into God’s kingdom, you will most surely get a good return on your investment. Paul says in verse six that you can be *confident*.

God has given each of us the opportunity to participate in missions. We can participate locally as we put our hands and hearts to serve in the events that our church is sponsoring this summer in order to reach our community for Christ.

We are also “partakers” of grace (as Paul says at the end of verse 7) when we give an offering over and above our tithe to support foreign missions. Each month our church gives to the Cooperative Program of our convention to support missionaries serving all over the world.

Paul’s love for the believers in Philippi

Phil 1:8 For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ.

In verse eight, Paul goes “on record” testifying of his love for the Philippians. This is a miracle in progress as we remember Paul in his “Saul” days—going around as a strict Jewish Pharisee killing Christians.

Now here is Paul, the apostle of Jesus Christ, professing his love for Christians. But the miracle doesn’t stop there, he is professing his love and affections not for Jewish Christians but for these former pagan Greeks!

There it is again—the *grace* of God!

*Marvelous grace of our loving Lord,
grace that exceeds our sin and our guilt!
Yonder on Calvary’s mount outpoured,
there where the blood of the Lamb was spilt.*

*Grace, grace, God’s grace,
grace that will pardon and cleanse within;
grace, grace, God’s grace,
grace that is greater than all our sin!*

It was the grace of God that saved the author of our current LIFE Group study. William Fay was once a money-driven businessman with Mafia ties who ran a house of prostitution until it was raided by police. Fay faced the threat of jail time and turned to Jesus Christ for redemption and ever since has been turning others to Him as well.²

² http://www.christianbook.com/share-jesus-without-fear/william-fay/9780805418392/pd/18393?item_code=WW&netp_id=124746&event=ESRCN&view=details

How did Paul come to know and love the Philippians? You may remember Paul and Barnabas on their first missionary journey to Galatia where God gave them much success in planting many churches even though they experienced a lot of persecution.

Paul wanted to go and visit the churches they started and he wanted Barnabas to accompany him again. This time, however, Barnabas wanted to take his nephew John Mark, who was with them at the beginning of their first missionary journey. But Paul doesn't want Mark to go this time because he went AWOL on their first trip, running back home.

Acts 15:39 tells us that "*the contention (between Paul and Barnabas) became so sharp that they parted from one another.*" So Barnabas took his nephew Mark and went in one direction and Paul took a brother named Silas and revisited the churches started by Paul in Galatia.

Luke records that Paul attempted to go south into the province of Asia (the leading city being Ephesus) but the Spirit of God prevented them. Paul and his team thought they would go north into the land where modern Turkey is today; but "*the Spirit of Jesus would not allow them*" (Acts 16:7).

He couldn't go north and he couldn't go south—since he had come from the east, the only direction he could go was *west*. Paul goes west as far as Troas (Troy) and then he had to stop because he could progress no further without taking a boat.

Have you ever felt that each direction you try to go or decision you attempt to make is blocked?

Sometimes we pray and ask the Lord "Where to go?" or "What should I do?" and we think He must give us an immediate answer. But sometimes God leads us by shutting doors. This is one of the ways we can discern God's "No," "Wait" and "Yes."

Paul waits for the Lord's direction and eventually God gives him a vision in Acts 16:9-10 of a man in Macedonia saying to him, "*Come over to Macedonia and help us.*"

Paul and his team board a ship and cross over into the continent of Europe and his first stop was...*Philippi*.

Acts 16:11 Therefore, sailing from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and the next day came to Neapolis,

Acts 16:12 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.

Acts 16:13 And on the Sabbath day we went out of the city to the riverside, where prayer was customarily made; and we sat down and spoke to the women who met there.

Acts 16:14 Now a certain woman named Lydia heard us. She was a seller of purple from the city of Thyatira, who worshiped God. The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul.

Acts 16:15 And when she and her household were baptized, she begged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay." So she persuaded us.

The vision that Paul had in Acts 16:9-10 could have been a direct response to the prayers that were regularly being prayed by the women mentioned in verse 13!

Scholars say that there was no synagogue in Philippi because it required at least 10 Jewish men to organize one. Rather take it upon themselves to start one, they prayed and God sent a vision to Paul and blocked his way so that he might end up in that city to start a church!

Don't ever think your prayers are in vain.

- I know only a few men meet each week on the Tuesday men's prayer line—don't give up.
- I know only a couple of women get together on the Thursday women's prayer line—sometimes only one—don't throw in the towel.
- Yes, there is only a handful of women who faithfully meet each Sunday morning at 10am to pray—the Scripture says to “pray without ceasing!”

God hears and He knows. God heard the prayers of these worshippers who knew the God of Abraham but did not know the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Verse 14 and 15 tells us that Paul and his associates met Lydia, a worshipper of God and the Lord opened her heart to the Gospel message and saved her!

Not long after this (if we continue reading the text) Paul comes across a slave girl who was possessed by a demon. The girl's master used her as a fortune teller and got rich from her demonically-inspired trade.

In verses 16-18 we find the demon screaming out through the girl, “*These men are the servants of the Most High God, who proclaim to us the way of salvation.*” The demon-possessed girl did this for many days until Paul got grieved in his spirit (lit. “worn out” or annoyed) and cast the demon from the girl.

This quieted her but it also cut the fortune telling profits from her masters and so they dragged Paul and Silas to the authorities who were pressured by the other greedy business holders in the town to throw them into jail.

While in jail, verse 25 says, “*at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them.*”

Acts 16:26 Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed.

Acts 16:27 And the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself.

Acts 16:28 But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, "Do yourself no harm, for we are all here."

Acts 16:29 Then he called for a light, ran in, and fell down trembling before Paul and Silas.

Acts 16:30 And he brought them out and said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

Acts 16:31 So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household."

Acts 16:32 Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house.

Acts 16:33 And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized.

Acts 16:34 Now when he had brought them into his house, he set food before them; and he rejoiced, having believed in God with all his household.

This was the beginning of the church in Philippi. Lydia and her group of God-worshipping women who prayed at the riverside every Sabbath; a young girl who was formerly demon-possessed but now gloriously saved and a prison guard who was about to kill himself who was now saved along with his entire household!

I can't help thinking about the background of the people who form GraceWay Church—from all backgrounds, situations and circumstances that God has brought together to form this local assembly of the body of Jesus Christ!

There were of course other people who formed the church at Philippi who names are not mentioned in this letter. Paul had an intense love for all the believers in Philippi. In the KJV of Philippians 1:8, Paul says, “*For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ.*”

The ancients regarded the inner organs as the seat of the tender affections. Today we would say the “heart” is the seat of the emotions. We also feel with our “gut.” Paul’s gut feeling was one of love for this church...his heart beat as one with the heart of Jesus concerning these believers.

They loved the Lord; they loved Paul. They were excited about the work of missions; they gave their money to assist Paul with the work of getting the Gospel out. They even sent money to support Paul while he was in prison.

But with all that this church was and all that they had done, the Philippians hadn’t “arrived.” You see, sometimes we think that just because there is no disharmony in the church everything is ok. Just because no one has crept in and is trying to get us to believe false doctrine that all is well.

GraceWay Church went through something a few years ago and a lot of people left the church. We stood in a circle, just a few of us, and cried out together that God would keep our church. And He came through for us!

And sometimes you can get comfortable and bask in God’s grace. You can get comfortable and with your friends and your situation and Paul knew that there was a danger of this church getting complacent.

Paul’s longing for these believers were translated into his prayers for them.

*Phil 1:9 And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment,
Phil 1:10 that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ,
Phil 1:11 being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.*

Notice with me that while Paul commended them for their financial gift and their participation in supporting his Gospel work and while he was encouraged by their concern for his imprisonment, Paul realizes that this church hadn’t arrived and there was more growth in the things of Christ that was needed.

Thus he prays for them...

1. He prays that their love might abound still more and more... - this is **agape** love...the love that God is (1 John 4:16). This is the self-less love that is born in the heart of the yielded believer by the Holy Spirit (Rom 5:5).

These new believers were saved from paganism and came to trust Christ with a lot of gratitude and zeal and passion to serve Christ and His body. By the way, it is so refreshing to see a new believer get involved in ministry. They are so excited and will do just about anything you ask them to do in the church.

Their problem, however is that their zeal sometimes comes without the knowledge of Scripture. Like the time as a new believer I wrote the Gospel on one of the stalls in the men’s restroom at work. Or the time I snapped at a co-worker who called me “brotha.” I told him he wasn’t my brother because he hadn’t trusted Jesus Christ as Savior.

Paul was concerned that there would be an eager and enthusiastic spirit among the new believers in Philippi but they would lack a deep understanding of the truth and also lack a sensitive moral perception and tact. (Wuest)

So Paul wanted their love to abound still more and more but that it would be brought within the constraints of *knowledge* and *discernment*.

- a. ...*in knowledge* – knowledge gained by experience; not just an accumulation of facts. This was a better understanding of God’s Word that can come only through experiential knowledge—this comes when the Christian puts the Word of God into practice in his or her life.
- b. ...*in all discernment* – this refers to what Kenneth Wuest calls an “ethical tact.” It is the ability to tell the truth in love. It is knowing what to say and not only when to say it but how to say it. It is a moral sensitivity that comes only from spending time with Jesus.

2. He prays that they may approve the things that are excellent

Paul is praying for the Philippian believers so that their love would grow more and that their zeal would be constrained by a better understanding of God’s Word that only came through experiential knowledge.

He was also praying that they would have an ethical tact that would guide them in saying and doing the right thing.

As God does a work in these believers Paul says that this would result in a sincere believer, one who is not a hypocrite and thus would not become a stumbling block to others. This person would be filled with the fruits of righteousness—in other words, they would be demonstrating that they were right with God by their behavior and God would be getting the praise and glory for it.

- God wants our church to move out of our comfort zone.
- He wants our church to be zealous of good works but according to knowledge and discernment.
- God wants us quit being complacent and comfortable in giving our time and our treasures—He wants us to stretch ourselves—to give sacrificially, like the Philippian believers.
- Later Paul is going to exhort the Philippians to let their conduct be worthy of the Gospel of Jesus Christ—that is, they were to share their faith wherever they went and not fear the consequences—this summer’s LIFE Group study will equip us to do just that.
- Paul would encourage the believers in Philippi not to merely look out for their own personal interests, but also for the interests of others—let’s make this our aim at GraceWay Church.

We learned earlier in this message that “*This letter deals with Christian experience at the level in which all Christians should be living. And while it’s not a level on which all of us are, it is where God wants us to be.*”

Though many of us have seen pictures of a huge eagle’s nest high in the branches of a tree or in the crag of a cliff, few of us have gotten a glimpse inside.

When a mother eagle builds her nest she starts with thorns, broken branches, sharp rocks, and a number of other items that seem entirely unsuitable for the project. But then she lines the nest with a thick padding

of wool, feathers, and fur from animals she has killed, making it soft and comfortable for the eggs. By the time the growing birds reach flying age, the comfort of the nest and the luxury of free meals make them quite reluctant to leave. That's when the mother eagle begins "stirring up the nest."

With her strong talons she begins pulling up the thick carpet of fur and feathers, bringing the sharp rocks and branches to the surface. As more of the bedding gets plucked up, the nest becomes more uncomfortable for the young eagles. Eventually, this and other urgings prompt the growing eagles to leave their once-comfortable abode and move on to more mature behavior.

We will see in this series from the letter to the Philippians that this is God's intent for the believer—He wants us to move onto Christian maturity in what we do, in what we say and how we conduct ourselves.

I have learned that one of the most popular aquarium fish is the shark. If you catch a small shark and confine it, it will stay a size proportionate to the aquarium. Sharks can be six inches long yet fully matured. But if you turn them loose in the ocean, they grow to their normal length of eight feet.

That also happens to some Christians. There are some of the cutest little six-inch Christians who swim around in a little puddle—they stay in the confines of the Sunday service—they sequester themselves among their Christian friends. They may even venture out into the holy huddle of the small group Bible study but they hurry back to the security of the aquarium.

But the aim of this study from Paul's letter to the Philippians is to put them into a larger arena—out into the world, not being ashamed of the Gospel—treating the things of Christ as more high and holy than their own agenda—it is only then can they become great and useful in the sight of God!