

The Church in Philippi¹

**Scripture Reading: Phil. 1:1-14, 16-17 19, 27-30; 2:1-2; 4:2, 14-18;
Acts 16:10-12**

The Church Established In Good Order

The unique group in the Local Church consists of the saints. The saints are the components of a local church. Among the saints there are leading ones, which the New Testament describes as elders or overseers. Overseers are the elders in a local church (**Acts 20:17, 28**). “Elder” denotes the person, whereas “overseer” denotes the function. Deacons are the serving ones in a local church under the direction of the overseers (**1Tim. 3:8**). The English word *deacon* is an anglicized form of the Greek word *diakonos*, which means “a serving one.” Paul said “all the saints with the overseers and deacons.” The Greek preposition rendered *with* actually means “together with.” His use of *with* indicates that there are not three separate groups in the church.

Fellowshipping In The Furtherance Of The Gospel

The church in Philippi had fellowship with Paul in the furtherance of the gospel. (**1:5**) *Fellowship* here means “participation, communication.” The same Greek word is translated “contribution” in Rom.15:26 and “sharing” in Heb.13:16. The saints in Philippi had fellowship unto the gospel, participating in the furtherance of the gospel through the apostle Paul’s ministry, including their financial contributions. (**4:10, 15-16**). This kind of fellowship, which kept them from being individualistic and diversely minded, implies their oneness with the apostle Paul and with one another. They also prayed for Paul (**1:19**), made his joy full and caused him to rejoice (**2:1-2**).

They were partakers with Paul of grace, sharing and enjoying the processed Triune God. Grace is the Triune God processed to be our enjoyment. This gave them the ground for their experience and enjoyment of Christ, which is the main point of this book. The Christ-experiencing-and-enjoying life is a life in the furtherance of the gospel, a gospel-preaching life, not individualistic but corporate. The more fellowship we have in the furtherance of the gospel, the more Christ we experience and enjoy. This kills our self, ambition, preference, and choice

Needing More Knowledge And Discernment

In Love That Abounds

The Philippian believers had love, but their love needed to abound, to overflow more and more, not foolishly, but in full knowledge; not in ignorance, but in all discernment, that they might prove by testing the things which differed. (**1:9**) This should include discernment of the different preachings (**1:15-18**) and different peoples in (**3:2-3**). The Greek word for *discernment* means “sensitive perception, moral tact.” Discernment is the ability to sense things. Paul did not want the Philippians to love in a foolish way. On the contrary, he encouraged them to love with a mind

¹ This outline is excerpted from the Life Study of Philippians, by Witness Lee. Copy or editorial errors are the sole responsibility of the adapter

full of knowledge and discernment, sensitive perception, and moral tact. The knowledge and discernment about which Paul speaks in 1:9 are actually Christ Himself. When we experience Christ, He becomes our knowledge and discernment.

To Discern Different Teachings of Christ and Different Peoples

The Philippians needed knowledge and discernment to distinguish between Paul's preaching and that of the Judaistic believers. Although there are different ways of preaching Christ and those ways may have certain positive features, we must ask whether or not such preaching is for God's economy, for His move on the earth today. Paul realized that some of the Philippians had been distracted by the preaching of the Judaistic believers. In order to discern the preaching of others in this way, we need more experience of Christ. Only the experience of Christ can cause love to abound in us in full knowledge and all discernment. Supplied with such a love, we shall love others, but not foolishly. Paul encouraged the Philippians to love the Judaistic believers, but to love in knowledge and discernment, not in foolishness and in blindness.

Testing by Purity and without Offense

Paul also prayed that the Philippians would "prove by testing the things which differ" and "be pure and without offense unto the day of Christ." (1:10) The Greek word rendered *pure* means "judged by sunlight, that is, tested as genuine; hence, pure, sincere." To be without offense means not to be offending, not to cause others to stumble. In discerning things, we need to be pure. In particular, the motives in our heart must be pure. Otherwise, we shall offend others. It is not easy to be discerning in a way that is pure and without offense. This depends very much on our motive.

Experiencing Christ Issuing in the Fruit of Righteousness

Paul prayed three things (1:9-10) on behalf of the Philippians: that their love would abound in full knowledge and all discernment; that they would prove by testing the things which differ; and that they would be pure and without offense unto the day of Christ. The secret to these three matters is being "filled with the fruit of righteousness, which is through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God." (1:11) Being filled with the fruit of righteousness through Jesus Christ is a necessary condition for these three matters. This condition comes from the experience of Christ, as seen in the phrase "*through Jesus Christ*". From the Christ we enjoy and experience, we have the fruit of righteousness, which is the living product of a proper life with a righteous standing before God and man. This could not come about by the believers' natural man for their boast, but through Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God.