

► Introduction

The book of Philippians is a letter, an epistle, from Paul to the church at Philippi. It was written when Paul was imprisoned in Rome toward the end of his ministry.

Paul’s letters have themes related to the situation of the church and the problems Paul addresses. Main theme in Philippians: **partnership in the gospel**, suffering, rejoicing, prayer. In this sermon we will look at **who** Paul’s partners are in the church at Philippi.

Hello, Partners!

1. **Equal Partners** in Christ
2. **Different Roles** in the Church
3. **One Purpose** in the World

Every saint—everyone that God redeemed and put in Christ’s body, the church—is Paul’s partner in the advancement of the gospel.
YES! Every SINGLE ONE of us!

We are all **equal partners** in Christ,
 And called to **different roles**,
 For **one purpose: the gospel!**

► Equal Partners in Christ

We are all equally **bondservant/slave of Jesus:**

- We were once slaves of sin
- We cannot free ourselves from our slavery
- Jesus purchased us with his precious blood
- We are now slaves of Christ, our new Master.
- Jesus doesn’t call us slaves anymore

But he calls us friends, brothers/sisters, fellow heirs with Christ! Adopted as children of God. Paul identifies himself as an equal partner of the Philippians. Fellow servant of Jesus.

Did you know?

In the churches that Paul founded, There were slaves and masters. 85-90% people in Rome and Italy were slaves or of slave origin. People initially became slaves through war and kidnapping. By Paul’s time, most were born as slaves, or were sold either voluntarily or to relieve debts.

Application: Whose slave are you? We are either slaves of Christ or slaves of something else (yourself, your desires, your family, your job, your boss, your depression, your health, etc.).

Come to Jesus, he is the best Master who cares for you!

We are all equally **saints in Jesus:**

Who are the saints?

- Saints are the **holy ones**
- **Holy** means set apart from the common
- **Saints are those set apart by God, called to holy living,** called to live a life different from those of the world.

How to be a saint?

- Not by the pope’s decision, not by the church’s vote
- But by the power of God.

Called by the Father, saved by the Son, alive by the Spirit.

Did you know?

Only the pope can declare someone as a saint. The candidate must first be dead for at least five years (can be waived by the pope), must be voted by a bishop and recognized by the pope as “having lived heroic virtues,” and two miracles must happen with someone prays for the candidate’s intercession.
THIS IS UNBIBLICAL!

Application: Live worthy of your calling!

Eph 5:15-16 *Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise but as wise, making the best use of the time, because the days are evil.*

Eph 5:4 *Let there be no filthiness nor foolish talk nor crude joking, which are out of place, but instead let there be thanksgiving.*

Eph 5:8, 10 *For at one time you were darkness, but now you are light in the world. Walk as children of light and try to discern what is pleasing to the Lord.*

Watch your walk, watch your talk. Let everything we do be pleasing to our Master.

► **Different Roles in the Church**

Paul is an apostle.

Apostle (see 1 Corinthians 9:1):

- Eyewitnesses of the risen Christ
- Officially appointed by Christ

By this standard, **no more apostles today!**

Paul was the last to whom Jesus appeared.

Elders/bishops/overseers:

- *Episkopos/presbyteros*
- Presbyter = elder
- Presbyterian = how a church is governed.
- Qualifications: 1 Timothy 3, Titus 1
- Duty: to oversee, as Jesus does.

Jesus is the Shepherd and Overseer.

Elders answer directly to Christ. No hierarchy such as in the Roman Catholic Church.

1 Pet 2:25 *For you were straying like sheep, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls.*

Acts 20:28 *Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.*

The apostles set the **foundation** of the church. Their authority is directly from Christ.

The elders' role is not foundational but **ministerial**. Their authority is derived from the Bible.

Deacons deal with the physical/practical matters. Their duty is primarily to supervise the work of mercy. Ask Deacon Max and Deacon Tim about their duties! 😊

Application:

Pray for the office bearers! It is a great responsibility to care for and lead God's precious ones.

The church is like a body with many different body parts.

The **diversity of roles** in the church does not eliminate the **equality** of the children of God.

Our world is very confused about this.

- Now, they emphasize equality and collapse the importance of different roles/tasks.
Example: male and female are equal, so woman must be able to do what man can do).
- In the past, they emphasized the importance of certain duties and forgot all humans are equal regardless of their positions. Example: bosses are important, workers are treated as subhuman.

Equality in diversity is modeled after the Triune God!

Christ, though he is equal with the Father, willingly submits to the Father's will.
See the beauty: Christ speaks of and obeys the Father; the Father highly exalts Jesus above all.
Christ is now the center of our faith!

As equal partners in Christ, we are given different roles in the church for what?

► **One Purpose: the Advancement of the Gospel**

Paul greets the Philippians with **grace** and **peace** from the Father and Jesus Christ.

This greeting is not simply lip service or formality.

It is Paul's prayer for his dearly missed brothers and sisters; a prayer for King Jesus to reign in the church, in every heart, so that **grace** and **peace** abound and overflow and the world may also receive God's blessings.

What is **grace**? God's unmerited, generous kindness.

For all the world, God gives **common grace** (sun, moon, season, harvest).

For God's elect, God gives **saving grace** through Jesus.

Saving grace saves us, opens our eyes to realize God's grace in everything.

Saving grace gives us **peace**.

What is **peace**? Restored relationship between man and God.

If we have peace with God, we can have peace in the worst situation, trusting the sovereign God.

Our duty as **partners in the gospel**, as slaves of Christ, is to bring **grace** and **peace**,

Both to our brothers/sisters in the church and to the world that is desperately in need.

Both tasks are important, one is not more noble than the other.

How did the Philippians serve as Paul's partners in the gospel?

They shared in the grace of God, in Paul's suffering, lived as ambassadors of Christ, defended the truth, prayed for Paul and his ministry, supported Paul financially.

All the saints in the church at Philippi play an active role as Paul's partners in the gospel.

Not only the elders and deacons, but every member.

Application:

Take part in the gospel!

In the church: greet the saints! Love your family in Christ! Pray for one another, give time to help out, study the Word, come support the ministries we have.

To the world: live as ambassadors of Christ, a life worthy of your calling. Share about Jesus.

Be a member of a local church!

Every saint is a member of a local church, a body part of a local body. It is the God's given context in which you are called to serve.

Each one of you has been put here to be our partners for the gospel. So, **hello, partners!**