

# Day 172, Philippians 1

by David Servant

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*The sermon emphasizes the importance of servant-leadership, the unbiblical spiritual gap between clergy and laity, and the need to live a life that is surrendered to Christ.*

**Scripture:** Acts 5:41, Philippians 1:1-29, 2 Timothy 3:12

**Topics:** "Servant Leadership", "Church Unity"

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## Description

David Servant preaches on Paul's letter to the Philippians, emphasizing the importance of servant leadership in the church and the equality of understanding God's Word among believers. He highlights the unbiblical divide between clergy and laity in modern churches, stressing the need for brotherhood and discipleship over corporate hierarchy. Paul's encouragement to the Philippians reveals God's commitment to perfecting His work in believers, leading them to grow in love and moral excellence through true knowledge of God's will.

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## Transcript

Note that Paul addressed this letter to "all the saints...in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons" (1:1). He did not write to the leaders only, or for that matter, to the leaders first. He wrote to every believer in Philippi, and just to make sure that the leaders didn't feel left out, he mentioned them. This helps us to understand how things are supposed to be in the church.

First, leaders aren't supposed to be exalted superstars who lord it over the ignorant peons. They are supposed to be servants. In fact, that is what the word "deacon" found in 1:1 literally means. (Notice, incidentally, that Paul does not mention pastors or elders in 1:1 or anywhere in this letter. The reason is because the word "overseer" is synonymous with the words "pastor" and "elder"; see Acts 20:28; Tit. 1:5-7; 1 Pet. 5:1-2).

Second, those who are not overseers/elders/pastors are not so pea-brained that they can't understand Paul's letters without the assistance of an overseer/elder/pastor. You don't need your pastor's help (or my help) to understand Paul's letter to the Philippians! And since I'm on the subject, Paul would never have dreamed that one day there would be 400-page commentaries that would explore Greek syntax and literary nuances found in this little letter that he likely wrote in less than half an hour!

All of this is to say that the vast spiritual gap between "clergy" and "laity" that exists in the modern church is unbiblical. It is the result of the institutionalizing and commercializing of Christianity. Brotherhood and

discipleship have been replaced by a corporate hierarchy and a producer/consumer franchise.

How wonderful it is to know that God is continuing the good work He began in us, and that He is devoted to seeing His work in us perfected (1:6). Paul's prayers for the Philippians indicate that God's goal is for our love to "abound still more and more in real knowledge" (1:9). That is, as we grow in the true knowledge of God's will, it motivates us to love others to a greater degree in genuine self-denial. Moral excellence---what can be grasped only by those who abide in the words of Jesus---prepares us to be "sincere and blameless until the day of Christ" (1:10). If what you are feeding on is not motivating you to love more, you are feeding on the wrong spiritual diet.

Just as in our day, in Paul's day there were ministers whose motives were wrong and who were apparently vying for notoriety in the church (1:15-17). Some were apparently happy about Paul's imprisonment, as it hindered him and gave them a chance to "get ahead." Paul certainly adopted a good attitude about those who were motivated by selfish ambition, looking at the positive side. At least they were preaching the true gospel, which is much more than can be said of so many of their modern counterparts.

"For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain" (1:21). Paul's well-known declaration is the motto of every true Christian, but one that is foreign to false believers. Christ is not our interest, pastime or hobby. He is our life! We are consumed with a passion to please Him! Consequently, death is gain, because it takes us to Him whom we love! We, just like Paul, are torn between earth, where we are privileged to serve Jesus, and heaven, where we are blessed to see Him. Paul knew, of course, that it was not yet his time to depart and be with Christ, because it was God's will for him to stand before Caesar in Rome.

True believers, and only true believers, can relate to Paul's words, "For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake...to suffer for His sake" (1:29). Generally, suffering isn't something that is spoken of as being "granted." But those who love Christ rejoice when they are "considered worthy to suffer...for His name" (Acts 5:41), as it gives them an opportunity to demonstrate their love for Him. Christianity unaccompanied by rejection and persecution is false Christianity. "All who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will be persecuted" (2 Tim. 3:12). Suffering for Christ's sake? Rejoice!

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