

Dear Philippians, II

The Secret to Enjoying People

February 2, 2003

THE VIA EGNATIA

- Philippi was a Roman colony, on the Egnatian Highway.

In 145 B.C. Proconsul of Macedonia, Gaius Egnatius ordered the construction of a mind-boggling chariot highway that would stretch 492 miles and link Rome to its eastern colonies.

- That's from Seattle to Missoula or the California boarder.

It was called the Via Egnatia:

1. "Via" means *by way of*, Egnatia in honor of Mr. Egnatius.
2. It was paved smooth, 10' wide, and had milestones.
3. Signs even told the number of miles to the next town.
4. And every 10 miles there was a rest stop.

This is the Philippian section of the Via Egnatia; the very road that Paul, Silas, Luke, and Timothy used to enter the city.

- A road license and traveling papers were required.
- There were even weight restrictions for carriages.

One ancient orator wrote that there was so much eastbound traffic on the Via Egnatia that he had to return to Rome via Thessaly!

PHILIPPIANS 1:1-11

We'll only be examining Paul's greeting and prayer (1-11). Listen to the joy exuding from this incarcerated apostle:

¹ Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons: ² Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. ³ I thank my God every time I remember you. ⁴ In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy ⁵ because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, ⁶ being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. ⁷ It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart; for whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. ⁸ God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus. ⁹ And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, ¹⁰ so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, ¹¹ filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ – to the glory and praise of God. – *Philippians 1:1-11 NIV*

GREETINGS FROM PAUL

We sign our name at the end of a letter; the Greeks put it first, so you wouldn't have to turn to the end to see who it was from!

First, who it's from; second, who it's too; and then a formal greeting.

Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons; Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. – Philippians 1:1-2 NIV

Paul couples his name with Timothy's, even though Paul is the author.

- Timothy founded the Philippian church with Paul, planned to return soon (Phil. 2:19), and joined in this expression of friendship.
- Paul may have dictated to Timothy; Paul almost always used a scribe (paper was expensive, professionals wrote small).

Servants in this sense mean “slaves”. Philippi had a large slave population, and they would've read this as an expression of humility.

Paul gives special recognition to the overseers and deacons.

- Overseers (a.k.a. bishops and elders) were teachers and leaders.
- Deacons were administrators and managers of the church.

Charein was a Greek salutation meaning *Greetings!* Paul changed it to *charis* meaning grace; and added a Jewish greeting: *shalom* (peace).

- Paul took every opportunity to emphasize the peace with God that we have through grace in Christ (Rom 5:1-2).
- Paul opened each of his thirteen letters with *charis* and *shalom*.

FOUR SOUND PRINCIPLES

- Paul makes 17 references to joy in this letter.

Q: You know who robs us of our joy ... even more so than the devil?

A: People! Co-workers; in-laws; neighbors; bosses; teachers; and spouses.

We're supposed to love people! But so often we settle for tolerating them; putting up with them; enduring them.

- Yet, if relationships are bad ... life stinks!

In the next nine verses, Paul will model four principles for really enjoying the people around us ... especially the icky ones.

1. Be grateful for the good

I thank my God every time I remember you. – Philippians 1:3 NIV

Paul could've said, "Remember when I was flogged in front of everyone? Remember that? Remember when they threw me in prison? Remember when I was run out of town? ... Do you remember?"

We unconsciously train ourselves to remember the bad. We dwell on it. We repeat it over and over, adding a little more to it each time.

- Paul's motto: Remember the best, forget the rest.

We like to say "But." He's a good teacher, *but* ... Anytime you hear yourself say, "but" the emphasis is going to be on the worst.

- But, if I forgot the 'rest' I wouldn't know 'em anymore!
- Like the woman who took 38 aspirin and her husband disappeared!

So, we have to choose to focus on the good ... here's how:

2. Pray for others with joy

In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now ... - Philippians 1:4-5 NIV

Q: Do you pray for the people who bug you?

Q: Do you pray for them with joy? Would you even know how?

There are two ways we can genuinely pray *joyfully* for anyone:

- a. Thank God for the good in them

Paul appreciated their loyalty, their partnership, their efforts, and the fact that they stuck with him. You're no picnic yourself at times.

Maybe the one thing you can be thankful for is that they've invested in you, stayed with you, put up with *you*.

- b. Pray sincerely for their growth and well-being

If there's absolutely nothing to be thankful for, intercede on their behalf. Ask God for the things you wish they were asking for.

- If you're sincere, you will grow to see them as God sees them.

3. Be patient with their progress

... being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. - Philippians 1:6 NIV

- God simply won't finish anyone on this side of Heaven.
- We've got to learn to enjoy people in the process.

We tend to judge people on the basis of how far they have to go rather than how far they've come.

If we demand perfection (or anything like it) from people, in order to enjoy them, we'll be miserable the rest of our lives.

However, we won't increase our patience by trying to ignore or disregard their faults, but only by *relating* to them:

It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart; for whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. - Philippians 1:7 NIV

We can keep 'em in our heart when we remember we share the same grace.

- If people are not in my heart, they'll be on my nerves.

I'm simply extending the very thing I'm receiving: understanding, mercy, compassion, and kindness.

I know when Shar's in my heart, and when she's on my nerves! And that's when I need to reexamine *my* arrangement with the Lord.

4. So that I can: Love with passion and wisdom

God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus ... - Philippians 1:8 NIV

- The Greek word for "affection" is the word for "intestines".

I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ. - Philippians 1:8 KJV

The Greeks considered the seat of emotions to be in their stomach and internal organs. It is a deep "gut feeling" of love.

And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ – to the glory and praise of God. - Philippians 1:9-11 NIV

- If our love is going to grow, it must be accompanied by wisdom.

Paul wants us to have depth and insight added to our expressions of love, so we can discern the best response in a given situation.

Paul is well aware that we can genuinely desire to do the right thing, but out of ignorance, express our love in unhelpful or unhealthy ways that enable others to simply continue their destructive patterns.

Fervent Love that is grateful for the good, prays for people with joy, is patient with the progress of others, and expresses itself sensibly, will be blessed with the fruit of righteousness.

- Those who practice it consistently will be pure and blameless.