

# Philippians 1:1, 2

by St. John Chrysostom

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*St. John Chrysostom emphasizes the importance of servanthood, fellowship, and God's faithfulness in the Christian community as expressed in Philippians 1:1-2.*

**Topics:** "Christian Humility", "Servant Leadership"

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## Description

John Chrysostom preaches to the saints in Philippi, emphasizing the humility of Paul and Timothy as servants of Christ, highlighting the honor and freedom found in serving Christ wholeheartedly. He explains the interchange of titles between Bishops and Presbyters in the early Church, showing the unity and respect among the clergy. Chrysostom commends the Philippians for their partnership in the Gospel from the beginning, expressing gratitude for their support and participation in his ministry. He encourages the congregation to continue in their good work, confident that God will bring it to completion, and urges them to share in the rewards of supporting and ministering to fellow believers.

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## Transcript

Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, fellow-Bishops and Deacons: Grace to you, and peace, from God our Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Here, as writing to those of equal honor, he does not set down his rank of Teacher, but another, and that a great one. And what is that? He calls himself a servant, and not an Apostle. For great truly is this rank too, and the sum of all good things, to be a servant of Christ, and not merely to be called so. The servant of Christ, this is truly a free man in respect to sin, and being a genuine servant, he is not a servant to any other, since he would not be Christ's servant, but by halves. And in again writing to the Romans also, he says, Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ. Romans 1:1 But writing to the Corinthians and to Timothy he calls himself an Apostle. On what account then is this? Not because they were superior to Timothy. Far from it. But rather he honors them, and shows them attention, beyond all others to whom he wrote. For he also bears witness to great virtue in them. For besides, there indeed he was about to order many things, and therefore assumed his rank as an Apostle. But here he gives them no injunctions but such as they could perceive of themselves.

To the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi. Since it was likely that the Jews too would call themselves saints from the first oracle, when they were called a holy people, a people for God's own possession Exodus 19:6; Deuteronomy 7:6, etc.; for this reason he added, to the saints in Christ Jesus. For these alone are holy, and those hence-forward profane. To the fellow-Bishops and Deacons. What is

this? Were there several Bishops of one city? Certainly not; but he called the Presbyters so. For then they still interchanged the titles, and the Bishop was called a Deacon. For this cause in writing to Timothy, he said, Fulfil your ministry, when he was a Bishop. For that he was a Bishop appears by his saying to him, Lay hands hastily on no man. 1 Timothy 5:22 And again, Which was given you with the laying on of the hands of the Presbytery. 1 Timothy 4:14 Yet Presbyters would not have laid hands on a Bishop. And again, in writing to Titus, he says, For this cause I left you in Crete, that you should appoint elders in every city, as I gave you charge. If any man is blameless, the husband of one wife Titus 1:5-6; which he says of the Bishop. And after saying this, he adds immediately, For the Bishop must be blameless, as God's steward, not self willed. Titus 1:7 So then, as I said, both the Presbyters were of old called Bishops and Deacons of Christ, and the Bishops Presbyters; and hence even now many Bishops write, To my fellow-Presbyter, and, To my fellow-Deacon. But otherwise the specific name is distinctly appropriated to each, the Bishop and the Presbyter. To the fellow-Bishops, he says, and Deacons,

Ver. 2. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

How is it that though he nowhere else writes to the Clergy, not in Rome, nor in Corinth, nor in Ephesus, nor anywhere, but in general, to all the saints, the believers, the beloved, yet here he writes to the Clergy? Because it was they that sent, and bare fruit, and it was they that dispatched Epaphroditus to him.

Ver. 3. I thank my God, he says, upon all my remembrance of you.

He said in another of his writings, Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit to them: for they watch in behalf of your souls, as they that shall give account; that they may do this with joy, and not with grief. Hebrews 13:17 If then the grief be due to the wickedness of the disciples, the doing it with joy would be due to their advancement. As often as I remember you, I glorify God. But this he does from his being conscious of many good things in them. I both glorify, he says, and pray. I do not, because you have advanced unto virtue, cease praying for you. But I thank my God, he says, upon all my remembrance of you,

Ver. 4. Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request also with joy.

Always, not only while I am praying. With joy. For it is possible to do this with grief too, as when he says elsewhere, For out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you with many tears. 2 Corinthians 2:4

Ver. 5. For your fellowship in furtherance of the Gospel from the first day even until now.

Great is that he here witnesses of them, and very great, and what one might have witnessed of Apostles and Evangelists. You did not, because you were entrusted with one city, he says, care for that only, but you leave nothing undone to be sharers of my labors, being everywhere at hand and working with me, and taking part in my preaching. It is not once, or the second, or third time, but always, from the time ye believed until now, you have assumed the readiness of Apostles. Behold how those indeed that were in Rome turned away from him; for hear him saying, This you know, that all that are in Asia turned away from me. 2 Timothy 1:15 And again, Demas forsook me: and at my first defense no one took my part. 2 Timothy 4:10-16 But these, although absent, shared in his tribulations, both sending men to him, and ministering to him according to their ability, and leaving out nothing at all.

And this ye do not now only, says he, but always, in every way assisting me. So then it is a fellowship in furtherance of the Gospel. For when one preaches, and you wait on the preacher, you share his crowns. Since even in the contests that are without, the crown is not only for him that strives, but for the trainer, and the attendant, and all that help to prepare the athlete. For they that strengthen him, and recover him, may fairly participate in his victory. And in wars too, not only he that wins the prize of valor, but all they too that attend him, may fairly claim a share in the trophies, and partake of the glory, as having shared in his conflict by their attendance on him.

For it avails not a little to wait on saints, but very much. For it makes us sharers in the rewards that are laid up for them. Thus; suppose some one has given up great possessions for God, continually devotes himself to God, practices great virtue, and even to words, and even to thoughts, and even in everything observes extreme strictness. It is open to you too, even without showing such strictness, to have a share in the rewards that are laid up for him for these things. How?

If you aid him both in word and deed. If you encourage him both by supplying his needs, and by doing him every possible service. For then the smoother of that rugged path will be yourself. So then if you admire those in the deserts that have adopted the angelic life, those in the churches that practice the same virtues with them; if you admire, and are grieved that you are far behind them; ye may, in another way, share with them, by waiting on them, and aiding them. For indeed this too is of God's lovingkindness, to bring those that are less zealous, and are not able to undertake the hard and rugged and strict life, to bring, I say, even those, by another way, into the same rank with the others.

And this Paul means by fellowship. They give a share to us, he means, in carnal things, and we give a share to them in spiritual things. For if God for little and worthless things grants the kingdom, His servants too, for little and material things, give a share in spiritual things: or rather it is He that gives both the one and the other by means of them. You can not fast, nor be alone, nor lie on the ground, nor watch all night? Yet may thou gain the reward of all these things, if you go about the matter another way, by attending on him that labors in them, and refreshing and anointing him constantly, and lightening the pains of these works.

He, for his part, stands fighting and taking blows. Do thou wait on him when he returns from the combat, receive him in your arms, wipe off the sweat, and refresh him; comfort, soothe, restore his wearied soul. If we will but minister to the saints with such readiness, we shall be partakers of their rewards. This Christ also tells us. Make to yourselves friends by means of the mammon of unrighteousness, that they may receive you into their eternal tabernacles. Luke 16:9 Do you see that they have become sharers? From the first day, he says, even until now. And I rejoice not only for what is past, but also for the future; for from the past I guess that too.

Ver. 6. Being confident of this very thing, that He which began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ.

See how he also teaches them to be unassuming. For since he had witnessed a great thing of them, that they may not feel as men are apt to do, he presently teaches them to refer both the past and the future to Christ. How? By saying, not, Being confident that as you began you will also finish, but what? He which began a good work in you will perfect it. He did not rob them of the achievement, (for he said, I rejoice for your fellowship, clearly as if making it their act,) nor did he call their good deeds solely their own, but primarily of God. For I am confident, says he, that He which began a good work in you will perfect it until

the day of Jesus Christ. That is, God will. And it is not about yourselves, he implies, but about those descending from you that I feel thus. And indeed it is no small praise, that God should work in one. For if He is no respecter of persons, as indeed He is none, but is looking to our purpose when He aids us in good deeds, it is evident that we are agents in drawing Him to us; so that even in this view he did not rob them of their praise. Since if His in working were indiscriminate, there would have been nothing to hinder but that even Heathens and all men might have Him working in them, that is, if He moved us like logs and stones, and required not our part. So that in saying God will perfect it, this also again is made their praise, who have drawn to them the grace of God, so that He aids them in going beyond human nature. And in another way also a praise, as that such are your good deeds that they cannot be of man, but require the divine impulse. But if God will perfect, then neither shall there be much labor, but it is right to be of good courage, for that they shall easily accomplish all, as being assisted by Him.

Ver. 7. Even as it is right for me to be thus minded on behalf of you all, because I have you in my heart, inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defense and confirmation of the Gospel, you all are partakers with me of grace.

Greatly still does he show here his longing desire, in that he had them in his heart; and in the very prison, and though bound, he remembered the Philippians. And it is not a little to the praise of these men, since it is not of prejudice that this Saint conceived his love, but of judgment, and right reasons. So that to be loved of Paul so earnestly is a proof of one's being something great and admirable. And in the defense, he says, and confirmation of the Gospel. And what wonder if he had them when in prison, since not even at the moment of going before the tribunal to make my defense, he says, did ye slip from my memory. For so imperial a thing is spiritual love, that it gives way to no season, but ever keeps hold of the soul of him who loves, and allows no trouble or pain to overcome that soul. For as in the case of the Babylonian furnace, when so vast a flame was raised, it was a dew to those blessed Children. So too does friendship occupying the soul of one who loves, and who pleases God, shake off every flame, and produce a marvelous dew.

And in the confirmation of the Gospel, he says. So then his bonds were a confirmation of the Gospel, and a defense. And most truly so. How? For if he had shunned bonds, he might have been thought a deceiver; but he that endures every thing, both bonds and affliction, shows that he suffers this for no human reason, but for God, who rewards. For no one would have been willing to die, or to incur such great risks, no one would have chosen to come into collision with such a king, I mean Nero, unless he looked to another far greater King. Truly a confirmation of the Gospel were his bonds. See how he more than succeeded in turning all things to their opposite. For what they supposed to be a weakness and a detraction, that he calls a confirmation; and had this not taken place, there had been a weakness. Then he shows that his love was not of prejudice, but of judgment. Why? I have you (in my heart), he says, in my bonds, and in my defense, because of your being partakers of my grace. What is this? Was this the grace of the Apostle, to be bound, to be driven about, to suffer ten thousand evils? Yes. For He says, My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. 2 Corinthians 12:9 Wherefore, says he, I take pleasure in weaknesses, in injuries. Since then I see you in your actions giving proof of your virtue, and being partakers of this grace, and that with readiness, I reasonably suppose thus much. For I that have had trial of you, and more than any have known you, and your good deeds; how that even when so distant from us, you strive not to be wanting to us in our troubles, but to partake in our trials for the Gospel's sake, and to take no less share than myself, who am engaged in the combat, far off as you are; am doing but justice in witnessing to these things.

And why did he not say partakers, but partakers with me ? I myself too, he means, share with another, that I may be a partaker of the Gospel; that is, that I may share in the good things laid up for the Gospel. And the wonder indeed is that they were all so minded; for he says that ye all are fellow-partakers of grace. From these beginnings, then, I am confident that such ye will be even to the end. For it cannot be that so bright a commencement should be quenched, and fail, but it points to great results.

Since then it is possible also in other ways to partake of grace, and of trials, and of tribulations, let us also, I beseech you, be partakers. How many of those who stand here, yea, rather all, would fain share with Paul in the good things to come! It is in your power if you are willing, on behalf of those who have succeeded to his ministry, when they suffer any hardship for Christ's sake, to take their part and succor them. Have you seen your brother in trial? Hold out a hand! Have you seen your teacher in conflict? Stand by him! But, says one, there is no one like Paul! now for disdain! now for criticism! So there is no one like Paul? Well, I grant it. But, He that receives, says He, a prophet in the name of a prophet, shall receive a prophet's reward. Matthew 10:41 For was it for this that these were honored, that they coöperated with Paul? Not for this, but because they coöperated with one who had undertaken the preaching. Paul was honorable for this, that he suffered these things for Christ's sake.

There is indeed no one like Paul. No, not even but a little approaching to that blessed one. But the preaching is the same as it was then.

And not only in his bonds did they have fellowship with him, but also from the beginning. For hear him saying, And ye yourselves also know, you Philippians, that in the beginning of the Gospel, no Church had fellowship with me in the matter of giving and receiving, but you only. Philippians 4:15 And even apart from trials, the teacher has much labor, watching, toiling in the word, teaching, complaints, accusations, imputations, envyings. Is this a little matter, to bear ten thousand tongues, when one might have but one's own anxieties? Alas! What shall I do? For I am in a strait between two things. I long to urge you on and encourage you to the alliance and succor of the saints of God; but I fear lest some one should suspect another thing, that I say this not for your sakes, but for theirs. But know that it is not for their sakes I say these things, but for your own. And if you are willing to attend, I convince you by my very words; the gain is not equal to you and to them. For you, if you give, will give those things from which, willing or unwilling, you must soon after part, and give place to others; but what you receive is great and far more abundant. Or, are you not so disposed, that in giving you will receive? For if you are not so disposed, I do not even wish you to give. So far am I from making a speech for them! Except one have first so disposed himself, as receiving rather than giving, as gaining ten thousand fold, as benefited rather than a benefactor, let him not give. If as one granting a favor to the receiver, let him not give. For this is not so much my care, that the saints may be supported. For even if you give not, another will give. So that what I want is this, that you may have a relief from your own sins. But he that gives not so will have no relief. For it is not giving that is doing alms, but the doing it with readiness; the rejoicing, the feeling grateful to him that receives. For, not grudgingly, says he, or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. 2 Corinthians 9:7 Except then one so give, let him not give: for that is loss, not alms. If then ye know that you will gain, not they, know that your gain becomes greater. For as for them the body is fed, but your soul is approved; for them, not one of their sins is forgiven when they receive, but for you, the more part of your offenses is removed. Let us then share with them in their great prizes. When men adopt kings they do not think they give more than they receive. Adopt thou Christ, and you shall have great security. Will you also share with Paul? Why do I say Paul when it is Christ that receives?

But that you may know that all is for your sakes that I say and do, and not of care for the comfort of others, if there is any of the rulers of the church that lives in abundance and wants nothing, though he be a saint, give not, but prefer to him one that is in want, though he be not so admirable. And wherefore? Because Christ too so wills, as when He says, If you make a supper or a dinner, call not your friends, neither your kinsmen, but the maimed, the lame, the blind, that cannot recompense you.

Luke 14:12 For it is not indiscriminately that one should pay such attentions, but to the hungry, but to the thirsty, but to those who need clothing, but to strangers, but to those who from riches have been reduced to poverty. For He said not simply, I was fed, but I was an hungered, for, You saw me an hungered, He says, and fed me. Matthew 25:35 Twofold is the claim, both that he is a saint and that he is hungry. For if he that is simply hungry ought to be fed, much more when he is a saint too that is hungry.

If then he is a saint, but not in need, give not; for this were no gain. For neither did Christ enjoin it; or rather, neither is he a saint that is in abundance and receives. Do you see that it is not for filthy lucre that these things have been said to you, but for your profit? Feed the hungry, that you may not feed the fire of hell. He, eating of what is yours, sanctifies also what remains. Luke 11:41 Think how the widow maintained Elias; and she did not more feed than she was fed: she did not more give than receive.

This now also takes place in a much greater thing. For it is not a barrel of meal, nor a cruse of oil 1 Kings 17:14, but what? An hundred fold, and eternal life Matthew 19:21-29, is the recompense for such -- the mercy of God you become, the spiritual food; a pure leaven. She was a widow, famine was pressing, and none of these things hindered her. Children too she had, and not even so was she withheld. 1 Kings 17:12 This woman has become equal to her that cast in the two mites.

She said not to herself, What shall I receive from this man? He stands in need of me. If he had any power he had not hungered, he had broken the drought, he had not been subject to like sufferings. Perchance he too offends God. None of these things did she think of. Do you see how great a good it is to do well with simplicity, and not to be over curious about the person benefited? If she had chosen to be curious she would have doubted; she would not have believed. So, too, Abraham, if he had chosen to be curious, would not have received angels.

For it cannot, indeed it cannot be, that one who is exceeding nice in these matters, should ever meet with them. No, such an one usually lights on impostors; and how that is, I will tell you. The pious man is not desirous to appear pious, and does not clothe himself in show, and is likely to be rejected. But the impostor, as he makes a business of it, puts on a deal of piety that is hard to see through. So that while he who does good, even to those who seem not pious, will fall in with those who are so, he who seeks out those who are thought to be pious, will often fall in with those who are not so.

Wherefore, I beseech you, let us do all things in simplicity. For let us even suppose that he is an impostor that comes; you are not bidden to be curious about this. For, Give, says he, to every one that asks you Luke 6:30; and, Forbear not to redeem him that is to be slain. Proverbs 24:11 Yet most of those that are slain suffer this for some evil they are convicted of; still he says, Forbear not. For in this shall we be like God, thus shall we be admired, and shall obtain those immortal blessings, which may we all be thought worthy of, through the grace and lovingkindness of Jesus Christ our Lord, with whom, to the Father, together with the Holy Spirit, be glory, power, honor, now and forever, and world without end. Amen.

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