
§1 *Prescript (Phil. 1:1-2)*

The prescript, or introductory salutation, of an ancient letter regularly contained three elements: (a) the name of the sender or senders; (b) the name of the recipient or recipients, and (c) a word of greeting or good wishes. Examples abound from letters of the New Testament period, in Greek and in Latin, both literary and nonliterary; earlier examples are the extracts from the official correspondence of the Persian court quoted in the book of Ezra; compare Ezra 7:12, "Artaxerxes, king of kings, To Ezra the priest, a teacher of the Law of the God of Heaven: Greetings." This pattern is followed here, as in all the NT letters: Paul and Timothy are named as the senders and "all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi" as the recipients, and the word of good wishes is "grace and peace."

1:1 / **Paul** is the sole author of the letter, even if Timothy's name is conjoined with his in the prescript. Immediately after the prescript he says, "I thank my God" (not, as in Col. 1:3, in a letter where Timothy's name similarly appears along with Paul's in the prescript, "we . . . thank God"). Later in this letter Timothy is referred to by name in the third person (2:19).

Timothy is associated with Paul in the prescript as a gesture of friendship. He was with Paul at the time of writing and may even have taken down the letter at Paul's dictation. He was well known to the Philippian Christians, having been a member of the missionary team that first brought the gospel to their city (his presence is implied, though not expressly asserted, in the narrative of Acts 16:11-40).

Timothy was a native of Lystra in Lycaonia, the son of a mixed marriage, since his mother was Jewish and his father Greek. He was brought up in the Jewish faith but was not circumcised in infancy. During Barnabas and Paul's first visit to his home town (Acts 14:8-20) he was converted to Christianity. When

Paul passed that way again a year or two later he was impressed by Timothy's spiritual development, which was attested to by senior Christians in Lystra and Iconium. He decided to enlist Timothy as a junior associate in his apostolic ministry but circumcised him first to regularize his anomalous religious status: as the son of a Jewish mother he was no Gentile Christian but a Jew in everything but circumcision. Both Paul and he knew that his circumcision made no difference to his status in the sight of God, but it was intended to remove what would have been an absolute barrier to any relations on Paul's part with synagogue authorities (Acts 16:1-3). Timothy willingly joined Paul and served him devotedly as his aide-de-camp—how devotedly can be gathered from Paul's appreciative words in 2:20-22.

Paul and Timothy are described as **servants** (lit., "slaves") **of Christ Jesus**. In Romans 1:1 Paul introduces himself as "a servant [lit., 'slave'] of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God." In addressing the Philippians Paul had no need to stress his apostolic authority as he did in addressing the churches of Galatia and Corinth: there was no disinclination to recognize his authority in Philippi, as there was in those other churches.

It has been argued that the term "servants" here does not bear the common sense of "slaves" because the Greek word (*doulos*) is used in LXX (the Greek version of the Old Testament) of someone whom God uses for a special ministry or through whom he speaks, like Moses (Neh. 10:29), Joshua (Josh. 24:29), David (Ps. 89:20 [LXX: 88:21]), Jonah (2 Kings [LXX: 4 Kingdoms] 14:25), each of whom is called "the servant (Gk. *doulos*) of the LORD." The readers of Paul's letters, however, would more readily have taken him to mean that he was the "slave" of Christ in the humble sense that the word normally had among them. No doubt Paul did esteem it a high honor to be the servant of Christ, but he implied by his choice of the word meaning "slave" that he was totally at the disposal of his Master. Yet for that very reason his words and actions carried his Master's authority, and in his bondservice to that Master he realized perfect freedom.

The recipients of the letter are called **saints** or "holy people" (those whom God has set apart for himself)—a very common designation for Christians in Paul's letters (cf. Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:2;

