

Paul's Message "to all the saints in
Christ Jesus" at Lebanon, PA.

Grace and Peace

Philippians 1:1-2 (NIV)

Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi (Lebanon), together with the overseers and deacons: Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Grace and Peace: Paul's Core Message



The heart of God's
heart

- ***Grace***: we are very comfortable with that concept.
- ***Peace/Shalom***: we are less familiar.
- More than just inner peace and security.
 - Wholeness and harmony
 - Right relationships...
 - “*Peace/Shalom*” sums up the mission of God in the world.

Peace: An Amazing Testimony

- A community practicing peace, internally and externally.
- Not just some pragmatic or idealistic advice.
- It is what God is up to in the world in Christ.

Colossians 1:19-20 (NIV)

For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

Nickel Mines, PA, 2006



© ASSOCIATED PRESS

If Paul were writing this letter today, what
would he mean as he referred to you as
“...the saints in ‘Christ Jesus’”
in Lebanon, PA?

First, Paul would mean that to be “in Christ Jesus” is to be ***“in community.”***

Secondly, Paul would mean that to be “in Christ Jesus” is to be an “**alternative community**,” even an
“**alternative political community**”.

- Your Christian community needs to be more political.
 - **Not the Washington, DC kind of political power...**
- The central reality of the gospel: Christ crucified!
- The antithesis of worldly political power.
- Notice the following texts:

1 Corinthians 1:23 (NIV)

...but we preach Christ crucified: a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles

1 Corinthians 2:1-5 (NIV)

When I came to you, brothers, I did not come with eloquence or superior wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except **Jesus Christ and him crucified**. I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power, so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.

What Kind of Alternative Political Community?

- It is "The" alternative; not "An" alternative way to live.
- The alternative way of being in the world
- The alternative way of ordering relationships with everyone and everything.
- The pure expression of the new creation that God has inaugurated in the death and resurrection of Jesus.

2 Corinthians 5:17 (NIV)

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!

C. S. Lewis, once penned these words:

(This is) “Enemy-occupied territory—that is what this world is. Christianity is the story of how the rightful king has landed, you might say landed in disguise, and is calling us all to take part in a great campaign of sabotage.” – Mere Christianity

Blessed Assurance

Blessed assurance, Jesus is mine!
O what a foretaste of glory divine!
Heir of salvation, purchase of God,
Born of His Spirit, washed in His blood.

This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Savior all the day long;
This is my story, this is my song,
Praising my Savior all the day long.

Third, Paul would mean that to be “in Christ Jesus” is to Become *a Faithful Interpretation of The Gospel*.

- Become the “good news” to the world who encounters us.
- Become a “Communal Commentary” on being like Christ
 - We are the only commentary most of your 79,230 “nones” are likely to read. It needs to represent Jesus accurately.
- Become the message of the cross.

The Cross: Both Source And Shape of Salvation.

Philippians 2:5-11 (NIV)

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death-- even death on a cross! Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

A Message of “Downward Mobility”

- Does the Lebanon "in-Christ Jesus" community look like this?
- Is this how you decide your priorities?
- Is this how you decide your ministries?
- If we believe that Christ crucified is the power of God, if we want the power of God to work in and through our Christian community, we will become a cross shaped community.

Christ Crucified Is An Epiphany (A Revealing)

- How does “Christ crucified” reveal what the Messiah is like?
- How does “Christ crucified” reveal what God is like?
- How does “Christ crucified” reveal what the church is like?
- How does “Christ crucified” reveal what humanity is to be like?

“Christ Crucified” is Seen In Self-giving Love.

John 13:34-35 (NIV)

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

“Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.”

The Look of a “Christ Crucified Community”

- **First**, people who care for one another and for our unity.

Philippians 2:1-4 (NIV)

If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose. Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.

The Look of a “Christ Crucified Community”

- **Second**, a people who flee sexual immorality and idolatry, including the false gods of rights and power.
- The fundamental sins of every culture, especially America.
- Embrace moral virtue and find the joy of the Lord.
- Embrace weakness, and there you will find the power of God.
- Demanding power undermines the contrast of a “Cross Crucified Community” to the world who is addicted to power.
- Absolute Rights & Absolute Power are Absolutely Idolatrous.

Absolute Power Corrupts Absolutely!

The Look of a “Christ Crucified Community”

- **Third**, we are living the gospel among fellow believers, unbelieving family, and friends.

1 Corinthians 10:24 (NIV)

Nobody should seek his own good, but the good of others.

1 Corinthians 10:31-33 (NIV)

So whether you eat or drink or whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God. Do not cause anyone to stumble, whether Jews, Greeks or the church of God-- even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved.

Bryan Stone summarizes his book, *Evangelism after Christendom* as follows:

“The most evangelistic thing the church can do today is to be the church—to be formed imaginatively by the Holy Spirit through core practices such as worship, forgiveness, hospitality, and economic sharing into a distinctive people in the world, a new social option, the body of Christ.”

The Look of a “Christ Crucified Community”

- **Fourth**, we are a people who make worship our assemblies missional.
- We Stop trying to make the gospel palatable.

Jesus' call is still... "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me." **Luke 9:23 (NIV)**

- We Start trying to make it intelligible.

“...When you come together, everyone has a hymn, or a word of instruction, a revelation, a tongue or an interpretation. All of these must be done for the strengthening of the church.” **1 Cor. 14:26 (NIV)**

Ephesians 1:18-23 (NIV)

I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.