These are the opening lines of the letter, and they tell us a lot about the spirit in which Paul is writing. This is a letter to dear friends who have blessed him with a gift even during his incarceration in Rome. Paul longs for his brothers and sisters in Philippi to stand firm in their faith despite the pressures of the world they live in, and to be transformed into the likeness of Christ as they press on towards that goal for which He has called them.

Q Read v1-2. How does Paul describe i) himself (and Timothy) and ii) the recipients of his letter?

Q What are “Overseers and Deacons”?

Q In what sense is Paul a “servant of Christ Jesus”? (the word actually means “slave”)

Q The same word for a slave is used again in chapter 2 v7. Who is this talking about? What did this service look like? And in what ways are we all supposed to follow that example (see 2:4-5)?

Q What might this look like in the church?

Q Why does Paul call the Christians in Philip “saints”? What does the word mean, and how is it possible that it can describe us!

Q How does the way Paul starts this letter challenge us about the way we should live and treat each other?
Sermon Summary

The Apostle Paul wrote the letter to the Philippians to express his gratitude and affection for the Philippian church, his strongest supporters in ministry. Scholars agree that Paul drafted the epistle during his two years of house arrest in Rome. Paul had established the church in Philippi approximately 10 years prior, during his second missionary journey recorded in Acts 16. His tender love for the believers in Philippi is apparent in this most personal of Paul’s writings. The church had sent gifts to Paul while he was in chains. These gifts were delivered by Epaphroditus, a leader in the Philippian church who ended up assisting Paul with ministry in Rome. At some point while serving with Paul, Epaphroditus became dangerously sick and nearly died. After his recovery, Paul sent Epaphroditus back to Philippi carrying with him the letter to the Philippian church.

A key theme in Philippians is joy/rejoicing in the Christian life.

Personal Application

Q What is Paul grateful for (v3)? Is gratitude an activity or an attitude? What difference does gratitude make in our lives? Practically, how can we cultivate greater gratitude in our lives? What stops us?

Q In v5 Paul uses the Greek word that is often translated “fellowship”. What is the difference between fellowship and friendship? What does it mean to partner in the Gospel?

Q What do we learn about God and our salvation from verse 6? What does “good work” refer to? What other Scriptures can we find that help us to understand this verse? Does this verse encourage us? Why?

Q In view of what Paul says in verse 6, how would you define “sanctification”? Is it something that God does or that we do?

Q What does verse 7 reveal about Paul’s heart as a pastor?

Q Read v9-11. What does it mean for our ‘love to abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight’? Practically, how can we discern what is best in a given situation?