

THE PREACHER'S GREEK COMPANION TO

# Philippians

THE PREACHER'S GREEK COMPANION SERIES

## Philippians

A Selective Commentary for  
Meditation and Sermon Preparation



Sean M. McDonough



**THE PREACHER'S  
HEBREW/GREEK COMPANION SERIES**

**General Editor / Old Testament Editor**

JONATHAN G. KLINE, PhD

*Senior Editor*

*Hendrickson Publishers*

**New Testament Editor**

SEAN M. McDONOUGH, PhD

*Professor of New Testament*

*Gordon-Conwell Theological Seminary*

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A Selective Commentary for  
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Sean M. McDonough



*an imprint of Hendrickson Publishing Group*

## **The Preacher's Greek Companion to Philippians: A Selective Commentary for Meditation and Sermon Preparation**

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**CONTENTS**

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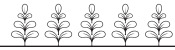
<i>Series Editors' Preface</i>	xi
<i>Author's Introduction</i>	xix
<i>List of Abbreviations</i>	xxi



---

**PHILIPPIANS 1:1-11**

---



**INTRODUCTION**

3

1:1-2 . . . . .	4
1:3-5 . . . . .	8
1:6-8 . . . . .	13
1:9-11 . . . . .	20
From Text to Sermon . . . . .	25



---

**PHILIPPIANS 1:12-26**

---



**PAUL'S EXAMPLE OF LOVE**

27

1:12-20 . . . . .	28
1:21-23 . . . . .	34
1:24-26 . . . . .	40
From Text to Sermon . . . . .	45



---

**PHILIPPIANS 1:27-2:4**

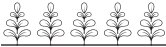
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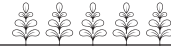
**LIVING AS LOVING CITIZENS OF HEAVEN**

47

1:27-28 . . . . .	48
1:29-30 . . . . .	54
2:1-4 . . . . .	58
From Text to Sermon . . . . .	66



**PHILIPPIANS 2:5-11**



**THE SUPREME EXAMPLE OF LOVE**

69

2:5-8 . . . . .	70
2:9-11 . . . . .	77
From Text to Sermon . . . . .	82



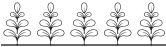
**PHILIPPIANS 2:12-18**



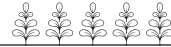
**DON'T GRUMBLE**

83

2:12-13 . . . . .	84
2:14-16 . . . . .	89
2:17-18 . . . . .	95
From Text to Sermon . . . . .	98



**PHILIPPIANS 2:19-30**



**TWO MORE EXAMPLES OF LOVE**

101

2:19-21 . . . . .	102
2:22-24 . . . . .	107
2:25-26 . . . . .	111
2:27-28 . . . . .	115
2:29-30 . . . . .	120
From Text to Sermon . . . . .	125



**PHILIPPIANS 3:1-16**



**PAUL'S PROGRESS**

127

3:1-7 . . . . .	128
3:8-11 . . . . .	130
3:12-14 . . . . .	140
3:15-16 . . . . .	146
From Text to Sermon . . . . .	149



**PHILIPPIANS 3:17-21**



**METAMORPHOSIS**

151

3:17-19 . . . . .	152
3:20-21 . . . . .	158
From Text to Sermon . . . . .	163



**PHILIPPIANS 4:1-9**



**REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS**

165

4:1-3 . . . . .	166
4:4-5 . . . . .	173
4:6-7 . . . . .	176
4:8-9 . . . . .	181
From Text to Sermon . . . . .	188



**PHILIPPIANS 4:10-23**



**SHARING AND CARING**

191

4:10-11 . . . . .	192
4:12-13 . . . . .	196
4:14-16 . . . . .	200
4:17-18 . . . . .	206
4:19-20 . . . . .	211
4:21-23 . . . . .	215
From Text to Sermon . . . . .	219

<i>Works Cited</i>	221
<i>Text-Critical Notes</i>	223
<i>Index of Biblical References</i>	227
<i>About the Author</i>	229

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## SERIES EDITORS' PREFACE




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### Overview

Like many preachers, you may wish you could use the biblical languages in your sermon preparation, but the task seems daunting. Perhaps you lack confidence in your language skills—especially if it's been a long time since you studied Greek or Hebrew—and when you turn to technical commentaries, you feel overwhelmed. Or perhaps you simply don't have the time to do the laborious work of digging into the original-language texts. To help you overcome these challenges, we designed this series, the Preacher's Greek Companion (as well as its Old Testament counterpart series, the Preacher's Hebrew Companion). In collaboration with the series authors, our goal as series editors is to gently guide you, the busy preacher, through the Greek text of select biblical passages in a way that will empower you to integrate original-language exegesis and homiletics. Our prayer is that you will find this book and the other volumes in this series spiritually and intellectually encouraging as well as pleasant to use. We hope your use of the series will make your sermon preparation a more profound and satisfying process and will invigorate your preaching.

### Structure


Each volume in this series includes the following three features for a given biblical book (or portion of a book):


-  **a curated selection of passages** we believe many preachers would likely choose to preach on from the biblical book (or portion of the book) in question; **or, for shorter biblical books, the entire book**, broken up into manageable passages
-  all the basic **lexical and grammatical tools** you need (whatever your Greek skill level may be) **to work through and meditate on the Greek text** of these passages in a way that strengthens your sermon preparation and empowers you to preach more effectively
-  **succinct, select comments** intended to help you responsibly and effectively bridge the gap between reading the Greek text and delivering a sermon on it

The Preacher's Greek Companion is not a traditional commentary series, as is reflected in its title and subtitle: "*Companion*" (not "Commentary") and "*Selected Passages for Meditation and Sermon Preparation*." That is, we conceived this series as a *supplement* to the wealth of fine commentaries that already exist, not as a replacement for any of them. We recommend using this series alongside traditional commentaries, which by design include helpful information that is not covered in ours.


## The Selection of Passages

Each volume in the Preacher's Greek Companion series provides the Greek text of **approximately ten to twelve passages** from a particular biblical book (or portion thereof):

 In addition to having expertise in Greek and exegesis, our series authors typically have extensive preaching experience or are full-time preachers by vocation. Unless the biblical book in question is short enough to be included in full, they chose **passages** they think **preachers would most likely desire to preach**. In order to encourage preaching through the biblical book in an "expository" rather than a thematic manner, these passages are presented in canonical order. That said, for longer books (such as Isaiah or Matthew), we encouraged authors to choose passages that highlight or represent important themes found in the book; for such books, however, the chosen passages are still presented in canonical order. The curated, limited number of passages in each series volume allows you, if you wish, to use the passages as the basis for a "ready-made" sermon series of whatever length suits your schedule (e.g., for a series consisting of, say, four, seven, ten, or twelve sermons). Alternatively, you might choose to preach a series using some of the passages in a volume and then supplement these with passages from the biblical book in question that are not found in the volume.

 The aims of the series guided our decisions about passage length. On the one hand, we encouraged authors to choose **passages that are not too long**, so that the portions of text won't be daunting to you if your Greek skills are rudimentary; nor do we want you to be overwhelmed by wading through dozens of verses in Greek. For this reason, our ideal length for most passages has been approximately ten verses. On the other hand, in order to do justice to the natural boundaries of longer passages, we have taken care not to artificially truncate such texts. Consider, for example, the account of the crossing of the Red Sea (Exod 14–15) or the story of the raising of Lazarus (John 11). Although these texts are far too long to be



included in full in a volume in this series, each constituent part of these texts is vital to understanding their narrative development and message. For such passages, we asked authors to focus—as a preacher might typically do when delivering a sermon on a lengthy passage—on what they consider to be the most salient verses from the passage. Accordingly, we have provided the Greek text for only these verses, with the author summarizing the other verses (in English).

 Finally, when authors deemed it helpful (especially for longer biblical books), they have indicated, on the first page devoted to each passage, the **larger literary unit to which the passage belongs**,<sup>1</sup> thus helping you see the passage in question as part of a larger whole rather than as an isolated pericope. In cases where this larger literary context is indicated, we encourage you to pick up a Bible and read and dwell on this context while using this volume to work through the passage.

## The Presentation of Each Passage

This volume helps you work through each passage it contains by presenting the Greek text of the passage along with the lexical and grammatical information you need in order to dig into this original-language text. Designed to be highly accessible, this format is intended (1) to enable you to work through the text in manageable chunks and according to your abilities, regardless of your skill level in Greek; (2) to simultaneously facilitate both study and devotion; and (3) in conjunction with the author's commentary, to help you bridge the gap, as easily and seamlessly as possible, between the original-language text and preaching.


More specifically, this volume contains the following five sections for each passage:

-  A **brief introduction** to the passage—typically comprising only a few sentences—is included in order to set the stage for the passage and highlight its important themes.
-  For ease of reading and to encourage you to slow down and contemplate the text, the passage is typically divided into subunits. For each of these subunits, we provide the **Greek text** of each clause or phrase, along with **transliteration** (as a pronunciation help for those whose Greek is at a rudimentary level) and the author's **translation**.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Occasionally, such a literary unit is coterminous with the passage itself.

2. The Greek text used in this series is that of the 1885 Westcott-Hort edition of the New Testament, as printed in B. F. Westcott and F. J. A. Hort, *The Greek New Testament*,

 Next, each clause or phrase from the subunit is presented in an inter-linear fashion, notably with a **contextual gloss (or multiple contextual glosses) and parsing for each word.**<sup>3</sup> For example:

3a Εὐχαριστῶ τῷ θεῷ μου			
I give thanks to my God			
<b>Εὐχαριστῶ</b> εὐχαριστέω	I am giving thanks/ give thanks <i>Eu·cha·ri·stō</i>	PRES ACT IND 1ST SG	verb
<b>τῷ</b> ὁ	to the <i>tō</i>	DAT SG MASC	article
<b>θεῷ</b> θεός	(to) God <i>the·ō</i>	DAT SG MASC	noun
<b>μου</b> ἐγώ	of me/my <i>mou</i>	1ST GEN SG	personal pron

This formatting allows you to easily analyze each word in the clause or phrase (by helping you on the level of semantics and morphology) and to perceive how the words work together as a whole (by helping you on the level of syntax).

 A key feature of each volume in this series is the inclusion of **concise comments** to accompany some clauses and phrases. These have two primary goals: (1) to enable you to understand and exegete the text more deeply than might be possible from reading it in English, and (2) to equip you with insights into the original-language text that will be of direct value for your preaching. To help you focus and not become overwhelmed with too much information, we encouraged our authors to comment only on those clauses and phrases for which they thought doing so would accomplish these two goals. In addition, because the volumes in this series are not only language aids but—ultimately and more importantly—preaching aids, we asked authors to highlight those features in the Greek text that bring out key themes, rhetorical and theological emphasis, narrative de-

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with *Expanded Dictionary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2008). For interested readers, text-critical variants for the passages included in the present volume are presented at the end of the volume.

3. The parsings are derived from an unpublished database created by Mark House and Maurice Robinson for Hendrickson Publishers. The glosses are the author's own, though sometimes they are based on glosses from the aforementioned database. The glosses intentionally err on the "literal" end of the spectrum, in order to help you apprehend the basic meaning(s) of each word in context.

velopment, character development, connections with other biblical texts, and the like. Although noting various other features in the Greek text may have been intrinsically interesting from a grammatical perspective or helpful for strengthening your language skills, authors have generally refrained from commenting on such features when doing so would not be likely to aid you in moving from text to sermon in any substantial way.<sup>4</sup> In short, an author's brief, select comments are intended—in conjunction with the volume's language aids—to provide you both with *focus* and with *space* to slow down, meditate, wonder, and mature in your understanding and experience of the text, as you form your own judgments on it and prepare to proclaim the divine word to your hearers. The author's comments are not intended to circumscribe the possible interpretive options with one single answer (especially for texts whose interpretation is the particular subject of debate among Christian believers). Rather, they are meant to stimulate your thinking, to help you see features of the text (and connections with other texts) that you may not have perceived before, and to prompt you to ask questions that may not have previously occurred to you.



Each passage ends with a brief section titled **“From Text to Sermon,”** in which our authors, building on their comments, suggest ways you can move from working through the Greek text to the task of homiletics, highlighting potential points of emphasis or particular insights you may wish to share with your audience. In this way, the authors provide you with possible ways to bring the text to life for your audience (e.g., types of illustrations you might use). Because individual preachers (and each of our series authors) bring their own particular skills, perspectives, backgrounds, and oratorical approaches to bear on the homiletical task, and because every biblical text has its own unique features, we encouraged our authors to structure the “From Text to Sermon” section as a free-form series of short paragraphs whose content and emphases are guided by their own personal judgment about what is most helpful for a variety of preachers in different places, cultures, and times. The remarks in this section are always grouped according to rubrics (in the form of inline


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4. Another way we have kept the presentation streamlined and uncluttered, so that you can achieve maximum focus, is by intentionally keeping source citations to a minimum. Authors' comments on a given passage are the fruit of their scholarly research on the passage, their personal reflection on it, and their experience preaching and teaching it. They cite secondary sources only when they draw a specific insight from one particular source or wish to point you to a particularly helpful resource for further reading. As stated above, we naturally encourage you to also use traditional commentaries (which typically provide more documentation) in your study and sermon preparation.

headers); but rather than restrict authors with a “one-size-fits-all” set of rubrics, we allowed them to create their own rubrics and even, if helpful, to vary these rubrics across passages within their volume in light of the unique features and emphases of each passage.<sup>5</sup> We view the resulting diversity of approaches and emphases across this series (and even within a given volume) as a strength, and we hope this aspect of the series will encourage you to use your own judgment about how to preach each passage in a way that best suits you and your listeners, being sensitive to the promptings and guidance of the Spirit of God.

## Audience and Theological Perspective

Since our hope is that many different kinds of people will find the volumes in this series useful, we have designed the Preacher’s Greek Companion to be helpful to a broad spectrum of Christian preachers:

 Our intention is that the series will be **useful and accessible to a large and diverse group of preachers serving a variety of communities throughout the world**. For this reason, we encouraged authors to exercise sensitivity and broad-mindedness in their comments and particularly when writing the “From Text to Sermon” section, in which they could run the risk of being too culturally specific. In particular, we asked authors that any sermon illustrations they included in this section generally be as universal as possible or that, instead of providing specific illustrations, they point to themes from the passage you may wish to illustrate in one way or another. That said, because specificity is essential for good communication, we also allowed authors to suggest—when they deemed it particularly helpful—concrete, culturally specific examples as springboards to help you think about examples that will be relevant for your own context.

 We asked our authors to express any **theological perspectives** in a way that is **consistent with the beliefs stated in the Apostles’ Creed**. Because this series aims to meet the needs of Christian preachers of various theological viewpoints, we encouraged a diversity of theological perspectives within these bounds across the volumes in the series. In addition, because the series has a joint focus on exegesis (close attention to what a specific text says) and homiletics (how to preach said text), we advised




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5. That said, we suggested the following possible rubrics to authors as starting points to consider: theological themes, themes for application and illustration, integrating the broader historical and literary context, learning from the language, and (as deemed helpful and not reductionistic) “the big idea” of the passage.

authors when making any theological comments to let these flow naturally from the text at hand, rather than using the text as a springboard to discuss issues that would more properly fall under the rubric of systematic theology. Although we asked authors to avoid reading any given passage through the lens of a theological system grounded in other biblical texts, we also strongly encouraged them to discuss allusions to other biblical passages or other innerbiblical literary connections if they felt that doing so would help you understand the message of the text at hand and know how to preach it more effectively.

## Acknowledgments

We would like to offer our heartfelt gratitude to the following individuals, who have played a central role in the creation of this series:

-  Arley Kangas and Marco Resendes, for their excellent work on various aspects of the making of these volumes, especially transliterating, proof-reading, and generating the indexes.
-  Phil Frank, for his expert typesetting and for patiently working with us, in our capacity as series editors, to achieve the desired formatting and aesthetic for these volumes.
-  The series authors, for joining us in this unique project and for sharing our vision and lending their considerable skills to the task. These volumes are the result of a fruitful collaboration between the Hendrickson team and the series authors (with both parties contributing to the content). We are truly grateful for the opportunity to have worked on this project together.

All of us—the series editors, the series authors, and the team at Hendrickson—pray that the volume you now hold in your hands will empower and encourage you to work through the Greek text of the Bible in order to deepen your sermon preparation and strengthen your proclamation of the word of God. We nurture a deep respect and appreciation for the challenging work that you as a preacher do on the “front lines,” and we recognize the many challenges (logistical, mental, emotional, spiritual, and more) that you encounter on a weekly, indeed a daily, basis. We are honored to come alongside you and support you in your important labors, and we pray that your use of this book will bear much fruit for the kingdom of God.

JONATHAN G. KLINE  
SEAN M. McDONOUGH

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## AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION

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While most of Paul's letters are written to address problems of one sort or another, the message to the Philippians raises an equally important question: what should Christians do when they are doing all right? The Philippians weren't struggling with gross immorality or faulty beliefs about Jesus or the law or fears about the end of the world. They were doing fine. So what happens now?

Paul's answer is that they should *keep making progress in their faith by showing the love of Jesus in their everyday lives*. If John Bunyan had not used it first, we might have entitled this study "Pilgrims' Progress": as citizens of the heavenly kingdom (see Phil 1:27; 3:20), the Philippians are *pilgrims* in this world, and they are to make *progress* by imitating Jesus (1:12, 25; 2:5–11). In case the example of Jesus seems too distant, Paul also holds out himself (1:23–25), Timothy (2:20–21), and Epaphroditus (2:30) as people who show the love of Jesus to others.

Paul knew the Philippian church well, since it was the first church he founded in Europe (Acts 16:12–40). Paul and Silas had been imprisoned in Philippi for casting out a demon from a slave girl, but God delivered them in a miraculous fashion. Paul probably visited the church a few times after that, and the congregation maintained a steadfast support for him throughout his ministry (Phil 4:15–16). In fact, it was the latest gift they had sent him through Epaphroditus (one of their own church members) that was part of the impetus for Paul writing this letter.

Precisely where Paul was when he wrote the letter is a matter of ongoing academic discussion. Caesarea, Ephesus, and Rome are the most likely possibilities. Paul had been imprisoned in the *praetorium* of Herod in Caesarea (Acts 23:35; he mentions the *πραιτώριον* in Phil 1:13); but since at that point he could still appeal for a trial in Rome, it would be odd for him to speak in Philippians as if his death might be imminent. Ephesus was close to Philippi and could allow for regular transmission of news—but we have no record of Paul being imprisoned in Ephesus. So, Rome seems to make the best sense: we know Paul had been imprisoned there, and the word *πραιτώριον* could refer to Caesar's corps of bodyguards, and Paul mentions "Caesar's household" in Phil 4:22.

Wherever Paul was writing from, he penned a warm, personal letter that was meant to encourage the Philippians to keep making progress in their faith. May it continue to inspire Christians today to love as Jesus loved!



Philippians is a wonderful book to preach and teach, and over the years I have preached a sermon series, led Sunday School, and taught Greek exegesis classes from this encouraging, heartfelt letter of Paul's. In the spirit of *κοινωνία* ("fellowship"), a key word in this text, I offer thanks to those who have taught me the Scriptures over the years, and for my family, who have been a constant source of support: my wife, Ariana; my children, Siobhan, Patrick, Keanu, and Daniel; and my canine companions Chizu (RIP) and Lani.

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## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

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1ST	first person	indef	indefinite
2ND	second person	INF	infinitive
3RD	third person	interr	interrogative
ACC	accusative	MASC	masculine
ACT	active	MID	middle
adj	adjective	NEUT	neuter
adv	adverb	NOM	nominative
AOR	aorist	OPT	optative
Aram	Aramaic	PASS	passive
cond	conditional	PERF	perfect
conj	conjunction	PL	plural
DAT	dative	PLUPERF	pluperfect
demonstr	demonstrative	prep	preposition
FEM	feminine	PRES	present
FUT	future	pron	pronoun
GEN	genitive	PTCP	participle
Heb	Hebrew	SG	singular
IMPF	imperfect	SUBJ	subjunctive
IMPV	imperative	translit	transliteration
IND	indicative	VOC	vocative

*NOTE: All Old Testament verse numbers in this volume refer to the Hebrew text. Where the English verse numbering differs, it is listed in brackets following the Hebrew numbering, without any special notation. When the Septuagint (i.e., Greek) version of an Old Testament text is cited and the verse numbering differs from that of the Hebrew text, the Greek reference is listed in brackets following the Hebrew reference, accompanied by the notation "LXX".*



# INTRODUCTION



The Philippians were doing pretty well as a congregation, and so Paul can begin the letter with a wholehearted affirmation of how thankful he is for his friends in Philippi. While Paul follows his usual pattern of making his first thoughts a kind of table of contents for the letter, he focuses his prayer for them on the need to grow in love and insight, all in the confidence that God is working in them. They are doing well, and they need to continue to make progress by loving like Jesus.



1a

Παῦλος καὶ Τιμόθεος

*Paulos kai Timotheos*

**Paul and Timothy,**

1b

δοῦλοι Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ

*douloi Christou Iēsou*

**servants of Jesus Christ,**

1c

πᾶσιν τοῖς ἁγίοις ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τοῖς οὖσιν ἐν Φιλίπποις

*pasin tois hagiois en Christō Iēsou tois ousin en Philippiis*

**to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi,**

1d

σὺν ἐπισκόποις καὶ διακόνοις·

*syn episkopois kai diakonois;*

**along with the overseers and deacons:**

2a

χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη

*charis hymin kai eirēnē*

**Grace and peace to you**

2b

ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν

*apo theou patros hēmōn*

**from God our Father**

2c

καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

*kai kyriou Iēsou Christou.*

**and the Lord Jesus Christ.**



1a Παῦλος καὶ Τιμόθεος			
Paul and Timothy,			
<b>Παῦλος</b> Παῦλος	Paul <i>Pau·los</i>	NOM SG MASC	noun
<b>καὶ</b> καί	and <i>kai</i>	---	conj
<b>Τιμόθεος</b> Τιμόθεος	Timothy <i>Ti·mo·the·os</i>	NOM SG MASC	noun

1b δούλοι Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ			
servants of Jesus Christ,			
<b>δούλοι</b> δούλος	servants/slaves <i>dou·loi</i>	NOM PL MASC	noun
<b>Χριστοῦ</b> Χριστός	of Christ/Messiah <i>Chri·stou</i>	GEN SG MASC	noun
<b>Ἰησοῦ</b> Ἰησοῦς	(of) Jesus <i>I·ē·sou</i>	GEN SG MASC	noun

1c πᾶσιν τοῖς ἁγίοις ἐν Χριστῷ Ἰησοῦ τοῖς οὖσιν ἐν Φιλίπποις			
to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi,			
<b>πᾶσιν</b> πᾶς	to all <i>pa·sin</i>	DAT PL MASC	adj
<b>τοῖς</b> ὁ	(to) the <i>tois</i>	DAT PL MASC	article
<b>ἁγίοις</b> ἅγιος	(to) saints/holy (ones) <i>ha·gi·ois</i>	DAT PL MASC	adj
<b>ἐν</b> ἐν	in <i>en</i>	---	prep
<b>Χριστῷ</b> Χριστός	Christ/Messiah <i>Chri·stō</i>	DAT SG MASC	noun
<b>Ἰησοῦ</b> Ἰησοῦς	Jesus <i>I·ē·sou</i>	DAT SG MASC	noun
<b>τοῖς</b> ὁ	to the <i>tois</i>	DAT PL MASC	article
<b>οὖσιν</b> εἰμί	(to) (those) being <i>ou·sin</i>	PRES ACT PTCP DAT PL MASC	verb
<b>ἐν</b> ἐν	in <i>en</i>	---	prep

<b>Φιλίπποις</b> Φίλιπποι	Philippi <i>Phi·lip·pois</i>	DAT PL MASC	noun
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1d <b>σὺν ἐπισκόποις καὶ διακόνους·</b>			
along with the overseers and deacons:			
<b>σὺν</b>	with/along with/ together with	---	prep
σύν	<i>syn</i>		
<b>ἐπισκόποις</b>	overseers/bishops	DAT PL MASC	noun
ἐπίσκοπος	<i>e·pi·sko·pois</i>		
<b>καὶ</b>	and	---	conj
καί	<i>kai</i>		
<b>διακόνους</b>	deacons/assistants/ ministers/servants	DAT PL MASC	noun
διάκονος	<i>di·a·ko·nois</i>		

Ἐπισκόποις and διακόνους (“overseers” and “deacons/assistants”) represent some sort of leadership groups in the church, but we do not know their exact functions. On the one hand, this teaches us that some leadership structures were a part of the church from its very beginning; on the other hand, given our lack of precise information, we cannot claim a given structure nowadays is “what the Bible teaches.”

2a <b>χάρις ὑμῖν καὶ εἰρήνη</b>			
Grace and peace to you			
<b>χάρις</b>	grace	NOM SG FEM	noun
χάρις	<i>cha·ris</i>		
<b>ὑμῖν</b>	to you all	2ND DAT PL	personal pron
σύ	<i>hy·min</i>		
<b>καὶ</b>	and	---	conj
καί	<i>kai</i>		
<b>εἰρήνη</b>	peace	NOM SG FEM	noun
εἰρήνη	<i>ei·rē·nē</i>		

While “grace and peace” (χάρις . . . καὶ εἰρήνη) is a standard introductory formula in early Christian letters, it’s good to remember that these really are the pillars of our relationship with God!

2b

## ἀπὸ θεοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν

from God our Father

<b>ἀπὸ</b>	from	---	prep
ἀπό	<i>a·po</i>		
<b>θεοῦ</b>	God	GEN SG MASC	noun
θεός	<i>the·ou</i>		
<b>πατρὸς</b>	father	GEN SG MASC	noun
πατήρ	<i>pa·tros</i>		
<b>ἡμῶν</b>	of us/our	1ST GEN PL	personal pron
ἐγώ	<i>hē·mōn</i>		

2c

## καὶ κυρίου Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

and the Lord Jesus Christ.

<b>καὶ</b>	and	---	conj
καί	<i>kai</i>		
<b>κυρίου</b>	Lord	GEN SG MASC	noun
κύριος	<i>ky·ri·ou</i>		
<b>Ἰησοῦ</b>	Jesus	GEN SG MASC	noun
Ἰησοῦς	<i>I·ē·sou</i>		
<b>Χριστοῦ</b>	Christ/Messiah	GEN SG MASC	noun
Χριστός	<i>Chri·stou</i>		