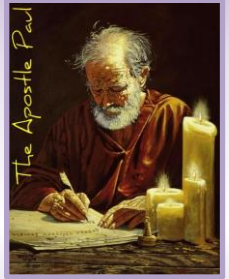


# PHILIPPIANS

## Joy In Christ



### Lesson 01: Introduction ... [PHILIPPIANS]

#### PREVIEW

The Apostle Paul's most personal letter was sent to the believers in Philippi. This intimate and loving epistle was written to believers who lived in the shadow of the Roman tyrant Nero. Paul himself was in a Roman prison, facing an uncertain future. Yet, surprisingly he wrote to the Philippians of the importance of Christian joy. As they were together in a worshiping community, even in the midst of their difficulties, they could experience the joy of the Lord that Jesus promised those who follow Him.

#### LETTER BASICS: AUTHOR, AUDIENCE

##### AUTHOR: WHO IS THE LETTER FROM?

The Apostle Paul is the author of this epistle. Paul was Jewish-born from the city of Tarsus, near the Lebanese border in modern Turkey. He was a Roman citizen and a prominent Jewish religious leader; highly educated as a Pharisee. He was responsible for the sanctioned persecution of Christians before his own dramatic conversion in **AD 37** (Acts 9). He was imprisoned by the tyrant Emperor Nero in **AD 69** in Rome (2 Timothy 2:4) where he was executed the next year.

##### AUDIENCE: WHO IS THE LETTER ADDRESSED TO?

The epistle is addressed to the church at Philippi.

The city of Philippi was located on a fertile plain about 9 miles from the Aegean Sea northwest of the island of Thasos. Neapolis served as the seaport. In New Testament times it was regarded as "the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony" (Acts 16:12); Thessalonica was the capital of that Roman province.

The city's inhabitants were regarded as legal Roman citizens who had the right to vote and to govern themselves. Because no Jewish synagogue was located there, scholars believe the citizens of Philippi were anti-Semitic. A large number of Jews could be found in other Greek cities, such as Thessalonica, Berea, and Corinth.

Originally, the city was a Phoenician mining town because of its proximity to gold mines located in the nearby mountains and on the island of Thasos. Later, Philip of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great, took the city from the empire of Thrace and renamed it after himself.

Subsequently, a crucial battle between the coalition of Octavius (later Emperor Augustus) and Mark Anthony and that of Brutus and Cassius (murders of Julius Caesar, in **44 BC**) was fought there. The former won, thus ending the Roman republic in **42 BC**. As a Roman colony, the city grew in prominence because it was on the main road from Rome to the province of Asia.

Today the city lies in ruins.

#### CHURCH AT PHILIPPI

Soon after Paul and Silas started out on Paul's **2<sup>nd</sup>** missionary journey, they recruited Timothy to assist them (Acts 15:36-16:5). Forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach in Asia and Bithynia, the three came to the coastal city of Troas. Paul there received a vision directing the team to go to Macedonia (Acts 16:9). Luke joined the team, and the four departed for Neapolis in Macedonia the next day. This was the first time Paul brought the gospel to Europe.

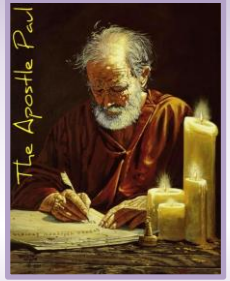
The missionaries left Neapolis for Philippi, where they ministered to a group of women on the Sabbath by the river, since there was no synagogue in the city. Lydia, a merchant woman of Thyatira, and her household believed and were baptized (Acts 16:15; 40).

The next significant event in Philippi occurred when Paul cast out a demonic spirit from a slave girl. Her enraged masters seized Paul and Silas, and dragged them to the city's rulers (magistrates), and brought a false accusation against them (Acts 16:20-21). Because of the Philippian antagonism toward Jews, the multitude beat them and cast them into prison.

At midnight Paul and Silas prayed, sang, and communicated their faith to the other prisoners. An

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earthquake shook the prison's foundation, opened the doors, and loosed the chains from the walls. The jailer, fearful that the prisoners under his care had fled, was about to commit suicide when Paul stopped him. Paul then led the jailer and his household to a saving knowledge of Christ.

At his release the next day Paul revealed that both Silas and he had Roman citizenship and that they had been wrongfully beaten. They then went to Lydia's house, ministered to the believers, and departed for Thessalonica, leaving Luke behind. The young church at Philippi began with an unusual membership of a converted businesswoman, a former demonic soothsayer, and a jailer, and perhaps some prisoners.

<sup>28</sup> There is **neither Jew nor Greek**, there is **neither slave nor free**, there is **neither male nor female**; for **you are all one** in **Christ Jesus**.

--- Galatians 3:28 ... NKJV

#### OVERVIEW: PURPOSES, DISTINCTIVES

##### PURPOSES

Paul wanted to relieve the Philippian's anxiety over the circumstances of his imprisonment (Philippians 1:1-30). They thought that Paul's ministry had been brought to an abrupt stop, but he assured them that God was still advancing the gospel.

Paul had several other reasons for writing. There apparently was a growing disunity among the members as evidenced by Paul's appeal to them to manifest humility and unity (Philippians 2:1-8). Paul also informed the church of a possible imminent visit by Timothy (Philippians 2:18-24); explained the reasons behind Epaphroditus' sickness and healing (Philippians 2:25-30); warned against the deceitful tactics and doctrines of the Judaizers (Philippians 3:1-4:1); admonished Euodia and Syntyche to maintain spiritual and sisterly unity (Philippians 4:2-3); prescribed truth that would give the members mental and emotional stability to replace their anxiety (Philippians 4:4-9); expressed thankfulness

for their financial assistance (Philippians 4:10-20); and share greetings with all of them (Philippians 4:21-23).

##### DISTINCTIVES

The intimate relationship that existed between Paul and the Philippian church can be seen in his frequent use of the first person singular personal pronoun. In these four short chapters, there are **over one hundred** occurrences of such words as "**I**", "**me**" and "**my**". In fact, the pronoun "**I**" can be found **52** times. This does not mean that Paul lacked humility; rather it shows the natural person-to-person rapport between him and the people. Thus, of all the epistles written to churches, Philippians is the most personal.

Within the book is a strong emphasis on the word, "**GOSPEL**" (Philippians 1:5); "**DEFENSE AND CONFIRMATION OF THE GOSPEL**" (Philippians 1:7); "**GREATER PROGRESS OF THE GOSPEL**" (Philippians 1:12); "**DEFENSE OF THE GOSPEL**" (Philippians 1:16); "**CONDUCT YOURSELVES IN A MANNER WORTHY OF THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST**" (Philippians 1:27a); "**FAITH OF THE GOSPEL**" (Philippians 1:27b); "**SERVED WITH ME IN THE FURTHERANCE OF THE GOSPEL**" (Philippians 2:22); "**IN THE CAUSE OF THE GOSPEL**" (Philippians 4:3); and "**THE FIRST PREACHING OF THE GOSPEL**" (Philippians 4:15).

This book has a traditional reputation of being the epistle of **JOY**. Various forms of the words "**JOY**" and "**REJOICE**" are found **18 times**. This theme can be seen in the key verse: "**REJOICE** in the Lord always: again I say, **REJOICE!**" (Philippians 4:4).

One of the greatest Christological passages occurs within Philippians as an example of genuine humility and obedience (Philippians 2:5-11). It speaks of Christ's eternal deity, incarnation, humiliation, death, resurrection, and exaltation via ascension. Theologians call it the "**KENOSIS**" passage, based on the Greek text underlying the phrase: "But emptied Himself" (Philippians 2:7).

**DIVINE  
KENOSIS**