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The Book of Philippians

Author: Paul of Tarsus – born to Jewish parents, a Roman citizen, speaks Greek eloquently, and a tent maker.

Year written:

Letter	Year Written
1 Thessalonians	52 AD
2 Thessalonians	52AD
1 Corinthians	57 AD
2 Corinthians	57 AD
Galatians	55-57 AD
Romans	57AD
Ephesians	62AD
Philippians	62AD
Colossians	52AD
Philemon	63AD
Hebrews	64-65AD
Titus	64-65 AD
1 Timothy	64-65 AD
2 Timothy	66-67 AD

Historical background and purpose:

Acts 16: 6-10, Now when they had gone through Phrygia and the region of Galatia, they were forbidden by the Holy Spirit to preach the word in Asia. After they had come to Mysia, they

tried to go into Bithynia, but the Spirit did not permit them. So passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." Now after he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go to Macedonia, concluding that the Lord had called us to preach the gospel to them.

The Spirit of God would not let them enter anywhere but Macedonia. Philippi is the first city in Macedonia where Apostle Paul established a church.



This city is a Roman colony and a military outpost. Retired and injured Roman soldiers were sent here to settle down.

The citizens of this colony were regarded as citizens of Rome, enjoying a number of special privileges. Because Philippi was a military city and not a commercial centre, there were not many Jews for a synagogue when Paul came in year A.D. 51.

Acts 16:12, and from there to Philippi, which is the foremost city of that part of Macedonia, a colony. And we were staying in that city for some days.

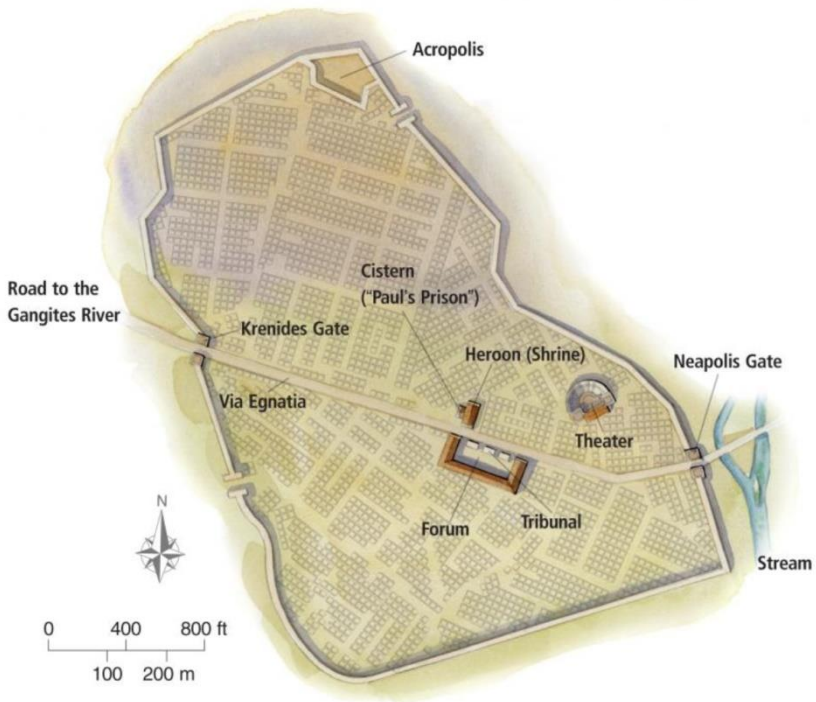
God had opened the heart of woman known as Lydia – a purple cloth merchant – in this well-known city in the region. Paul and his companion stayed there and preached Christ starting from there.

Acts 16:16-33 gives us the details of what happened there.

As Paul was preaching in that region, he meets a girl who through the power of the evil spirit predicted the future, making good money for her masters. She keeps following Paul saying, “listen to these men, they are from God.” This annoys Paul and so he commands the evil spirit to leave her at once in the name of Lord Jesus Christ. She is delivered instantly. Now that their business is ruined, the masters of the girl lodge a complaint against Paul and his companion, and they are beaten and put behind bars, the dungeon.

Around midnight, when Paul and Silas are praying and singing praises to God, the prison doors swing open. The jailor in charge of the prison sees the doors open, assuming that the prisoners have escaped, tries to kill himself. But Paul prevents him from doing so, saying none have escaped. The jailor then repents and puts his trust in Jesus Christ, and he

and his household believe in Jesus and are baptised – thus the Philippian church is born, starting with Lydia.



This Philippian church, "From the first day until now" (1:5) has shared in his interests, made his suffering their own, and participated with him in his ministry for the sake of the furtherance of the Gospel. Though poor in comparison with the other churches, yet they have sent him money twice before – once at Thessalonica (4:16) and once at Corinth (2 Corinthians. 11:9) – and now again at Rome (4:18).

Their love for him (1:9) was well reciprocated (1:7-8). In this letter, Apostle Paul calls them "*beloved*" three times, and also

calls them "*brethren ... longed for*" and "*my joy and crown*" (4:1).

But for some minor non-cooperation, the church does not have any other major problems – hence in good spiritual health overall. Their only flaw is an apparent lack of complete harmony among some of their members. Hence, Paul often summons them to unite (1:27; 2:1-4; 4:2-3). Despite being under persecution (1:28) and experiencing suffering (1:29-30), they are doing well.

Purpose:

- Epaphroditus who came with the gifts from the church fell very ill with life-threatening sickness; therefore, Paul wanted the church to know that he has recovered and is doing well now.
- To thank them for the gifts they had sent through Epaphroditus to meet his needs.
- Appealing for unity among the believers so that there are no quarrels among them.
- Urging them to remain in their faith and be joyful in every circumstance.

Brief Summary:

The basic theme of this epistle is Joy.

This idea of **rejoicing** is found 16 times, appearing in noun forms (1:4, 25; 2:2, 29; 4:1) and verb forms (1:18, twice; 2:17, twice; 2:18, twice; 2:28; 3:1; 4:4, twice; 4:10). In fact, Apostle Paul commands them to stay joyful as well as act joyful!

We see this theme of Joy and Rejoicing woven across the entire letter.

- There is joy in suffering and God accomplishes good through this (1:12-14)
- There is joy in sacrificial living (2:17-18) and living for the sake of the good of others (4:18)
- There is a joy in meeting the needs of others and doing God's will, following Jesus' example (2:4-11)
- There is joy in knowing Christ and experiencing His resurrection power (3:8-10)
- There is joy when harmony triumphs among the brothers (2:4; 4:2-5)
- There is joy over the sufficiency of Christ (4:13, 19), which produces happiness for every circumstance of life.

This four-chapter letter can be categorised under four headings for an easy understanding:

Chapter 1: Paul's present circumstances and the furtherance of the Gospel

1. Thanksgiving prayer by Apostle Paul V:1-11
2. Paul's suffering helps to promote Gospel V:12-18
3. Paul's sufferings glorify God V: 19-26
4. Paul's encouragement for those who are going through sufferings V:27-30

Chapter 2: Paul urges the church to have the mind of Christ

1. Paul's appeal for unity through humility V: 1-4
2. Christ is our example of humility V: 5-16
3. Paul as an example V: 17-18
4. Timothy as an example V: 19-24
5. Epaphroditus as an example V: 25-30

Chapter 3: Paul's appeal to the church to have the knowledge of Christ

1. Warning against self-confidence V: 1-9
2. Make it a goal to know Christ V: 10-16
3. Live as a citizen of heaven V: 17-21

Chapter 4: Paul commands them to have the peace of Christ

1. Peace with brothers and sisters V: 1-3
2. Peace with the Lord V: 4-9
3. Peace with every circumstance V: 10-19
4. Greetings and blessings V: 20-23

Application for today:

1. Heaven-focused life

The Philippians were living like citizens of heaven! They used everything they had to expand the Kingdom of God. How are you living your life today?

- a) Are you suffering? Does it help to further the Gospel?
- b) Are you being generous in your giving? This church set an example by giving despite poverty, which helped shape the ministry of Apostle Paul.
- c) Humility! How are you doing in this area? Paul dedicated an entire chapter to this subject!

2. Is knowing Christ your goal of life?

Apostle Paul does not use any of his credentials when it comes to knowing Christ. Could we live a life making it our goal to know more about Christ?

3. If I got to write a letter about you, will I be able to do so like this?

Apostle Paul writes about his spiritual son and his co-worker Timothy.

Philippians 2:20-21, ²⁰ *For I have no one like-minded, who will sincerely care for your state.* ²¹ *For all seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus.* (NKJV)

What about you?