Bible Study

Philippians: Living with Joy

Introduction to the Epistle of Philippians

The name comes from the Greek city – **Philippi**. This is the first town in Macedonia where Paul established a church. He had intended to take the gospel to Asia (modern Turkey), but a series of events hindered him. Luke, who recorded the venture in Acts, saw this as the guidance of the Spirit of Jesus. They arrived instead at the coastal port of Troas, where Paul had a vision. A man from Macedonia in Greece was begging him to go and help them.

**Acts 16:9-12** (1-12)

The epistle (letter) is written by the Apostle Paul. The traditional view is that it was written along with the other prison epistles (letters) Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon, during Paul’s first imprisonment at Rome (c. A.D. 60-62).

Paul visited Philippi on his second missionary journey. Paul founded the church in Philippi when he travelled there with Silas and Timothy.

Through his ministry there several people trusted Christ as their Savior. Some of these were Lydia and her family and the Philippian jailer and his family.

Acts 16:14–34

Soon after Paul’s visit, a local church was established in Philippi. The church helped the apostle in different ways, so this epistle was written to acknowledge their help, as well as to help them.

Themes in Philippians

Though many exhortations and challenges are given, one major theme or emphasis is “living the Christian life” or “pursuing Christlikeness.

**ch. 3:12-14**

A secondary theme found in this letter is “joy” or the “joy of the Lord”. Paul emphasized the need for believers to rejoice in Christ. “Joy” (*chara*) is used four times (Phil. 1:4, 25; 2:2; 4:1); “rejoice” (*chairō*) occurs eight times (1:18 [twice]; 2:17–18; 3:1, 4:4 [twice], 10); and “glad” occurs thrice (2:17–18, 28). (In 1:26 the word “joy” is a different Gr. word; there it is the word “glad,” “boast,” or “glory,” [*kauchēma*], which also occurs in 2:16 and 3:3.)

Paul wrote frequently in this epistle about the mind of a child of God. One’s manner of life is truly a reflection of what occupies his mind.

Historical Content

When the Philippian believers heard about Paul’s imprisonment at Rome, they sent Epaphroditus, who may have been their pastor, to minister to him. He personally comforted Paul, expressing to him the affection of the saints in Philippi. And he brought Paul a financial contribution from them so that his confinement would be more comfortable.

**ch. 4:18**

While Epaphroditus was in Rome, he became so ill he almost died. After he recovered, he took Paul’s letter to the Philippian Christians.

**ch. 2:27**

Purpose of this Letter

The initial reason for writing seems to have been to thank the Philippians for their love gift. But Paul also took advantage of this opportunity to address some of the problems in their church. Apparently, rivalry and personal ambition were present among some of the saints (2:3–4; 4:2). The Judaizers were also gaining a hearing (3:1–3).

Names to Remember/Watch for

* Timothy
* Ephaphroditus
* Syntyche
* Euodia

OUTLINE OF PHILIPPIANS

(Warren Wiersbe)

I. THE SINGLE MIND—chapter 1

A. The fellowship of the Gospel—1:1–11

B. The furtherance of the Gospel—1:12–26

C. The faith of the Gospel—1:27–30

II. THE SUBMISSIVE MIND—chapter 2

A. The example of Christ—2:1–11

B. The example of Paul—2:12–18

C. The example of Timothy—2:19–24

D. The example of Epaphroditus—2:25–30

III. THE SPIRITUAL MIND—chapter 3

A. Paul’s past—3:1–11

1. (the accountant—“I count”)

B. Paul’s present—3:12–16

1.(the athlete—“I press”)

C. Paul’s future—3:17–21

1. (the alien—“I look”)

IV. THE SECURE MIND—chapter 4

A. God’s peace—4:1–9

B. God’s power—4:10–13

C. God’s provision—4:14–23

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Philippians: Living with Joy

Chapter 1

I. THE SINGLE MIND—chapter 1

A. The fellowship of the Gospel—1:1–11

B. The furtherance of the Gospel—1:12–26

C. The faith of the Gospel—1:27–30