

Philippians

The city of Philippi was named after King Philip II of Macedonia in 356 B.C. who was the father of Alexander the Great. It became a colony of Rome in 42 B.C. and enjoyed political and economic prosperity. It was located on the main road connecting the eastern provinces with Rome known as the Egnation Way. The people of Philippi were Roman citizens and enjoyed full rights as Roman citizens including exemption from taxes. Roman culture was dominant.

The church in Philippi was established through the clear leading and work of the Holy Spirit. Paul saw a vision of a man from Macedonia begging him to come (Acts 16:6-10). Through this vision Paul and his companions (Silas, Timothy, Luke and possibly others) knew that God wanted them to preach the gospel in the region.

Paul and his band made their way to Philippi. The account in Acts 16:11-40 details their ministry there. Lydia was the first one to believe the gospel. Paul and Silas were later thrown into jail, however, for exorcizing a demonized girl who predicted the future through an evil spirit. In jail Paul and Silas were praying and worshipping God about midnight when God shook the jail with a great earthquake. The doors of the jail flew open and the chains fell off of the prisoners.

The jailer almost killed himself because he thought that the prisoners had escaped. When he found that they were all there he came to Paul and Silas and asked the question, *"What must I do to be saved?"* Paul answered, *"Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you will be saved - you and your household"* (Acts 16:31). The jailer and all his family were baptized that night. Accounts such as this show how the church was formed through the evident and powerful work of God in people's lives.

Author, Date and Place

Most scholars believe that Paul wrote this letter to the church in Philippi while imprisoned in Rome. He probably composed the letter while under house arrest awaiting trial as described in Acts 28:14-31. If this is the case the date of the writing would be in A. D. 61 or 62. Paul and his missionary team had planted the church in Philippi some ten or eleven years before this time.

Circumstances and Purpose

The church in Philippi had kept in contact with Paul. When they learned of his imprisonment, they sent a financial gift to him through one of their members named Epaphroditus. After bringing the gift to Paul Epaphroditus got very sick and almost died. Upon his recovery, Paul sent him back to the church in Philippi with a letter for them.

Paul wanted to thank them for their encouragement and financial support. In addition to reporting on his own situation he also took the occasion to encourage them in their walk with Christ. He also explained to them why he was sending Epaphroditus back to them and warned them about false teachers. This letter reflects the intimate and warm personal relationship that Paul had with this church.

It is very important to understand that Paul was writing to his disciples! He was close to them, loved them, and wanted to encourage them in their walk with Jesus. He shared his faith and passion for Christ and wanted to see them continue to follow his example. Paul wanted them to know Christ and grow to full maturity in Him. This was Paul's heart and passion in writing this letter to the disciples in Philippi.

Message and Characteristics

Knowing Christ and experiencing His life and power is the central focus of Paul's message to the church in Philippi. The word "Christ" is used 38 times in this short letter. The life and sufficiency of Christ are emphasized in each chapter. The centrality of Christ in Philippians can be seen in the following chapter outline:

Chapter 1 "Christ Our Life"

Key Verse: 21 *"For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain."*

Chapter 2 "Christ Our Example"

Key Verse: 5 *"Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus."*

Chapter 3 "Christ Our Goal"

Key Verse: 7 *"But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ."*

Chapter 4 "Christ Our Strength and Peace"

Key Verse: 13 *"I can do everything through him who gives me strength."*

Other significant themes in Philippians include joy, fellowship, humility and unity. The theme of "joy" is echoed in every chapter. Paul expresses his joy and faith in the Lord and also instructs them to, "rejoice in the Lord" (4:4). He demonstrates by his life and example that joy is not dependent on circumstances but on our relationship with the Lord. He was able to rejoice despite his imprisonment and suffering.

Our fellowship (koinonia) in Christ is another word that reoccurs frequently in this letter (1:5, 2:1, 3:10, 4:14-15). In addition, Paul also makes several personal references to their close relationship and expresses his feelings and affection for them. Unity in fellowship is maintained by a spirit of humility, which Christ modeled for us. The description of Christ's humility and exaltation (2:6-11) is thought to be a hymn that was sung in the early church. This passage expresses deep truths concerning the deity of Christ, His incarnation, His humiliation, and His present position.

Another interesting characteristic of this letter is that it has no quotations from the Old Testament. The absence of Old Testament references may be because the Philippians were primarily Gentiles and unfamiliar with Old Testament Scriptures. Another feature of this letter is that it was a missionary thank you letter. Apparently, the church in Philippi was Paul's strongest supporting church. Paul's appreciation and affection for them is expressed repeatedly.

Outline of Philippians

I. Sharing Christ and Living Christ		1:1-30
A. The Heart of a Disciple-Maker		1-11
B. The Faith of a Disciple-Maker		12-19
C. The Fire and Focus of a Disciple-Maker		20-26
D. Live Lives Worthy of the Gospel of Christ		27-30
II. Walking in the Humility of Christ		2:1-30
A. Unity Through Humility		1-11
1. Exhortation to humility	1-4	
2. Christ's example of humility	5-11	
B. Work Out Your Salvation in Humility		12-18
C. Examples of Humility		19-30
1. Timothy	19-24	
2. Epaphroditus	25-30	
III. Focusing on the Person of Christ		3:1-21
A. Boasting in Christ		1-14
1. No confidence in the flesh	1-3	
2. Past reasons for confidence in the flesh	4-6	
3. Present focus on knowing Christ	7-14	
B. Living for Christ		12-21
1. Pressing toward the goal in Christ	12-17	
2. Some are enemies of Christ	18-19	
3. Awaiting the return of Christ	20-21	
IV. Experiencing the Strength and Peace of Christ		4:1-23
A. Encouragements and Exhortations		1-9
1. "Stand firm in the Lord"	1	
2. "Agree with each other"	2-3	
3. "Rejoice in the Lord"	4	
4. "Let your gentleness be evident to all"	5	
5. "Don't worry, but pray"	6-7	
6. "Think right"	8	
7. "Do what I taught you"	9	
B. Support and Supply		10-20
1. Content in Christ no matter what the circumstances	10-13	
2. You have supplied my needs	14-18	
3. God will supply your needs	19-20	
C. Greeting and Blessing		21-23

Philippians 1

Christ is our Life

The Heart of a Disciple-Maker - Philippians 1:1-11

Paul and Timothy, servants of Jesus Christ; To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and servants: 2 Grace to you, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Describe the author and recipients of this letter from these first two verses.

3 I thank my God whenever I remember you, 4 always in every request of mine on behalf of you all, making my requests with joy, 5 for your partnership in furtherance of the Good News from the first day until now; 6 being confident of this very thing, that he who began a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ.

How did Paul describe the relationship he had with the believers in Philippi? What feelings did he express? (3-6)

Paul said in verse 6 that he was confident that God who began a good work in them would complete it until Day of Christ. Why was he confident? (6)

7 It is even right for me to think this way on behalf of all of you, because I have you in my heart, because both in my bonds and in the defense and confirmation of the Good News, you all are partakers with me of grace. 8 For God is my witness, how I long after all of you in the tender mercies of Christ Jesus.

Paul continued in verse 7-8 about his confidence that God would complete His work in them. He said, "*It is right for me to think this way about you.*" What reasons did he give? What feelings did he express? (7-8)

9 This I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and all discernment, 10 so that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense to the day of Christ, 11 being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.

Summarize what Paul prayed for them in your own words from verses 9-11.

The Faith of a Disciple-Maker - Philippians 1:12-18

12 Now I desire to have you know, brothers, that the things which happened to me have turned out rather to the progress of the Good News, 13 so that it became evident to the whole palace guard, and to all the rest, that my bonds are in Christ, 14 and that most of the brothers in the Lord, being confident through my bonds, are more abundantly bold to speak the word of God without fear.

How did Paul's imprisonment advance the gospel? (12-14)

15 Some indeed preach Christ even out of envy and strife, and some also out of good will. 16 The former insincerely preach Christ from selfish ambition, thinking that they add affliction to my chains; 17 but the latter out of love, knowing that I am appointed for the defense of the Good News. 18 What does it matter? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed. I rejoice in this, yes, and will rejoice.

What was Paul's attitude about people who preached with wrong motives? Why did Paul rejoice? (15-18)

The Fire and Focus of a Disciple-Maker - Philippians 1:19-26

19 For I know that this will turn out to my salvation, through your prayers and the supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, 20 according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I will in no way be disappointed, but with all boldness, as always, now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death. 21 For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain.

What was Paul's main passion and desire? How is Christ being revealed to others through you? (19-21)

What do Paul's words in verse 21 mean to you: *"For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain."*

22 But if I live on in the flesh, this will bring fruit from my work; yet I don't know what I will choose.
23 But I am hard-pressed between the two, having the desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better. 24 Yet to remain in the flesh is more needful for your sake. 25 Having this confidence, I know that I will remain, yes, and remain with you all for your progress and joy in the faith, 26 that your rejoicing may abound in Christ Jesus in me through my presence with you again.

Why would it be better to leave our bodies and to be with Christ? What did Paul say was the purpose of him remaining in his body? What is the purpose of you remaining on earth? (22-26)

Live worthy of the gospel of Christ - - Live in unity. - Philippians 1:27-30

27 Only let your way of life be worthy of the Good News of Christ, that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of your state, that you stand firm in one spirit, with one soul striving for the faith of the Good News; 28 and in nothing frightened by the adversaries, which is for them a proof of destruction, but to you of salvation, and that from God. 29 Because it has been granted to you on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in him, but also to suffer on his behalf, 30 having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear is in me.

What does it mean to live worthy of the gospel of Christ? Explain what this means for us as individuals and as a group. (27)

Do you think you will face opposition, suffering and persecution? Are you willing to follow Christ anyway? (28-30)

Philippians 2

Christ is our Model

Live in unity and humility: Value OTHERS more than yourself! - Philippians 2:1-4

If therefore there is any exhortation in Christ, if any consolation of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any tender mercies and compassion, 2 make my joy full by being like-minded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind; 3 doing nothing through rivalry or through conceit, but in humility, each counting others better than himself; 4 each of you not just looking to his own things, but each of you also to the things of others.

Why should our fellowship and relationship with God produce oneness and fellowship with each other? (1-2)

What does it mean to consider others better than yourself? How do selfish ambition and vain conceit affect relationships with others? Give examples of understanding and valuing others rather than focusing only on your own interests. (3-4)

Have the same attitude of humility that Jesus had. - Philippians 2:5-11

5 Have this in your mind, which was also in Christ Jesus, 6 who, existing in the form of God, didn't consider equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself, becoming obedient to the point of death, yes, the death of the cross.

What is the attitude (mindset, way of thinking) of Jesus? (5)

Is Jesus God? What does it mean, "*He did not consider equality with God something to be grasped?*" (6)

How did Jesus, "make himself nothing?" (Another translation says, "He emptied himself")? How did Jesus become a servant to others? Give examples. (7)

How did Jesus humble himself? Was it hard for Jesus as a man to submit to the will of the Father and go to the cross? Why? (8)

What do we need to change in order to have the attitude (mind) of Jesus? (5-8)

9 Therefore God also highly exalted him, and gave to him the name which is above every name, 10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those in heaven, those on earth, and those under the earth, 11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

What do verses 9-11 teach about Jesus? Jesus was exalted through humility, service and obedience. How should this affect our thinking? (9-11)

Work out your own salvation in humility - Philippians 2:12-18

12 So then, my beloved, even as you have always obeyed, not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. 13 For it is God who works in you both to will and to work, for his good pleasure.

What does it mean to "*work out your salvation in fear and trembling?*" What is God's part and what is your part in living out the Christian life? (12-13)

How has God worked in you so that you can both will and do what pleases Him?

14 Do all things without complaining and arguing, 15 that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without defect in the middle of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you are seen as lights in the world, 16 holding up the word of life, that I may have something to boast in the day of Christ, that I didn't run in vain nor labor in vain. 17 Yes, and if I am poured out on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice, and rejoice with you all. 18 In the same way, you also rejoice, and rejoice with me.

How does complaining or arguing affect the atmosphere of a fellowship? How does it affect your witness to the world? How can we shine like stars? (14-16)

What was Paul's attitude about his ministry among them? (17-18)

Examples of humility: Timothy and Epaphroditus. - Philippians 2:19-30

19 But I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, that I also may be cheered up when I know how you are doing. 20 For I have no one else like-minded, who will truly care about you. 21 For they all seek their own, not the things of Jesus Christ. 22 But you know the proof of him, that as a child serves a father, so he served with me in furtherance of the Good News. 23 Therefore I hope to send him at once, as soon as I see how it will go with me. 24 But I trust in the Lord that I myself also will come shortly.

How was Timothy like Jesus? (19-24)

25 But I counted it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother, fellow worker, fellow soldier, and your apostle and servant of my need, 26 since he longed for you all, and was very troubled because you had heard that he was sick. 27 For indeed he was sick, nearly to death, but God had mercy on him, and not on him only, but on me also, that I might not have sorrow on sorrow. 28 I have sent him therefore the more diligently, that when you see him again, you may rejoice, and that I may be the less sorrowful. 29 Receive him therefore in the Lord with all joy, and hold such people in honor, 30 because for the work of Christ he came near to death, risking his life to supply that which was lacking in your service toward me.

How was Epaphroditus like Jesus? (25-30)

Philippians 3

Christ is our Goal

I have no confidence in the flesh, although I used to - Philippians 3:1-6

Finally, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord! To write the same things to you, to me indeed is not tiresome, but for you it is safe. 2 Beware of the dogs; beware of the evil workers; beware of the false circumcision. 3 For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh; 4 though I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If any other man thinks that he has confidence in the flesh, I yet more: 5 circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; 6 concerning zeal, persecuting the assembly; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, found blameless.

Who were the "mutilators of the flesh" Paul mentioned in verse 2?

What kind of "circumcision" was Paul talking about in verse 3? (Compare with Romans 2:28-29)

What were Paul's reasons for having confidence in the flesh? (verses 4-6)

If you had to boast about yourself, what would you say?

I want to know Christ and have his righteousness - Philippians 3:7-11

7 However, I consider those things that were gain to me as a loss for Christ. 8 Yes most certainly, and I count all things to be a loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord, for whom I suffered the loss of all things, and count them nothing but refuse, that I may gain Christ 9 and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own, that which is of the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith, 10 that I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, becoming conformed to his death, 11 if by any means I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

What did Paul consider to be valuable (profit) and not valuable (loss)? (7-11)

How did Paul's way of thinking and values change after meeting Christ? (7-11)

What was Paul's greatest passion and goal? What is yours? (7-11)

Why does true righteousness come through faith in Christ? Compare this with, "*a righteousness of my own that comes from the law.*" (9)

Do you think that verse 10 means that we can have fellowship with Christ because of his sufferings or that it means that we experience deeper fellowship with Christ by suffering ourselves? (10)

I press on towards the goal in Christ - Philippians 3:12-16

12 Not that I have already obtained, or am already made perfect; but I press on, that I may take hold of that for which also I was taken hold of by Christ Jesus. 13 Brothers, I don't regard myself as yet having taken hold, but one thing I do: forgetting the things which are behind, and stretching forward to the things which are before, 14 I press on toward the goal for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. 15 Let us therefore, as many as are perfect, think this way. If in anything you think otherwise, God will also reveal that to you. 16 Nevertheless, to the extent that we have already attained, let's walk by the same rule. Let's be of the same mind.

What "prize" was Paul pursuing? Describe Paul's attitude in pursuing this goal. (12-14)

What view should mature believers have? (15)

How does God make his truth clear to us? Are you living up to what he has already revealed to you? (16)

Follow our example of living for Christ - Philippians 3:17- 4:1

17 Brothers, be imitators together of me, and note those who walk this way, even as you have us for an example. 18 For many walk, of whom I told you often, and now tell you even weeping, as the enemies of the cross of Christ, 19 whose end is destruction, whose god is the belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who think about earthly things.

20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from where we also wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who will change the body of our humiliation to be conformed to the body of his glory, according to the working by which he is able even to subject all things to himself.

Describe the person you know whose model you most desire to follow. Can you say to other people, "*Follow my example?*" (17)

Who are "enemies of the cross" today? (18-19)

What will happen to us when Jesus returns? Why are you excited to be a citizen of heaven? (20-21)

4:1 Therefore, my brothers, beloved and longed for, my joy and crown, stand firm in the Lord in this way, my beloved.

Describe Paul's heart for the believers in Philippi. (4:1)

Philippians 4

Christ is our Joy, Peace and Strength

Encouragements and Exhortations (Love, Joy and Peace) - Philippians 4:2-9

2 I exhort Euodia, and I exhort Syntyche, to think the same way in the Lord. 3 Yes, I beg you also, true partner, help these women, for they labored with me in the Good News with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.

How can we, *"agree with each other in the Lord?"* Can you agree with someone in the Lord even though you disagree about issues? (2-3)

It is clear from these verses that women were co-workers in the ministry. What sorts of ministry do you think they were doing? (2-3)

4 Rejoice in the Lord always! Again I will say, "Rejoice!" 5 Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand. 6 In nothing be anxious, but in everything, by prayer and petition with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God. 7 And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus.

What does it mean to, *"rejoice in the Lord always?"* (4)

Why should the understanding that the Lord is near give us a gentle (forbearing) spirit? (5)

How are we instructed to pray in verses 6-7? What is the relationship between prayer, peace and our connection with Christ? (6-7)

8 Finally, brothers, whatever things are true, whatever things are honorable, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report: if there is any virtue and if there is any praise, think about these things. 9 The things which you learned, received, heard, and saw in me: do these things, and the God of peace will be with you.

Name some things that are "true, noble, right, pure, lovely, excellent or praiseworthy," which you can focus on rather than on negative things. (8)

Which of the exhortations in these verses do you need to put into practice the most now? (1-9)

I am content in Christ - Philippians 4:10-13

10 But I rejoice in the Lord greatly, that now at length you have revived your thought for me; in which you did indeed take thought, but you lacked opportunity. 11 Not that I speak because of lack, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content in it. 12 I know how to be humbled, and I also know how to abound. In everything and in all things I have learned the secret both to be filled and to be hungry, both to abound and to be in need. 13 I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me.

What was the secret Paul learned of how to be content whatever the circumstances? What were Paul's circumstances? (10-13)

How can you be content even if you have unmet needs or difficult circumstances? (10-13)

You have supplied my needs -- God will supply your needs - Philippians 4:14-20

14 However you did well that you shared in my affliction. 15 You yourselves also know, you Philippians, that in the beginning of the Good News, when I departed from Macedonia, no assembly shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you only. 16 For even in Thessalonica you sent once and again to my need.

17 Not that I seek for the gift, but I seek for the fruit that increases to your account. 18 But I have all things and abound. I am filled, having received from Epaphroditus the things that came from you, a sweet-smelling fragrance, an acceptable and well-pleasing sacrifice to God. 19 My God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. 20 Now to our God and Father be the glory forever and ever! Amen.

Describe the giving of the Philippians. (14-16)

Describe Paul's situation and attitude in receiving the gifts. (17)

How did God view their giving? (18)

Why was Paul confident that, "*God will supply all of your needs according to his riches in glory in Christ?*" (19-20)

How is God glorified when people give cheerfully and when he abundantly supplies their needs? (19-20)

Final greetings and blessing - Philippians 4:21-23

21 Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brothers who are with me greet you. 22 All the saints greet you, especially those who are of Caesar's household.

23 The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen.

What kind of relationship do you think the people mentioned in these verses had? (21-22)

What does verse 23 mean? "*The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.*"

Philippians

Memory Verses

Philippians 1:21

For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

Philippians 2:5

Your attitude should be the same as that of Christ Jesus.

Philippians 3:7

But whatever was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.

Philippians 4:13

I can do everything through him who gives me strength