

This week, we begin our study of the book of Philippians. In this short book of only four chapters, there is a clear overall theme. The word joy appears sixteen times in the text and Christ is mentioned over fifty times. That is not by chance. Real joy is found in Jesus Christ alone. No matter what the circumstances are or what hardship you might be struggling through, a believer in Jesus Christ can have true deep abiding joy through life. That's the message of Philippians. As we study this book, we will see clear examples of lives lived through hardship of all kinds, yet joy remains.

I. CITY OF PHILIPPI

A. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Philippi was a Greek city in Macedonia. It was named after Philip of Macedonia who seized the city in 358 BC. He was the father of Alexander the Great. In 42 BC, Antony and Octavian defeated Brutus and Cassius and thereby marked the end of the Roman Republic and the start of the Roman Empire. Later, Augustus Caesar made Philippi a Roman Colony, elevating the status and importance of the city now under Roman rule. This was a principle stop on the Roman highway.

B. PAUL ESTABLISHED FIRST EUROPEAN CHURCH

It was here in Philippi that Paul comes to preach the Gospel on his second missionary journey (Acts 16: 11-40). The church that was founded in Philippi became the first church established on European soil. This was a major event that has affected all our lives in the west.

II. AUTHOR AND SETTING OF PHILIPPIANS

A. AUTHORSHIP- THE APOSTLE PAUL

The authorship of Philippians is not in question. Paul was a high-ranking Jew of the Pharisee sect focused on strict keeping of the Jewish Law. You will remember from Acts 7 and 8 that Paul hated believers. He persecuted this new group called Christians, which means “*little Christs*.” However, God had a plan for Paul's life. While traveling to Damascus one day, Jesus transformed Paul's life forever. The book of Acts records the growth of Christianity as the Gospel of Jesus Christ spreads. In Acts 13, God clearly calls Paul to preach the good news of Jesus Christ throughout the world and Paul begins the first of three missionary journeys.

B. WRITTEN DURING PAUL'S FIRST IMPRISONMENT IN ROME

The book was written during Paul's first imprisonment at Rome, around AD 60-62. This fact is verified by the reference to the “*Palace guard*” in Philippians 1:13 and “*Caesar's household*” in Philippians 4:22. Paul gives details of his imprisonment in Acts and they are similar to the details given in other prison Epistles (Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon), all written at the same time in Rome. The following Scripture references provide some detail that describe Paul's imprisonment:

? Acts 28:16- *Paul was guarded by soldiers.*

? Acts 28:30- *Paul was able to receive visitors.*

? Acts 28:31- *Paul was able to preach the Gospel. (Eph 6:18-20, Col 4:2)*

? Philippians 2:23-24- *Paul thinks his imprisonment will end soon, so this was probably written near the end of his first Roman imprisonment, approximately thirty years after Paul's conversion.*

III. ESTABLISHMENT OF THE PHILIPPIAN CHURCH

A. PAUL'S 2ND MISSIONARY JOURNEY – ACTS 16:1-10

Paul founded the church at Philippi on his second missionary journey. The purpose for which Paul lived was to share the Gospel wherever the Lord led. In Acts 16:1-10, Paul desired to preach in Asia, but God closed the door. So, Paul proceeded to travel to Bithynia, and God closed the door there. Then, Paul went to Troas and God opened the doors to Macedonia where Paul would travel to the leading city of Philippi and preach the God's Word.

Paul was relentless in his desire to serve the Lord. God wants to use every believer to share the good news of Jesus Christ. Paul didn't just sit around waiting for God to tell him where to go. He was out knocking on every door. You know, it is easier to steer a truck if it's moving. What about you?!

B. PAUL IN PHILLIPI WITH GOSPEL – ACTS 16:11-15

Acts 16:12 says: *“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.”* In Phillipi, Paul and his companion Silas find a small group of Jewish women who were meeting by the river outside of the town. Obviously, there were not enough men to have a synagogue, (it took at least ten men to establish one).

Paul went out to their place of prayer on the Sabbath and preached the Gospel. There, a woman by the name of Lydia came to know the Lord. Acts 16:14 says, *“The Lord opened her heart to heed the things spoken by Paul.”* God was sovereignly at work in the heart of Lydia bringing her to salvation. She invited Paul and his companions to stay in her home. There they preached the Gospel and the church in Philippi was established.

C. OPPOSITION TO THE GOSPEL – ACTS 16:16-24

While preaching the Gospel in Lydia's home, a demon-possessed slave girl came to show opposition to the new church, daily. Paul casts the demon out of the slave girl. (Acts 16:16-18) This enraged the girl's master because he was using her for profit in fortune telling. With this resource gone, the master seized Paul and Silas and took them before the city authorities for throwing the city into confusion. (Acts 16:19-21) In Acts 16:22-24, Paul and Silas were beaten, placed in stocks and imprisoned.

D. GOD USES AN EARTHQUAKE – ACTS 16:24-35

Acts 16:25-26 says, *“But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed.”* For the jailer, this meant his life if any prisoners escaped. He was about to kill himself but stopped when Paul yelled out that they were all there. (Acts. 16:27-28) Immediately, the jailer went to Paul and Silas. Trembling, he brought them out asking, *“Sirs, what must I do to be saved?”* (Acts 16:30) This is the eternal question for all mankind. God literally moved heaven and earth to bring the good news of salvation found in Jesus Christ. There, in his own jail and imprisoned by his sin, Jesus Christ freed the jailer and his household. Acts 16:31-33 says: *“So they said, ‘Believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household.’ Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him and to all who were in his house. And he took them the same hour of the night and washed their stripes. And immediately he and all his family were baptized.”* Paul and Silas could have been freed by this earthquake from a temporary jail but God used it to free a jailer and his household for all eternity!

E. PAUL AND SILAS ARE FREED – ACTS 16:35-40

The next day, the city authorities learned that they had illegally imprisoned Paul and Silas because they were Roman citizens. Afraid, they begged them to leave the city. This marked the beginning of the church at Philippi.

F. PAUL FOLLOWS UP ON PHILLIPIAN BELIEVERS

We know that Paul was able to visit the Philippian believers two more times during his life in his third missionary journey. (2 Corinthians 8:1-5, Acts 20:6)

Paul loved the Philippians as recorded in many places throughout the book. The Philippian believers supported Paul financially. (Philippians 4:15-16) When they heard that Paul was in prison in Rome, they sent a messenger, Epaphroditus, to encourage Paul along with financial gifts. (Philippians 2:25-26) There, Epaphroditus became sick and almost died. After recovering, Paul returned him to Philippi with this letter.

IV. PHILIPPIANS' THEME OF JOY

We have been reminded of the incredible hardships faced by Paul and his companions as they spent their lives sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul understood about hardship and loss. And so did the Philippian believers for they were persecuted as well for their belief in God. And yet, Paul writes of “joy” in this Epistle. How could that be?

A. PAUL’S VIEW OF JOY: A THE BIBLICAL VIEW

Matthew Henry’s Commentary on Philippians defines joy this way, “*A settling conviction that God sovereignly controls the events of life for the believers’ good and His glory is available to all who obey Him.*” Happiness is a fleeting feeling based on circumstances. Joy is the heart we possess regardless of circumstances because of our security in Jesus Christ. The Apostle Paul exhorts and encourages the Christians at Philippi to steadfastness in the faith and joy in the Lord. Philippians 3:1 says: “*Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe.*” And later Paul wrote in Philippians 4:4: “*Rejoice in the Lord always! Again, I will say rejoice!*” As we study the book of Philippians and apply the principles to our lives, like Paul, we will learn the secret of having joy, peace and contentment in every circumstance.

V. EXHORTATION/ ENCOURAGEMENT OF PHILIPPIANS

The Philippian church had its share of problems and hardships. Paul encouraged them to rejoice! (Philippians 1:27-30, Philippians 3:2, 18-19, Philippians 4:2-3) We already looked at a few of the hardships Paul struggled through. Yet, Paul had a joy that would not be diminished no matter what happened. That’s because his purpose and focus was found in serving Jesus Christ. If the cause of Christ was furthered and the Gospel was shared, then Paul fulfilled his purpose no matter what happened. Now, that is having an eternal perspective. That is also why Paul could rejoice and encourage others to do the same. Let us commit to reading, studying, and applying what we learn in Philippians that truly we might live and radiate joy in our lives. May God bless our time together.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

BIBLE STUDIES

Legislators, Governor & Spouses: Tuesday at 7:15am, Capitol Basement, Room 0109

Staff, Lobbyists, Journalists & Sergeants: Tuesdays at Noon, SSB 1525 SHERMAN, RM #603- ACROSS COLFAX FROM CAPITOL