

Philippians

A Study Outline, compiled and written by Dorothy McNaught

INTRODUCTION

I. Background

A. The author. The apostle Paul

Date: Most authorities place in A.D. 62 or 63, while Paul a prisoner under Roman guard in his own house for 2 years. Luke tells us that he spent this time preaching the kingdom of God.

During this period Paul wrote four of his epistles -- Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians and Philemon. Some scholars think one or more of these four epistles were written during the 2 years' imprisonment in Caesarea prior to coming to Rome where he was a prisoner for 2 years. It is plain from the statement in **Phil. 4:22**, about Caesar's household, that Philippians was written from Rome.

B. The city of Philippi

1. Location (map)

2. History and culture (ref. C Encyclopedia)

a. Philip II of Macedon, father of Alexander the Great, took the city in 358 B.C., improved it and named it after himself. It was strategically located on the east-west Egnation Highway between Rome and Asia, and served as a starting point for Alexander the Great when he began his military campaign to conquer the world.

b. It became a Roman colony with the rights of a Roman city in 42 B.C. under Octavius Augustus (Caius Julius Caesar Octavianus, first Roman emperor, and Caesar at time of birth of Christ). All people had priests and altars for worship of any god. It was a very important Roman military city, commanding the great highway from East to West.

c. Little known of history after N.T. times. Later town was destroyed by the Turks; today nothing remains but some ruins.

The French School of Athens conducted excavations here from 1914 to 1938. Many sections of the city were uncovered. (Ref. Thom. Ch. 4425*)

C. The Philippi church (Founded by Paul on his "second missionary journey")

1. The journey to Philippi

a. In Jerusalem to settle a dispute concerning circumcision as required for salvation under the law of Moses - **Acts 15:1-30**

b. Jerusalem to **Antioch** - **Acts vs.22-30**

In **Antioch**, delivering the letter in person - **vs. 30-45**

Paul & Silas leave Antioch, - **vs. 36-40**

- c. Antioch to **Lystra - Acts 15:40 - 16:1**
Timothy joins them at Lystra - Acts, **16:1-3**
- d. Lystra to **Troas, - Acts 16: 6-8** (delivering the decrees, strengthening and growing the churches along the way)
Paul's vision at Troas - **v.9**
Luke joins them here ("we" - **v.10**)
- e. Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke sail to **Philippi - vs.10-13**
"500 years before, Xerxes had sailed on the same waters with his great armada. The four men, in the Trojan ship, accomplished what the great army of Xerxes could not do-- conquered not only Greece, but all of Europe", (New Analytical Bible, 1950, John A. Dickson Pub. Co. p. 1356), beginning with the beachhead at Philippi, the chief city of that part of Macedonia.

2. In Philippi

Philippi was where the Gospel was first preached in Europe. It had no synagogue, so there were very few Jews there, but the Lord had "opened the heart" of a pious woman named Lydia, and brought Paul to her.

- a. Conversion of Lydia, **Acts. 16: 12 ff**
 - 1) Lydia, seller of purple
 - 2) Heart prepared by God; provided housing and place to gather
- b. Damsel with a spirit of divination **v. 16-19**
 - 1) Her handlers lost their source of income and complained
- c. Paul and Silas, beaten severely without a trial
 - 1) Singing praises to God in prison at **Philippi vs.20-26**
 - 2) The jailer & his family **v. 27-34**
 - 3) Penalty for escaped prisoners was death for the jailer
 - 4) Paul's concern for him; introduced him to Jesus
 - 5) Paul's Roman Citizenship. **v. 35-39**
Roman by birth (not purchased at great price)
One of the greatest crimes was to punish an untried and uncondemned Roman, and Roman law absolutely forbade the application of the scourge to the person of a Roman. The magistrate infringing that law was at once under penalty of death. For that reason the magistrates at Philippi were greatly troubled when Paul announced his citizenship. (NAB, p. 1356)
- d. At Lydia's house **v. 40**
Activities -- what they did there.

Note: God takes women as leaders in His church

OVERVIEW: (for reference and personal study)

II. Characteristics of Paul's letter to the Philippians

- A. A letter of spiritual love, filled with warm affection and gratitude.
- B. Emphasizes victory and joy in Jesus Christ -- here and now
- C. Rejoicing
 - 1. In prayer **Phil.1:4**
 - 2. In the gospel, **Phil.1:18**
 - 3. In Christian fellowship, **Phil.2:1-2**
 - 4. In sacrifices for the cause, **Phil.2:17-18**
 - 5. In the Lord **Phil.3:1**
 - 6. For the loving care of the church, **Phil.4:10**

III. Central Message of Philippians: Jesus Christ

- A. **Phil. 1**
 - 1. As source of spiritual fruit, v. 11
 - 2. As the theme of preaching, v. 18
 - 3. As the highest motive of Christian service, v. 20-21
- B. **Phil. 2**
 - 4. As the only perfect spirit and example, v. 5-11
- C. **Phil. 3.**
 - 5. To know Jesus is the supreme prize for which to struggle in life, v. 7-14
 - 6. At whose appearing believers' bodies shall be fashioned anew, v. 20-21
- D. **Phil. 4**
 - 7. Whose power is limitless in Christian lives, v. 13
 - 8. By and through whom God supplies for every need, v. 19

THE LETTER/EPISTLE

IV. Outline of Philippians

- Salutation (compare to other epistles/letters) **Phil. 1:1-2**
 - 1. To all the saints, leaders, and servers
 - 2. Grace (define)

3. Peace (*Hebrew: shalom*)

A. Reflections

Concerning the Philippians -- God is at work among His people

Consider throughout this study: This is a letter full of joy and gladness and Jesus. **What, about the church at Philippi, caused Paul, the slave and apostle of Christ Jesus, to rejoice?**

Note references in the margins of your Bible to other passages. Take time to read them.

1. Expression of Love between Paul and the Philippian church in Christ v. **3-11**
(Note: God takes women as leaders in His church)
 - a. Concerning what was happening through Paul's Imprisonment
2. Paul's imprisonment furthers the spread of the good news of Jesus v. **12-14**
 - a. About how the word was being preached about Jesus
God is loose in the world, even if Paul is confined.
3. Joy about preaching Jesus, no matter what the motive of those doing the preaching v. **15-18a**
 - a. Where is the power? In the Word (speaker is the delivery person)
 - b. How can Christians today each "preach Jesus" to the people in our world?
 1. Tell what Jesus has done in your life. Each of us has a story to tell
4. Paul abiding in/with Jesus v. **18b-26**

B. Instructions and Exhortations **Phil. 1:27-2:30**

1. Stand united with Christ v. **27- Chap. 2: 1-2**
 - a. signs and actions
Ref. be imitators of God **Eph. 5:1-21**; be in the Lord **Eph 6: 10-20**
2. Imitate Jesus' humility **Phil.2:3-11**
(also possible words for a song) **3b -11**
3. Work with the Lord as He strives with you to will and to act according to His good purpose.
4. Expect Timothy, Paul's faithful co-worker to come soon
5. Epaphroditus commended
What he did

6. What Paul expects of the Philippians

C. Rejoice and be glad in the Lord **Phil. 3:1**

1. Heritage **vs.2-6**

- a. Salvation not in circumcision of the flesh
Confidence is in Christ Jesus, worshiping by the Spirit of God
- b. How did Paul's Jewish heritage contrast with faith since his encounter with Jesus **v. 4b-6** (Jesus took hold of him **v. 12**)

2. Having values in true perspective **vs.7-11**

- a. Worldly view values things
Examples
- b. Christian values knowing Christ Jesus "my Lord,"
 - 1) *What does "knowing Jesus" mean?*
(Grk: ginosko = to absolutely know, understand, perceive, be aware of, be sure, have knowledge)
 - a) Denotes an intimacy, an active interaction with our living LORD
 - b) We are given the righteousness of Jesus
Gift of God by faith (belief & trust) in Jesus
Not by any works a person can do or by following the law
Works as a response to God in "my" life
- c. Deeply wants to know Jesus more and more intimately, and to attain to the resurrection out of (*Gk: ek, not apo*) the dead.

3. Growing in Christ Jesus is a continuing process, **Phil. 3:12-16**

- a. Takes conscious effort to let go of what is behind while also pressing on to what God has planned for each
- b. Mature in the faith (ways?),
 - 1) Ask God to clarify what we question, **v.15**
How does God do this?
- c. Live up to what we have already attained, **v.16**
What does this mean?
How are they/ we to do this?
Ref. **Eph. 5:1-21 and 6:10-20.**

4. Stand firm in the Lord

- a. Live a Christian life, according to the pattern you were given
- b. Guard against worldliness
Enemies of the Cross of Christ are
 - 1) Destined for destruction
 - 2) Their god is their stomach (what they want)
 - 3) Their glory is in their shame (do whatever the flesh desires)

- 4) Do not practice self-control
 - 5) Thoughts are focused on earthly things
- c. Our citizenship is in heaven
 We eagerly await our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ
 The Lord Jesus Christ transforms us
5. You are my dear friends and brothers, my joy and crown in the Lord,
- a. We stand firm in the Lord through His power, **Phil.4:1**
- D. Keep your focus upon Jesus. Look to Him in every way.
- 1. “Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice” v. 4
How is this done?
 - 2. In disagreements with fellow Christians
 - a. Resolve them, **Phil. 4:2, 3**
 Often involves forgiveness
 - b. What to do when “I just can’t”?
 Ask God’s help-turn it over to him **Rom. 12:19**,
 - c. What if the dispute is with the Lord?
 - 1) Disaster in our life **Psalm 25:4-5**
 - 2) Paul’s list: **II Cor. 11:23 ff.**
 - 3) Job’s answer **Job 13:15**
 - 4) David’s songs in life experiences with God; **Ps. 116: 17, Ps. 50:14, 15; Ps. 95:2; Ps. 100:4**
 - 3. Involves the way we think
 - a. Scripture explains .
 - 1) Parallel passage (pp): **Prov. 28:7**
 - 2) Other passages concerning the heart
 (Use your concordance and look up “heart”)
 - 4. Involves the way we live in true joy **Phil.4: 4-8**
 - a. Discuss “joy” vs. “happiness”
 - b. *How do we show this “joy in the Lord” in our lives?* v. 5-8
 - 5. God’s peace **Phil.4:9**
 - a. Possible in a troubling world/world of troubles - pp. **Phil. 1:2;**
 - b. Brings believers into consensus in Christ’s Spirit **Phil. 2:1,2 v. 9b**
 “the God of peace will be with you” (RSV).

- c. The presence of the Spirit Jesus sends = the witness of Truth, our “oneness” with the Lord, that Jesus prayed us in **John 17**, promised at his ascension, and sent on Pentecost.
- d. This is the greeting we speak to each other during worship service:
 - 1) The peace of the Lord be with you always
And also with you.
 - 2) The Lord be with you
And also with you.
- e. We use in our daily speech:
 - 1) Goodbye = God be with ye (you)
 - 2) God bless!
- f. *What is the visible result of this peace?*
Freedom from fear; true joy
The early Christians did not fear death; this baffled their enemies

6. Relationships: Phil. 4:10-14; 14-20

- a. Paul’s relationship with Jesus gives him strength to be content in any and every situation. He is in Christ. Both here and hereafter.
 - 1) While here on earth
In plenty, and in want
He is grateful for their support, both the gifts and their prayers
- b. Philippian church members’ relationship with Jesus gives them concern for his welfare and for the spread of the Word since their first acquaintance with the gospel **Phil.4:14-20**
 - 1) They perceived a need and gave generously
 - 2) What attitudes of the heart are shown? (fruits of the Spirit-use concordance)

F. Greetings

Glory, (*honor, praise, adoration, thanksgiving*) be to our God without end.
Greetings to all the saints, from the saints and brethren.
The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.

Some Definitions

consensus *n.* [*<Lat. consentire, to agree*] agreement; “I can live with that”, even if not entirely the way I would word it or do it; general acceptance; of like mind or belief

grace *n.* [*<Lat. gratia*] [Greek: *charis*, gift] acts of compassionate, loving kindness, especially when undeserved; pure love and mercy in action

holy *adj.* [*<Old English. halig*] [Greek. *hagios*] sacred; totally pure.

peace *n.* [*<Lat. pax*] [Greek. *eiraynay*] quietness; rest; complete harmony; absence of hostility; freedom from quarrel or disagreement; calm; + set at one again

praetorian guard *n.* palace guard; particularly the whole camp of official palace guards in Rome referred to by Paul in Philippians

redeem *v.* [*<Lat. redimere*] To regain ownership of something or somebody by paying the required price; to buy back; to turn in what is required to receive something in exchange.

saint *n.* [*<Lat. sanctus, sacred*] A person who is made holy in the righteousness of Jesus by the grace of God. The living Christians at Philippi (and other places) are addressed as saints in the books of the New Testament.

{Lutheran teaching: we are both saint and sinner at the same time in this world.}

salvation *n.* [*<Lat. salvare, to save*] deliverance or redemption from destruction, death or disaster; deliverance or redemption from evil or difficulty

References used in this study and freely quoted:

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The New Oxford Annotated Bible, RSV, 1973, Edited by Herbert G. May and Bruce M. Metzger, Oxford University Press, New York

The Thompson Chain-Reference Bible, NIV, Compiled and Edited by Frank Charles Thompson, D.D., Ph.D., Archaeology by G. Fredrick Owen, D.D., Ed. D., et al;

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Appendix

Notes for the Study and the Study Leader

First and foremost, begin each study session with prayer, asking God to open our eyes to see, our ears to hear, and our hearts to understand His Word to us today. (**Job 32:8; II Tim. 2:7**)

You may want to allow about 5 sessions (45min. to 1 hour each) to the study, depending on your group. “Background” will take the whole first session, but it is important.

INTRODUCTION

I. Background.

In the study of the letter to the Philippians, it is helpful to briefly explore what was happening in the spread of the gospel. For that, we journey with Paul to Jerusalem for a conference about what is needed to be one of God’s people, especially concerning the ceremonial laws of the Jews. This had to do primarily with the requirement under the law of Moses [since the time of Abraham’s covenant with God (**Gen. 17**)] for the circumcision of all male descendants. Circumcision had been a solemn requirement for about 2000 years. This was an historical meeting which has impacted Christianity ever since.

Acts 15 records the meeting of the apostles and elders (believers who were not new in their faith). Based on the teachings by Jesus and also by His Holy Spirit since Pentecost, plus the writings of the prophets (**Am.9.11-12; Jer. 12.15; Is. 45.21**), the apostles and elders come to consensus on what is right teaching about what is required to be people of God. This points to Jesus as the fulfilling of the Law, and established the teaching that we are saved by the grace of God, through faith, not by our works or additional man-made rites.

Consensus was also reached at this conference, to accept the eating of meat of all kinds (clean and unclean), and to abstain from what was offered to idols, and from blood, and from sexual immorality (*look up in the dictionary*). This conference resulted in a letter to be carried to the “brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia”. (**Acts 15:22-30**).

Read the account in **Acts 15 and 16**, picturing the journey to Philippi, and trace it on the map as Paul and Silas traveled up the coast and across Turkey, and noting who was with them.

Take time to locate the city of Philippi on a map, and explore the culture of the place. Note that Paul wanted to go into Macedonia earlier, but God told him to wait. Now he was given a vision of a man in Macedonia beckoning to him to come, for God had prepared the way, opening the heart of Lydia to receive the good news of Jesus. Paul

had to search out the prayer group out by the riverbank because there was not a synagogue in Philippi, although there was many worship places for gods of all kinds. In a Roman city, there was freedom of religion. Philippi became the beachhead for the spread of Christianity throughout Europe.

A and **B** are self explanatory

C. Some interesting things happened in Philippi.. **Acts 16: 12-19.**

2.

- a.** With Lydia, whose heart and home were open to the Lord. (What is an open heart? Who opened it? It was/is an act of God striving with each. **Gen.6:3; John 16:13-15; Rom.8:26,27)**
- b.** What was the reception of these messengers sent by God to Philippi? What was going on with the young woman with a “spirit of divination?” (now we would say the psychic or fortuneteller) Ref. **Deut.18:10-15.** Why were Paul and Silas arrested, beaten, and imprisoned?
- c.** Paul and Silas were not behaving like most severely beaten prisoners in the middle of the night. What happened? God to the rescue! Not only of Paul and Silas, but also of the jailer and his whole household. The jailer and his whole family were rescued from bodily and spiritual death and destruction.
- d.** God’s saving action encompasses the jailer and his household. This has an impact on his life and actions from then on. Christians come together for prayer and worship.

II and III are an overview of the of the letter according to the Narrated Bible and are included for a preview, and can be read before the next study session, rather than discussed in class. The points can be brought up, if desired, as the study progresses. Keep in mind the central focus of the letter is upon Jesus Christ, our living Lord, in our lives here and from now on.

IV. The outline of the letter to the Philippians.

A. Compare the salutation to that of the other epistles/letters of the N.T.

Define “saints.” They/we are people who are living in this world. The overseers are the leaders of the church at Philippi, and the deacons are those who do various serving responsibilities. Paul is especially appreciative of the faithful ways they serve the Lord, and says so. What is special?

To define “grace”; it is helpful to describe what it means to be gracious. Use a large dictionary. Also define “peace” or the Hebrew “shalom” as a greeting. For your convenience, a short list of words and simple meanings is included with the study.

Throughout the study, take time to look up the passages given in the margins of your study bibles as you meet them. It will give you a deeper understanding of the Word, and show you the infinite care God has used in presenting His message throughout the Scriptures. There is no conflict, but only more understandings, given with God’s help, as

Scripture explains Scripture. Remember Jesus' promise, "Where two or three are gathered in My name, I am there in the midst of you." **Matt. 18:20**

Most of the rest of study should be clear enough to follow . I encourage you to stay open to the Lord's leading of discussion as you follow the outline. Allow the members of your group to bring up questions and concerns. A large dictionary and Strong's Concordance would be helpful to understand the full meaning of some of the words used by the translators, and to find the passages for what is brought to mind. God loves to teach us.

If you cannot answer the question, stop right then to pray about it, simply and briefly asking the Lord to help, and put it in His most capable hands. Then go on with the study. We do not see everything clearly this side of heaven. Keep the focus on the study at hand so it does not take longer than has been allotted. Respect the members' time commitment.

B. 3. Even in the beginning of the Church, there were those who preached for profit and self-aggrandizement, but Paul does not spend time finding fault with them if they are preaching Jesus. **Phil. 1:15-18a**

Paul keeps his eye on Jesus, and rejoices that Christ is preached. God promises that His Word will not return to Him ineffectual/void, but do that which He sends it to do. **Is. 55:11** The power is in the Word. The speaker is the delivery person. That should give each one of us courage to reflect what Jesus has done for us in both the way we live and what we say.

C. Paul sends some encouragements to the Philippians, and

- 1.** Tells them to stand united with Christ. If they are united with Christ, they will be living a Christian life. What does it mean to be an imitator of Jesus? Read and discuss **Eph. 5 1-21**. Read what **Ephesians 6:10-20** says about being in the Lord. Do not rush through this part. It is at the core of the cause of Paul and the Lord's rejoicing about the Philippian Christians. Examine Paul's rejoicing, and see how the Ephesians passages describe the Philippians throughout the letter.
- 2.** Tells them to imitate Jesus' humility. In **John 17:1-5**, read Jesus' conversation/prayer with the Father as he was heading to Jerusalem and his death on the cross, about the power that was given to him over all flesh, to give eternal life to all whom the Father has given him, and his reference to the glory which Jesus had with the Father before the world was made. Also read **John 16:15a**. Then ponder the life of loving, merciful service he exhibited, even as he taught his followers about the Kingdom of God. We cannot imagine what Jesus left behind to walk among us, exhibiting how we were created to live: united with God (walking in oneness with the Lord). **John 15:1-11**. How does this fit with the joy and rejoicing in Philippians?

Scripture tells us that in this world, people lord it over others, but it is not to be so among us as Jesus' followers. **Mark 10:42-45**. Jesus did not come as a ruler, but as a servant of God to fulfill the Law and redeem mankind. We are to show forth the fruits of the Spirit.

(Use your concordance to find the passages about the fruits Christians are to bring forth and grow in. One is **Gal. 5:22-24.**) What fruits of the Spirit did the Philippians exhibit? How does that apply to our daily lives?

Here and now, in the world we, too, reside in God's Kingdom of Grace. **John 17:2** states: "And this is eternal life, that they know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent." It is only as God reveals Himself through His Word, that we can know Him. He promises that if you seek Him, He will be found by you. It is my prayer that this study will help you know God better (for with God, there is always more), and that you will share with others what Jesus has done for you, that they may also know Him.

The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. **Phil. 4:23**

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