



The Book of Philippians

Outline of the Book of Philippians:

1) Greeting and Prayer (1:1-11)

a) Salutation from Paul and Timothy (1:1-2)

b) Paul's thanksgiving and prayer for the Philippians (1:3-11)

2) Paul's Reflection on His Imprisonment (1:12-30)

a) Paul's imprisonment has meant progress for the Gospel (1:12-18)

b) To live is Christ (1:19-26)

c) Encouragement to walk worthy of the Gospel (1:27-30)

3) Exhortation to Humble Service (2:1-30)

- a) Encouragement to unity in the faith and service to one another
- b) Christ's example of humble service (2:5-11)
- c) Living as lights in the world (2:12-18)
- d) Timothy as an example of service-centered life (2:19-26)
- e) Epaphroditus as another example of service (2:25-30)

4) Opponents of the Gospel: Where does righteousness come from? (3:1-21)

- a) Initial call to rejoice in the Lord (3:1)
- b) Contrast between the opponents of the Gospel and the true people of God (3:2-3)
- c) Paul's renunciation of spiritual and ethnic privileges for the sake of knowing Christ (3:4-11)
- d) Paul's progress in the Gospel: Through Christ, not the Law (3:12-16)
- e) A call to follow Paul's example of commitment to Jesus as Lord (3:17-21)

5) Concluding Exhortations and Thanksgiving (4:1-23)

a) Standing together for the Gospel (4:1-3)

b) Rejoicing in Faith (4:4-9)

c) Thanksgiving for the Philippians' gift; Paul's contentment in God (4:10-20) and Benediction (4:23)

Introduction:

The Book of Philippians was written by the Apostle Paul to the Church at Philippi which was a Roman colony. There has been a great debate over the location of which Paul was at while scribing this letter; whether it was Caesarea, Ephesus, or Rome of which are the most commonly argued locations.

The Book of Acts 23:35 notates that Paul was first imprisoned at the Praetorium by Herod the Great in Caesarea of which is noted in Philippians 1:13 regarding his imprisonment and those of the imperial guard knowing of him.

Though there is a contention over the location of which Paul was being held, the year of this letter is noted to be around 62 A.D. of which fits best with the possibility that his place of imprisonment at this point of his life was in Rome.

The Church at Philippi was planted by Paul on his second missionary journey somewhere around 46-52 A.D. So the church was somewhere around 10-15 years old when Paul wrote this letter to them. The overarching Theme of this letter can be surmised in one word above all else: encouragement.

According to my ESV study Bible regarding the theme and emphasis of this letter, it records the following, *“Paul wants to encourage the Philippians to live out their lives as citizens of a heavenly colony, as evidenced by a growing commitment to service to God and to one another. The way of life that Paul encourages was manifested uniquely in Jesus Christ; it was also evident in the lives of Paul, Timothy and Epaphroditus.”*

Now regarding the history of this ancient city, there are some unique dynamics to this city to share. After their victory at the Battle of Philippi in 42 B.C., Antony and (later) Augustus re-founded this Macedonian City with army veterans.

Its special status as an Augustan colony exempted the city from significant forms of taxation and gave it additional privileges of land ownership. The city encompassed good agricultural land, and it was on the Egnatian Way, an important Roman commercial road (built mid-2nd century B.C.)

The Roman ethos of the colony is evident in Philippi's Latin civic inscriptions and in the worship of Roman gods. Extant archaeological remains from Paul's day testify to the presence of a theater, a large forum (beneath the later 2nd-century-ad forum), shops, and two city gates (designated "Krenides" to the west and "Neapolis" to the east).

There is a speaker's platform (Greek-bema) in the existing second-century forum between a pair of large fountains. One small stone crypt (built over a cistern) near the forum was designated in later church traditions as the prison site of Paul and Silas (Acts 16:23-24).

Other structures dating from NT times and the early centuries of the church (e.g. a sports facility, pagan temples, octagonal and basilica style churches) can still be seen in Philippi.

Chapter 1

1) Greeting (Verses 1-2)

a) ¹ Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons:

² Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ."

- b) In verse one, Paul notates himself as well as Timothy at the beginning of the letter which is reminiscent of the same point made by Paul in the letter to the Colossians; Timothy was present and played some part in the assembling of the letter itself. It is clear that Paul is the author of this letter to the Philippians.
- c) Paul is speaking to three specific audiences that he is addressing: the Saints, the Overseers, and the Deacons. The word used here for Saints in the Greek is a unique word and it is the word, “hagios” Strong’s Greek #40. This word defined interprets to mean, “set apart, holy or sacred”.
- d) This Greek word is derived from the word, “Hagos” which means “sacred”. So when Paul called them “Saints”, he is not just referring to their salvation but also their sanctification to the things of God being set apart from the world and living unto Christ and not unto self.
- e) In the second half of verse 1, Paul not only refers to the Saints who are at Philippi but he also references “the overseers and deacons”. The Greek word for overseer is “Episkopos” Strong’s Greek 1985 which interprets to mean, “a superintendent, an overseer, a supervisor; i.e. a Christian officer in genitive case charge of a church”.

f) The Greek word for deacon is “diakonois” Strong’s Greek 1249 which interprets to mean, “an attendant, a waiter”. A deacon is one who waits tables and tends to the needs of the local church body as a minister of Christ to the body itself.

g) I shared these points of information with you because I believe that it is important to note that Paul is not only addressing the Church Body but he is also addressing the Church leadership as well.

2) Thanksgiving and Prayer

a) “³I thank my God in all my remembrance of you, ⁴always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, ⁵because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. ⁶And I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ. ⁷It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel. ⁸For God is my witness, how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. ⁹And it is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, ¹⁰so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Christ,

¹¹filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God.”

- b) It would seem easy to assume that Paul finds great joy in this Church as well as its impact upon his emotions when he reminisces of them as well as prays for them which brings joy.
- c) This joy is manifest because this Church body and its leadership have the same mission as Paul and Timothy! Their partnership in the Gospel.
- d) He goes on to encourage them in their good works until the day of Jesus Christ as well as expresses his desire to be with them because he genuinely cares about them.
- e) He goes on to pray that their love may abound as well as with knowledge and discernment in so that they may have the ability to approve and discern what is right and wrong as well as guard their witness and be blameless on the day of Christ.
- f) That their lives may overflow with the fruit of the Spirit It is easy to see that Paul is very pleased with this church and loves them very much. And may that be our hearts as well... to Love Jesus, to Love His Church, and to Love one another for if we do this, we do well.

3) The Advance of the Gospel

a) “¹²I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel, ¹³so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ. ¹⁴And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold to speak the word without fear.”

b) Paul’s addresses, in verse 12, how that his imprisonment has actually served to the benefit of the Gospel and not to its disadvantage.

Why? Because the Message of the Gospel was being spread within the whole of the imperial guard, which is the guardians of the imperial leadership, as well as to those who are in the prison with Paul respectively.

c) Paul goes on to further notate that what he himself was enduring had removed the fear from others to be willing to stand for Christ all the more the more boldly because Paul was showing them jail was not to be feared.

d) Perhaps the Lord has done the same for some of us; He, in His sovereignty, allowed us to go through things in life to show others that if we can survive it then they can too. It is the power of Testimony! We get a Testimony by surviving the Test!

- e) “¹⁵ Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will. ¹⁶ The latter do it out of love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. ¹⁷ The former proclaim Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment. ¹⁸ What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice.”
- f) Friends, the Holy Spirit does many things but one great need for the Spirit of God in the life of the Believer is the need for Spiritual Discernment.
- g) Paul makes mention of the dichotomy of motives amongst those who either minister the message or wield the message. There is a huge difference between ministering and wielding. There are those who minister the message for others and those who wield the message for themselves.
- h) However, Paul makes it clear that either way, God gets Glory because He ensures that Christ is proclaimed and Paul rejoices in this.
- i) Friends, if God can make a donkey talk to a prophet who won't listen then He can use crazy people too.

j) In the big picture of things, it seems that Paul is finding the silver lining in the difficult of it all and to try to find some semblance of God working in the affairs of men in spite of their motives; being pure or otherwise.

4) To Live Is Christ

a) “Yes, and I will rejoice, ¹⁹ for I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, ²⁰ as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death.”

b) Paul, in verse 19, requests of the church to pray for his deliverance from prison as it is his hope and desire but it seems that he also resigns himself to the reality that if he is delivered then Christ will be honored and if he is not delivered then Christ will be honored.

c) Personally, I believe that we would all do well to have that perspective in life and in the seasons of faith and challenge because far too often we measure God’s faithfulness by our comfort level.

d) We must remember that the Lord uses us because we are emotional creatures and we feel; however, Christ does not act based upon whether or not I feel bad or feel good. Christ acts upon His purpose and not my emotional state.

e) Thus Paul's last remarks, "now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death."

f) ²¹ For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. ²² If I am to live in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. ²³ I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. ²⁴ But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. ²⁵ Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your progress and joy in the faith, ²⁶ so that in me you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again."

g) It would seem that perhaps Paul is as melancholy as he is hopeful because his emphasis remains the same as in verses 19 and 20.

h) Paul makes it clear that he is less concerned with his own advancement or comfort or even deliverance; but rather his focus and hope is solely upon the advancement of Christ's Kingdom and not seeking to establish his own.

- i) His life he counts as gain to the church but his death he counts as rest and peace because he will be with Christ! His motivation and perspectives seem to be very balanced as far as his view of himself and life versus death and faith.
- j) But ultimately, according to Church History, Paul is killed by the Roman Emperor Nero in 64 A.D. following the great fire of Rome upon which Nero blamed Christians for starting thus leading to a mass martyrdom of Christians.
- k) My point in mentioning this is the fact that just because Jesus did not deliver Paul from Rome does not mean that Christ was not present to hear the prayers and did not act or respond.
- l) Again, Christ acts based upon His Purpose and just because Paul wasn't delivered from the prison, he was delivered in death.
- m) As we close, chapter one of Philippians Chapter 1, pay close attention to Paul's words...
- n) ²⁷ Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, ²⁸ and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God. ²⁹ For it has been granted

to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake, ³⁰ engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have.”

o) I love the way Paul culminates his thoughts in chapter 1 with a few very specific requests and expectations:

i) Live a life worthy of the Gospel

ii) Standing in one spirit with one mind striving side by side

iii) Stand unafraid of our opponents of the faith

iv) And be willing to suffer for Christ's sake and endure the same conflict as what Paul himself faced and was still facing at the time of this letter. Friends, the demand of faith is hard and the payment of faith is painful.

p) Dear hearts, I close with this in mind. May we live a life worthy of the Gospel being willing to standing together in one spirit and in one mind striving side by side unafraid of the opponents of our faith as well as darkness of this present age because suffering is a part of following Christ...

Chapter 2

1) Christ's Example of Humility

a) “So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy,² complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³ Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the Interests of others.”

i) It is easy to gather from these few verses that Paul is encouraging the church to live selflessly and with others in mind; it is a regrettable byproduct of the human condition to be focused on self-preservation and self-emphasis. And if we are to exemplify Christ’s Example of Humility then we must strive, with the help of the Holy Spirit, to do the same.

ii) Like a father desiring for his children to love one another and be united, it seems that this same desire bleeds through Paul’s words as he is coaching the church not only tend to themselves but those around them as well. Mutual support and mutual vision!

b) “⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.”

- i) In these verses, Paul is striving to give us context of the dichotomy of the person and deity of Christ; both being the expression of the Father as the promised messiah but also as the suffering servant who lived his life as a man being both fully God and fully Man.
- ii) This was a major point of argument in the early church regarding the Being of Christ; whether He was fully God or fully Man or both and if both, then how? The Gnostics, the Mystics, and other religious leaders tried to explain or define but so many of them fell short and their teachings were condemned as Heresy by the early Church Councils.
- iii) I have found that many of the modern day teachings that are heretical in nature are nothing more than the revisiting of teachings that were from long ago. There is nothing new under the Sun for sure.

c) “⁹Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

- i) The purpose for the Name being above every name is that it is by that Name that we are saved, redeemed and through Him that we are made right with the Father. I would like to reference you all to an interesting part of verse 10, “in heaven and on earth and under the earth”. Heaven, Earth, and Under the Earth. The words in Greek for these three words are: epouranion / epigeion / katachthonion.
- ii) Epouranion - Strong’s Greek 2032 - heavenly, celestial, in the heavenly sphere, the sphere of spiritual activities; met: divine, spiritual.
- iii) Epigeion - Strong’s Greek 1919 - on the earth, belonging to the earth (as opposed to the sky), (b) in a spiritual sense, belonging to the earthly sphere, earthly (as opposed to heavenly).
- iv) Katachthonion - Strong’s Greek 2709 - under the earth, subterranean, infernal.

v) All three of these are in direct correlation to specific places thus His Kingship and these noted places are not metaphors but places or dimensions, if you will, of His Dominion.

2) Lights in the World

a) ¹²“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, ¹⁸for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure.”

i) The phrase “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” has been interpreted in many ways by many different people. According to my ESV Study Bible, it had the following noted which I personally believe is one of the best contextual responses to this verse I’ve ever read.

ii) It records, “The Philippines have obeyed in the past and should continue to do so as they work out their salvation with fear and trembling. They cannot be content with past glories but need to demonstrate their faith day by day as they nurture their relationship with God.”

iii) May none of us be willing to settle for past glories but press on in our faith unto its fullness!

b) ¹⁴“Do all things without grumbling or disputing, ¹⁵ that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, ¹⁶ holding fast to the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I may be proud that I did not run in vain or labor in vain. ¹⁷ Even if I am to be poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. ¹⁸ Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.”

i) Friends, our attitude is typically the direct result of our perspectives of things or others; hence, Paul’s warning to do not fall into the trap of grumbling and disputing as it leads to division but rather guard yourselves in so that you are blameless of such things. It would seem that Paul is trying to warn them to do not do such things which are the fruits of a crooked and twisted generation.

ii) To take it a step further, Paul is not just challenging them to not act as this generation does but to be willing to shine as a light in the world, ¹⁴“Do all things without grumbling or disputing, ¹⁵ that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world,”

iii) Among whom you shine as lights in the world; simply put, show them a better way than what they know but you can't influence them if you act, think, and live as they do.

iv) We are not called to simply live by example but to lead by example as well!

3) Timothy and Epaphroditus - Closing portion of Chapter 2

a) ¹⁹“I hope in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you. ²⁰For I have no one like him, who will be genuinely concerned for your welfare. ²¹For they all seek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ. ²²But you know Timothy's proven worth, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel. ²³I hope therefore to send him just as soon as I see how it will go with me, ²⁴and I trust in the Lord that shortly I myself will come also.”

i) Again, we see the heart of Paul bleeding through his words as he so desires to be with them but thankfully has Timothy to send to them in so that he may be cheered by news of them.

ii) He seems to call out those who perhaps have used Paul's name as leverage or perhaps has tried to leverage their way into some position of power or influence hence Paul's statement about others seeking their own interests and not those of Jesus Christ.

iii) **“²²But you know timothy's proven worth, how as a son with a father he has served with me in the gospel.”**

iv) Friends nothing replaces tenure and consistency; faithfulness to the things of God eventually brings influence to be received and accepted as a leader and shepherd. It's more than a title; it's the life that has been lived and the actions that have been faithfully weighed in the balance of one's witness.

b) **“²⁵I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need, ²⁶for he has been longing for you all and has been distressed because you heard that he was ill. ²⁷Indeed he was ill, near to death. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. ²⁸I am the more eager to send him, therefore, that you may rejoice at seeing him again, and that I may be less anxious. ²⁹So receive him in the Lord with all joy, and honor such men, ³⁰for he nearly died for**

the work of Christ, risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me.”

- i) Quick Note: Epaphroditus noted in verse 25 and the Epaphras that is noted in the Book of Colossians are not the same person. After further research, these men are two different people.
- ii) Epaphroditus was someone who was sent from the Church at Philippi to Paul as noted in verse 25, “your messenger and minister to my need,” who had apparently become very ill and almost died but the Lord healed him and saved him from death.
- iii) Paul closes this chapter with encouraging the church to receive Epaphroditus with joy and honor for his work for the church unto Paul. I find the interesting dichotomy of Paul ministering to the Church but also the Church ministering to Paul; they loved their shepherd and their shepherd loved them.
- iv) The Scripture Psalm 133:1-3, “Behold, how good and pleasant it is when brothers dwell in unity! ²It is like the precious oil on the head, running down on the beard, on the beard of Aaron, running down on the collar of his robes! ³It is like the dew of Hermon, which falls on the mountains of Zion! For there the Lord has commanded the blessing, life forevermore.”