



Overview for Philippians

Purpose: To express Paul’s appreciation for the gift the Philippian believers had sent to him, and to strengthen these fellow Christians by showing them that true joy comes from Jesus Christ alone and is not dependent upon circumstances.

Author: Paul the Apostle

Date Written: About 61 A.D.

Setting: The letter was written from Rome during Paul’s imprisonment. The city of Philippi was originally known as Krenides (“The Little Fountains”) because of the many natural springs nearby. Philippi (“city of Philip”) received its name from Phillip II of Macedon (the father of Alexander the Great). Attracted by the nearby gold mines, Philip conquered the region sometime during the fourth century B.C. and in the second century B.C. the city became a part of Rome’s Macedonian province. The church there was founded during Paul’s second missionary journey.

Key People: Paul, Timothy, Epaphroditus, Euodias, and Syntyche

Summary: Paul’s letter to the church at Philippi was one of four (Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon were the other three) written during his first imprisonment at Rome. During his time of incarceration, he no doubt thought often of the churches he had established

during his missionary journeys and felt a natural desire to send instruction and encouragement to those he had helped bring into the Kingdom. This letter is unique among the epistles, for at least two reasons: it is not disciplinary in tone, as it dealt with no specific problems; and it is filled with joy, even though Paul was chained in prison at the time he penned it.

The Philippian church was especially dear to Paul, as it was born as the result of intense persecution that had led to cruel punishment and his eventual imprisonment (Acts 16). God’s miraculous deliverance of Paul and Silas also resulted in the miraculous birth of this church, the first Paul established in Europe.

In addressing these saints, Paul described them as citizens of Heaven, a particularly appropriate reference, since the people of Philippi were citizens of Rome. As he penned this primarily practical letter, he gives them instructions that were usable for daily challenges of life and the ever-present onslaught of the enemy. So timeless are his instructions that saints through the ages have often used them to challenge each other to spiritual excellence.

Paul’s love for these saints is clearly evident as he wrote to them of victory and joy in Christ their Savior. The concept of *rejoicing* or *joy* appears sixteen times, and his message radiates with this positive message, culminating in his exhortation to “Rejoice in the Lord always: and again I say, Rejoice” (Philippians 4:4).

Timeline

Many of these dates are approximate, as reference materials differ slightly.

Jesus crucified; Pentecost; Church begun A.D. 30	Stephen martyred; Paul's conversion 35			Peter's ministry in Asia Minor 47	Jerusalem council 50	PAUL IMPRISONED (CAESAREA) 57-59	PAUL'S HOUSE ARREST 60-62	James (Jesus' brother) martyred 62	Peter & Paul martyred 67/68?	Jude martyred 72
	PAUL IN CILICIA & SYRIA 35-46			PAUL'S MISSIONARY JOURNEYS 46-48	50-52	53-57	Paul's trip to Rome 59			Rome destroys Jerusalem 70
			Holy Spirit falls on Gentiles 41	James (the apostle) martyred; Peter imprisoned 44	Galatians; James 49	1 & 2 Thessalonians 51/52	1 & 2 Corinthians 55	Romans 57	St. Mark 58/60	Ephesians; Colossians; Philemon 60
							Philippians 61	St. Matthew; St. Luke 61/64	1 Timothy; Titus; 1 Peter 64	Jude 65
								Acts; 2 Peter; 2 Timothy 66/68		Hebrews 68

Outline

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- I. Introduction (1:1-2)
 - A. The servants and the saints (1:1)
 - B. The salutation (1:2)
- II. Joy in the furtherance of the Gospel (1:3-30)
 - A. Paul's praise and prayer for the believers (1:3-11)
 - B. Paul's attitude toward afflictions (1:12-26)
 - C. Paul's exhortations to the afflicted (1:27-30)
- III. Joy through submission in suffering (2:1-30)
 - A. The exhortation to submission (2:1-4)
 - B. The divine example of submission (2:5-16)
 - C. The human examples of submission (2:17-30)
- IV. Joy in the person of Christ (3:1—4:3)
 - A. The appeal (3:1)
 - B. The warning against false circumcision and confidence in the flesh (3:2-6)
 - C. The testimony (3:7-14)
 - D. The exhortations (3:15—4:3)
- V. Joy in the provisions of Christ (4:4-19)
 - A. Peace (4:4-9)
 - B. Contentment (4:10-13)
 - C. Material needs (4:14-19)
- VI. Conclusion (4:20-23)
 - A. Praise (4:20)
 - B. Greetings (4:21-22)
 - C. Benediction (4:23)