

Philippians



THE **BOOK** OF PHILIPPIANS

Paul writes a thank-you note to the believers at Philippi for their help in his hour of need, and he uses the occasion to send along some instruction on Christian unity. His central thought is simple: Only in Christ are real unity and joy possible. With Christ as your model of humility and service, you can enjoy a oneness of purpose, attitude, goal, and labor – a truth Paul illustrates from his own life and one the Philippians desperately need to hear. Within their own ranks, fellow workers in the Philippian church are at odds, hindering the work proclaiming new life in Christ. because of this, Paul exhorts the church to “stand fast ...be of the same mind ...rejoice in the Lord always ... but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known ... and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (4:1, 2, 4, 6, 7).



THE **TIME** OF PHILIPPIANS

Paul’s “Macedonian Call” in Troas during his second missionary journey led to his ministry in Philippi with the conversion of Lydia and others. Paul and Silas were beaten and imprisoned, but this resulted in the conversion of the Philippian jailer. The magistrates were placed in a dangerous position by beating Roman citizens without a trial (Acts 16:37 – 40), and that embarrassment may have prevented future reprisals against the new Christians in Philippi. Paul visited the Philippians again on his third missionary journey (Acts 20:1, 6). When they heard of his Roman imprisonment, the Philippian church sent Epaphroditus with financial help (4:18); they had helped Paul in this way on at least two other occasions (4:16). Epaphroditus almost died of an illness, yet remained with Paul long enough for the Philippians to receive word of his malady. Upon his recover, Paul sent this letter back to Philippi (2:25-30).

Silas, Timothy, Luke, and Paul first came to Philippi in A.D. 51, eleven years before Paul wrote this letter. Philippians 1:3 and 4:22 suggest that it was written from Rome, although some commentators argue for Caesarea or Ephesus. Paul’s life was at stake, and he was evidently awaiting the verdict of the Imperial Court (2:20-26).



THE *CHRIST* OF PHILIPPIANS

The great *kenosis* passage is one of several portraits of Christ in this epistle. In chapter 1, Paul sees Christ as his life (“For to me, to live is Christ,” 1:21). In chapter 2 Christ is the model of true humility (“Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus,” 2:5). Chapter 3 presents Him as the One “who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body” (3:21). In chapter 4 He is the source of Paul’s power over circumstances (“I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me,” 4:13).



KEYS TO PHILIPPIANS

Key Word: *To Live is Christ* – Central to Philippians is the concept of “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (1:21). Every chapter resounds with the theme of the centrality of Jesus in the Christian’s life. High points include the following: “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” (2:5); “I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus” (3:8); and “I can do all things through Christ who strengthen me”(4:13).

Key Verses: Philippians 1:21 and 4:12 - “For to me, to live is Christ, and to die is gain” (1:21).

“I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all thing I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need”(4:12).

Key Chapter: Philippians 2 – The grandeur of the truth of the New Testament seldom exceeds the revelation of the humility of Jesus Christ when He left heaven to become a servant of man. Christ is clearly the Christian’s example; and Paul encourages, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus” (2:5).



SURVEY OF PHILIPPIANS

Philippians is the epistle of joy and encouragement in the midst of adverse circumstances. Paul freely expresses his fond affection for the Philippians, appreciates their consistent testimony and support, and lovingly urges them to center their actions and thoughts on the pursuit of the Person and power of Christ. Paul also seeks to correct the problems of disunity and rivalry (2:2-4) and to prevent the problems of legalism and antinomianism (3:1-19). Philippians focuses on: Paul’s account of his present circumstances (1); Paul’s appeal to have the mind of Christ (2); Paul’s appeal to have the knowledge of Christ (3); Paul’s appeal to have the peace of Christ (3).

Paul’s Account of His Present Circumstances (1); Paul’s usual salutation (1:1, 2) is followed by his thanksgiving, warm regard, and prayer on behalf of the Philippians (1:3-11). For years, they have participated in the apostle’s ministry, and he prays for their continued growth in the real knowledge of Christ. Paul shares the circumstances of his imprisonment and rejoices in the spread of the gospel in spite of and because of his situation (1:2-26). As he considers the outcome of his approaching trial, he expresses his willingness to “depart and be with Christ” (1:23) or to continue in ministry. Paul encourages the Philippians to remain steadfast in the face of opposition and coming persecution (1:27-30).

OUTLINE OF PHILIPPIANS

- I. **Paul’s Account of His Present Circumstance 1:1 – 30**
 - A. Paul’s Prayer of Thanksgiving1:1 – 11
 - B. Paul’s Afflictions Promote the Gospel.....1:12 – 8
 - C. Paul’s Afflictions Exalt the Lord.....1:19–26
 - D. Paul’s Exhortation to the Afflicted1:27–30