

PHILIPPIANS

Introduction: Philippians is the most joyful of Paul's letters. The words "rejoice", "rejoicing", or "joy" are used seventeen times in the book's four brief chapters. Paul has been given reason to rejoice by the church's kind treatment of him, most recently evidenced in a gift sent by Epaphroditus. Through this letter, the apostle wishes to thank the church for their mindfulness of him and to encourage them to make rejoicing a life-style.

Name — The epistle is named for the church that originally received it. (i.e. - Philippi)

Author — Paul (Philippians 1:1)

Purpose — Paul wrote this letter to:

1. Thank the believers at Philippi for sending him a financial gift.
2. Let them know that even though he was a prisoner, the gospel was still being preached.
3. Encourage two women in the church who had differences between them to be reconciled.

I. Background Of The Book.

A. The city of Philippi.

1. Philippi was located on the Bounarbachi, now Amgistes, River, about eight miles from the Aegean Sea and was called "the chief city" of that part of Macedonia. (Acts 16:12)
2. Originally named *Crenides* (i.e. Fountains), the city was captured and rebuilt by Philip of Macedon.
 - a. Philip wanted the town for its strategic importance and for gold and silver mines nearby.
 - b. He renamed the city for himself in 356 BC.
3. Philippi claimed political importance.
 - a. Augustus made a colony of the city.
 - b. A Roman colony was like a miniature Rome.
 - c. Their official language was Latin, and they wore Roman clothing and used Roman money.
 - d. Their two chief magistrates were appointed from Rome and were not subject to the provincial governor.

B. The church at Philippi.

1. The Philippian church was planted when Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke responded to the "Macedonian call" which Paul received in Troas on his second missionary journey. (AD 51-52; Acts 16:6-12)
2. When Paul came to Philippi, the first converts were Lydia and her household. (Acts 16:6-10)
 - a. Lydia was apparently a God-fearing Gentile.
 - b. There apparently was no synagogue in Philippi.
3. The next notable conversion came in connection with the casting out of a demon from a servant girl. (Acts 16:16-34)
 - a. For this heroic action, Paul and Silas were beaten and thrown into prison.
 - b. At midnight, they were singing hymns to God.
 - c. After a miraculous release, their jailor was converted.
4. In summary, the church was founded with the conversions of a business woman, her household, a jailor and his family, and possibly a young slave girl and some prisoners.
5. Evidently, Luke stayed behind to help establish these new Christians in the faith.
 - a. We make this assumption from the fact that the first "we" section of Acts ends here. The next episode in Thessalonica is told using the third person, plural pronoun, "they." (cf. Acts 16:10-17; 17:1)
 - b. When Paul returned to Philippi on his third tour, Luke apparently rejoins his group. (cf. Acts 20:5-

6)

6. When the Philippians learned of Paul's imprisonment at Rome, they sent a gift to him by Epaphroditus. (Philippians 4:18)
7. Paul composed his epistle to the Philippian Christians during Epaphroditus' stay at Rome and sent it back by him. (2:25-28)
 - a. Philippians was probably the latest written of the four prison epistles.
 - [1] Paul's confinement has been lengthy. (1:14-17)
 - [2] The epistle implies that several journeys and activities have taken place since his confinement in Rome.
 - [3] Also, the letter seems to indicate that Paul's fate would be decided shortly. (1:23; 2:23-24)
 - b. All these facts point to a date of AD 62 for its composition.

II. The Message of the Book

- A. From what he learned from Epaphroditus, Paul wanted to address certain situations at the church there.
 1. He pleaded for unity and appealed for a spirit of humility. (2:1-8; 4:2-3)
 2. He warned against Judaizing teachers. (3:1-4:1)
- B. Through these challenges he called for them to maintain their joy in Christ.
 1. Philippians is often called "the epistle of joy."
 2. "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! (4:4)

III. Outline of the Book.

- A. Introduction. (Philippians 1:1-11)
 1. Paul offers a typical salutation. (1:1-2)
 2. He expresses thanks for the saints there. (1:3-11)
- B. Paul's ministry while in bondage. (1:12-30)
 1. The apostle assures the readers that God is using his situation to advance the gospel. (1:12-18)
 2. He expects to be released soon. (1:19-20)
 3. However, he is prepared to die for Christ (1:21-26) and encourages the Philippians to be bold in their faith. (1:27-30)
- C. Rejoicing in Christ. (2:1-18)
 1. Paul appeals for the Christians there to have in them the mind of Christ. (2:1-11)
 2. He encourages them to "shine like stars in the universe" as they cooperate with God's purposes. (2:12-18)
- D. Paul sends to them Timothy and Epaphroditus. (2:19-30)
- E. Paul's past and present needs. (Philippians 3:1-21)
 1. Paul recalls his status as a Jew. (3:1-6)
 2. He counts it all as loss for the sake of knowing Christ. (3:7-11)
 3. He exhorts them to press on to the goal "for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus." (3:12-21)
- F. Paul's principles for joyful living. (Philippians 4:1-23)
 1. He appeals for unity. (4:1 -3)
 2. He encourages dependence on God and a focus on noble things. (4:4-9)
 3. He talks of the secret of contentment. (4:10-13)
 4. He thanks them for their gift. (4:14-20)

G. Closing words and benediction. (Philippians 4:21-23)

IV. Key themes of the book.

A. Paul's attitude toward hardship and suffering. (Philippians 1:12-18)

1. The apostle maintained a perspective that his chains had served to advance the gospel and the cause of Jesus Christ. (1:12-14)
2. Yet for reasons we're not told, some at Rome were embarrassed or threatened by Paul's presence as a prisoner there. (1:15-17)
 - a. Perhaps they were embarrassed that an apostle was imprisoned like a common criminal and wanted to show the church could grow without him.
 - b. Perhaps some leaders in the church there felt their importance threatened by his presence.
 - c. Whatever the specifics, we are told their motives for preaching the gospel were insincere.
3. Because their problem was not *doctrinal* but *personal*, Paul simply rejoiced that the gospel was being preached. (1:18)

B. Jesus Christ — Man, God, Savior (Philippians 2:5-11)

1. In his appeal for unity among Christians at Philippi, Paul urged them to imitate the mind of Jesus. (2:1-5)
2. As he described the humility our Lord displayed, Paul penned one of the most beautiful and meaningful texts in the Bible.
 - a. We don't know if this is a contemporary hymn sung by early Christians or Paul's own poetic composition.
 - b. Regardless, it simply and beautifully traces the career of the Christ from his pre-incarnate state to his present exaltation.
3. Jesus Christ is God. (2:6; cf. John 1:1 -3; Colossians 1:15-20; 2:9)
4. Jesus Christ became a man. (2:7; John 1:14; Hebrews 4:15)
5. Jesus Christ is exalted as our Lord. (2:8-11; Hebrews 12:2; Mark 16:19)

C. The Secret of contentment

1. After Paul thanks the Philippians for their gift, he declares that he has learned the secret of contentment. (4:10-12)
2. The secret is found in Philippians 4:13 **“I can do everything through him who gives me strength.”**