

**LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS
UNIFIED HOPE: LOVING CHRIST
AS WE LOVE ONE ANOTHER**

INTRODUCTION, OVERVIEW, AND BACKGROUND

Topics:

Author, Date Written, Audience/Addressees, Occasion and Purpose for Writing, Message, Themes: Joy, Humility, Self-sacrifice, Unity, Christian Living

Opening Questions

1. How can we promote unity without compromising the truth of God’s Word?

2. Can a person experience joy in the midst of trials and tribulations? Explain

3. What actions can we engage in daily to show unity and love among the body of Christ? Explain

The Pauline dilemma

Obstacles of Paul- Paul has found himself in Prison (Phil. 1:12-26; 3:4-17) it is clear that Paul was imprisoned at the time at or near a praetorium (Phil. 1:13) There is no doubt Paul had several encounters with confinement.

Opportunities of Paul -Paul used his chains to build the confidence of the believers and reinforce his conviction and loyalty to Christ.
(Phil. 2:19-30)

Offering of Paul - The book of Philippians consists of several moving parts, but its overarching theme is an offering given as support.

Residual theme of the Gospel is present in the book of Philippians and that is, United we stand divided we fall (Matthew 12:22-28) A House divided cannot stand.

All conform to the central image of Christ's own self emptying slavery, humiliation, and obedience to God, even to the point of death on the cross (Phil. 2:6-8)

Outline

- I. Christ, the believer's life rejoicing in spite of suffering (1:1-30)
- II. Christ the believer's pattern, rejoicing in lowly service (2:1-30)
- III. Christ, object of the believer's faith, desire, and expectation (3:1-21)
- IV. Christ, the believer's strength, rejoicing over anxiety (4:1-23)

Important Emphasis

Although relatively brief Philippians is one of the most interesting and beloved of Paul's undisputed epistles. Philippians reflects Paul's thinking on important theological issues in particular justification by faith and theodicy. **Justification** is Divine, forensic act of God, based on the work of Christ upon the cross. (Holman Illustrated Bible Dictionary) **Theodicy**- this word is a two-part word *Theos*- God and *dike* which means justice. Theodicy deals with the justice of God!

In Philippians, suffering is illumined through the cross! *Phil. 2:6-8*

Galatians has been called Paul's charter for Christian liberty. Philippians would then constitute Paul's charter for Christian unity.

A strong bond of friendship colors this letter that expresses gratitude and keeps the Philippians informed; indeed the human attraction of Paul the man is revealed in their loyalty.

Paul took on a more modified expression of friendship than the definition of the Greeks and Romans. Thus what we have in Philippians is a letter that has the

formal character – and the logic – of a friendly or family letter, where as in terms of content it carries on conversation at a much deeper level of friendship.

“Paul writes to believers that have been reliable partners for Paul in faith and in mission, who face the hostility of their neighbors on the one hand, and who have been distracted from their high calling by internal competition, posturing and discord on the other.” *Phil. 1:4-5* (An Introduction to the New Testament DeSilva)

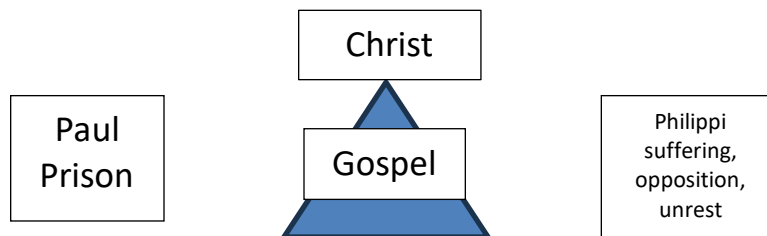
According to Aristotle there were three kinds of friendship it was based on good will and loyalty (including trust). Secondly, friendship based on pleasure that is on the enjoyment of the same thing, so that people enjoy the society of those who are agreeable to us. Thirdly, friendship based on need, a purely utilitarian agreement, which Aristotle disdains.

At the Center is the Gospel

At the Top is Christ

At the Left Side is Paul and his imprisonment

At the Right is Philippi suffering and opposition and some internal unrest.



This illustration leans heavily toward the “reciprocation” of friendship, three features of this theoretical example are noteworthy for Philippians

- 1) The note at the beginning that friendly letters are related to absence “between friends” *Phil. 1:27; 2:12*
- 2) That such letters are concerned with “the affairs of both the sender and recipient” *Phil. 1:12; 1:27; 2:19,23*
- 3) That the recipient “does well” in looking after the needs of the sender *Phil. 4:14*

These expressions of friendship are further heightened by the fact that in this letter Paul studiously avoids any indication of a patron- client or patron protege relationship, which emerges so frequently in his other letters (a form of apostleship or the imagery of a father). (Isaiah 41:8 and John 15:15)

For in Paul's hands everything turns into gospel, Most significantly, friendship in particular is radically transformed from two way to a three way being between him, the Philippians, and Christ.

“He writes to strengthen their resolve in the face of opposition, while also restoring a harmonious and cooperative spirit among believers.”

Empowerment and Impact of Women- This story seems to reflect accurately social realities in Philippi and especially the prominent position played by women.

Introduction

_____ dominates this letter to the believers at Philippi. In fact, the concept of “rejoicing” or “joy” appears sixteen times in four chapters. The pages radiate the positive, triumphant message that because of _____ work for us (2:6-11; 3:12), because of the _____ work in and through us (1:6, 12-14, 18-26; 2:12-13; 4:4-7, 10-13), and because of _____ plan for us (1:6, 9-10, 3:7-14, 20-21; 4:19), we can and should REJOICE!

As you read Paul's letter from prison to his beloved friends in Philippi, note all that you possess in Christ, and find your joy in him.

Authorship

Evidence for Paul's authorship of Philippians comes from the letter itself, as the very first sentence states: “This letter is from Paul and Timothy...” (1:1a NLT). Although Timothy's name also appears in the greeting, it soon becomes obvious that Paul alone is writing since he uses the first person throughout the letter.

Paul also offers examples from his own life and Timothy and Epaphroditus all conform to Christ image.

First Person Examples

Chapter 1:1-5

“I am writing” (1:1)

“I think of you” (1:3)

“I give thanks to my God” (1:3)

“Whenever I pray” (1:4)

“I make my requests” (1:4)

“my partners” (1:5)

Addressees

This letter is from Paul and Timothy, slaves of Christ Jesus. I am writing to all of God’s holy people in Philippi who belong to Christ Jesus, including the church leaders and deacons. (Philippians 1:1 NLT).

Paul wrote this Letter to the believers in Philippi. The city was located at the gateway between Europe and Asia and was like a miniature Rome with a large number of Roman citizens.

While Paul greeted all of God’s people, meaning the entire church, he singled out the church’s leadership for greetings as well. _____ (bishops, pastors or overseers) were in charge of the church, overseeing it—watching over, nourishing, and protecting the spiritual lives of the believers.

The qualifications and duties of the elders are explained in detail in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. The qualifications and duties of deacons are spelled out in 1 Timothy 3:8-13.

Date Written

Paul’s Letter to the Philippians was written from prison in _____ in approximately a.d. 61.

PAUL'S LETTERS AND MISSIONARY JOURNEYS				
YEAR A.D.	MAJOR EVENTS	ACTS	PERIOD	LETTERS
34	Conversion, Damascus, Arabia	9	3 years - Arabia	
37	Jerusalem, Tarsus, Syria, Cilicia			
46-47	Antioch, Jerusalem	11	1 year - Antioch	
48-49	First Missionary Journey and Antioch	13-14		Galatians
50	Jerusalem Council and Antioch	15		
51-53	Second Missionary Journey	16-18	18 months - Corinth	1 Thessalonians 2 Thessalonians
53-54	Antioch			
54-57	Third Missionary Journey	19-21	3 years - Ephesus	1 Corinthians 2 Corinthians Romans
57	Jerusalem Arrest	22-23		
57-59	Caesarea Prisoner	24-26	2 years	
59-60	Journey to Rome	27-28		
60-67 circa	Rome House Arrest	28	5-7 years circa	Ephesians Colossians Philemon Philippians 1 Timothy Titus 2 Timothy

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During the years of house arrest, Paul wrote what have come to be known as the “*Prison Epistles*”—Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, and Philemon.

The Setting

The Macedonian (northern Greece today) city of Philippi was named after Philip of Macedon (the father of Alexander the Great). Surrounded by mountains and close to the sea, Philippi became a strategic city in the *Greek Empire*. In 167 b.c. it became part of the *Roman Empire*.

In 27 b.c., the City of Philippi was given the right to the Law of Italy together with many rights and privileges, including _____ from taxation. The residents of Philippi were very conscious and proud of their _____ citizenship and heritage (see Acts 16:20-21). Although thoroughly colonized by the Romans after 31 b.c., Philippi was still more Greek in culture than Roman.

The church at Philippi in ancient Macedonia was the first European church founded by Paul. Thus, it represents the first major penetration of the gospel into _____ territory (see Philippians 4:14-15).

Acts 16:9-40 tells how the Church at Philippi began. On Paul's second missionary journey in about a.d. 51, prevented by the Holy Spirit from preaching in Asia and in Bythynia, Paul and Silas traveled to Troas, the farthest Asian port on the Aegean Sea.

While in Troas, God spoke to Paul through a vision, telling him to take the gospel to Europe. In this vision, a Greek man begged, "Come over here and help us" (Acts 16:9). Immediately, Paul and his traveling companions set sail for Samothrace and Neapolis, continuing on to Philippi.

Acts 16:14-34 tells of two of the first converts in Philippi: Lydia, a businesswoman who may have been a Jew or a Jewish proselyte; and a Roman jailer. The response of these two provided a clear demonstration that God's Good News was for all classes, sexes, races, and nationalities. (See Galatians 3:28)

When Paul and Silas departed from Philippi, they left _____ there, in his hometown, to carry on the ministry.

Paul's day Philippi was a city of about 10,000 As it was primarily agricultural colony, the mixed population of Thracians , Greeks, and Romans would have lived not only in the town proper.

Philippi was governed by the *Ius Italicum*, Italian law, the highest honor a Roman province could attain.

Checking for Understanding

1. Who is the author of this letter?

2. Who are the addressees?

3. What is the approximate date this letter was written?

4. What is this letter and Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon called? Why?

5. Who founded the church that this letter is addressed too?

6. What two empires did the citizens of this city belong to?

7. Who were the first two converts in this city?

8. Who was left in the city to carry on the ministry after Paul and Silas left to continue their travels?

Purpose for Writing

During the course of Paul's ministry, the Philippian believers had continually come to his assistance through their gifts (4:15-18). At this time, nearly ten years later, the Philippians had again sent a gift to Paul to help him in his time of need (4:10, 14).

In response to this gift and to their relationship over the years, Paul wrote to express his deep appreciation for their love, faithfulness, and generosity.

Joy

Rejoicing

Contentment

The Philippian believers had enjoyed a special relationship with Paul, so he wrote them a personal expression of his love and affection. They had brought him *great*

joy (4:1). Philippians is also a joyful book because it emphasizes the _____ of the Christian life.

The concept of *rejoicing* or *joy* appears sixteen times in four chapters, and the pages radiate this positive message, culminating in the exhortation to “Always be full of joy in the Lord” (4:4).

Main Themes

Five main themes—*joy, humility, self-sacrifice, unity, and Christian living.*

Joy (1:3-6, 12-26; 2:1-4, 17-18; 3:1; 4:4-13)

Paul’s example of maintaining an _____ of Joy in spite of life’s trials and adversities. With sins forgiven, our future secure, and our lives in God’s control, we can be content . . . and have joy. Yes, we can have joy, even in hardship.

Humility (1:15-18; 2:5-11; 3:7-14)

If anyone had the right to boast, it was Paul. Yet he continued to lay aside personal ambition and glory in order to know Christ (3:7-11) and to glorify him (3:12-14).

As Christ’s _____, believers should live as he would. This means putting others first and renouncing personal recognition. It also means serving others and looking out for their best interests. When we give up our self-interest, we can serve the Lord with joy, love, and kindness.

Self-Sacrifice (1:15-26; 2:4, 17, 25-30; 3:7-14; 4:14-19)

Christ _____ and _____ so that all who believe might have eternal life. Paul _____ himself for the ministry, taking every chance to tell others God’s Good News, preaching and teaching even while in prison.

Reaching people for Christ, helping those in need, and changing our world will involve _____. Christ gives us the power to do that. We must follow the example of Jesus and of godly leaders like Paul who demonstrate self-denying concern for others.

Unity (1:15-18, 27-30; 2:1-4, 14-16; 4:2-3)

In every church, in every generation, controversial issues, personality conflicts, and other divisive issues arise. The tendency toward arguments and division intensifies during hard times, when people can turn against each other.

Christians should contend against their common enemy—Satan and his work in the world—and not against each other. We need all our resources, focus, and energy for the battle. When we are unified in love, Christ works through us, and we can make a difference for him. We need to keep before us the ideals of teamwork, consideration of others, and unselfishness.

Christian Living (1:6, 9-11, 21-29; 2:12-13; 3:12-21; 4:4-13)

In this day of media evangelists, celebrity Bible teachers, and articulate preachers, it can be easy to depend on others for our spiritual nourishment and motivation. Yet the Christian life always depends on the _____ an individual believer has with the Lord Jesus.

Instead of relying on others for our “faith,” we must depend on Christ and the Holy Spirit working within us. And instead of expecting growth to happen because we have a strong Christian environment, we must keep our focus on _____, discipline ourselves to pray and to read the Bible, and apply God’s word to our lives. On whom do you depend for your motivation to live for Christ? Where do you find your spiritual nourishment? Christian living depends on Christ living in you and you then living in obedience to him.

Checking for Understanding

9. Why was this letter written?

10. What are the main messages in this letter?

11. What are the main themes in this letter?
