

Outline of Philippians

We hope this outline of Philippians will help you as you endeavor to study God's letter to you.

Philippi was named after Philip II of Macedon, who was the father of Alexander the Great. Philippi was in an area of Greek or Thracian control until gold was discovered at a nearby mountain. Settlers from the nearby island of Thasos seized the area and founded a city which they named Krenides. Sometime after 400 B.C., Philip II seized the city and the mines and renamed it for himself. The gold mines produced over 1,000 talents (a talent = about 75 pounds) of gold a year and financed Philip's army. After the battle of Pydna (168 B.C.), Macedonia passed into Roman hands. The gold was exhausted and Philippi became a small village. But on its plains, a very important battle was fought in 42 B.C. when Brutus and Cassius, the assassins of Julius Caesar, met Octavian and Antony. Octavian and Antony won and in honor of this victory, Philippi became an important Roman city. It held the right of the Law of Italy, including immunity from taxation.

Into this city, God directed Paul in 50 A.D. We have the story told for us in Acts 16:6-40. Paul revisited the city undoubtedly in 56 or 57 A.D. on his journey to Corinth and may have written 2 Corinthians from there. He also stopped by the following spring and spent Passover there with these Gentile converts (Acts 20:6).

Now, he writes them this letter. Polycarp, a bishop of the church at Smyrna at the beginning of the second century, who is well known for his martyrdom, wrote to the Philippians in the only letter that survives from his writings. He states in his letter:

For neither I, nor any other such one, can come up to the wisdom of the blessed and glorified Paul. He, when among you, accurately and steadfastly taught the word of truth in the presence of those who were then alive. And when absent from you, he wrote you a letter, which, if you carefully study, you will find to be the means of building you up in that faith which has been given you, and which, being followed by hope, and preceded by love towards God, and Christ, and our neighbor, "is the mother of us all." [a quotation from Galatians 4:26].

Again, he states concerning Paul:

For he boasts of you in all those Churches which alone then knew the Lord; but we [of Smyrna] had not yet known Him.

That Paul wrote Philippians has no serious challenge. The place of writing is unknown, but most likely Rome. Other places hypothesized have been Caesarea or Ephesus. If Rome, the date of writing was probably around 62 A.D., linking the book with Ephesians and Colossians.

The book is a tome on joy. The word "joy" is found five times in this book. The verb "rejoice" is found 11 times in this book, more than any other book except Luke. The book is about joy. Christ is referenced some 67 times in this book. The book is about Christ.

The book does not appear to be written to address any problem, but simply as an expression of Paul's love and concern for the church. Paul speaks much about his own practice and life in the book, setting himself forth as an example to the believers. There is much great teaching in the book.

Finally, it is interesting to note that the book is addressed to the saints and the bishops and deacons seem to be added, not the main addressees. Scripture is written for all Christians, not just the leaders or scholars.

Date: 62 A.D.

Structure:

This book should be viewed as pastoral instruction. There are no great divisions in the book as there are in Romans, the Corinthian epistles, Galatians and Ephesians. Rather, the book is an exhortation to Christian living, stressing unity through love (1:9, 27; 2:2-4; 4:2).

I. Introduction 1:1-2

II. Paul's praise of and hope for the Philippians. 1:3-11

- A. Prayer is for love to abound more and more.
- B. Prayer is so that they may approve the things that are excellent.
- C. Prayer is so that they may be sincere and without offense.

III. The centrality of the proclamation of the gospel 1:12-18 (Let Christ be preached)

IV. Paul's view of life and death 1:19-26 (Life is to be lived for Christ.)

V. Paul's view of conflict 1:27-30 (Be worthy of the gospel. Suffering is a gift.)

VI. Be humble 2:1-11 (Be united in love and mind and look to the example of Christ)

VII. Lights in the world 2:12-18 (Be blameless and harmless, children of God without fault.)

VIII. Paul's desire to send Timothy and Epaphroditus 2:19-30 (Timothy and Epaphroditus receive Paul's high commendations.)

IX. Paul's motivational desire 3

- A. No place to glory in the flesh 3:1-8
- B. A desire to know Christ 3:9-14
- C. I'm setting an example 3:15-21

X. Paul's closing exhortations 4:1-9

- A. Stop the division 4:1-2
- B. Help the laborers 4:3
- C. Live positively in prayer 4:4-9

XI. Paul's praise for their sharing 4:10-20 (They set the example; they receive the promises.)

XII. Closing 4:21-23

Key Idea: Living worthy of the gospel of Christ

Key Passages: 3:10

Key Lesson: Being completely devoted to Christ is joy.