

## Book of Philippians

### Background To Epistle

#### 1. **Author** - Paul (Phil. 1:1).

- a. His name only appears once in this epistle.
- b. In many epistles his name appears more than once, but no significance can be attached to the number of times his name appears. (Rom. 1:1; 1 Cor. 1:1,12, 13; 3:4, 5, 22; 16:21; 2 Cor. 1:1; 10:1; Gal. 1:1; 5:2; Eph. 1:1; 3:1; Phil. 1:1; Col. 1:1, 23; 4:18; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2:18; 2 Thess 1:1; 3:17; 1 Tim. 1:1; 2 Tim. 1:1; Tit. 1:1; Phile. 1:1, 9, 19).

#### 2. **Prison Epistle**

- a. This is one of four epistles Paul wrote during his 1<sup>st</sup> Roman imprisonment. (Acts 28:16, 20, 30, 31).

ACT 28:16 And when we entered Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself, with the soldier who was guarding him.  
ACT 28:20 "For this reason therefore, I requested to see you and to speak with you, for I am **wearing this chain** for the sake of the hope of Israel."

ACT 28:30 And he stayed two full years **in his own rented quarters**, and was welcoming all who came to him,  
Lit. "in his own hired apartment," that is, at his own expense.

ACT 28:31 preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered.

- b. There are several references to his imprisonment in the epistle. (Phil. 1:7, 13, 14,17: 4:22).

- c. The other prison epistles are Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon.

#### 3. **Date** - 60-62 A.D. - Paul wrote this letter during Epaphroditus' stay in at Rome.

- a. He sent this epistle "to the saints at Philippi" by this faithful brother who had been sent to help and comfort him.. (Phil. 2:25-28).

PHI 2:25 But I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger and minister to my need;

PHI 2:26 because he was longing for you all and was distressed because you had heard that he was sick.

PHI 2:27 For indeed he was sick to the point of death, but God had mercy on him, and not on him only but also on me, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.

PHI 2:28 Therefore I have sent him all the more eagerly in order that when you see him again you may rejoice and I may be less concerned about you.

- b. The church upon learning Paul was in prison at Rome sent him a gift by Epaphroditus. (Phil. 4:18).

PHI 4:18 But I have received everything in full, and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God. See Acts 28:30 & Phil. 4:14-17.

#### 4. **To Whom Written** - To all the saints in Philippi

a. Philippi was “a city of Macedonia” (Acts 16:12).

1) It was also a Roman colony. (Acts 16:12).

2) This gave the city the advantage of Roman citizenship. Its citizens were self-governed and had citizenship rights.

b. Paul had worked there on two different occasions. (Acts 16:11-34; 20:1-6).

c. He had come to Philippi in response to the Macedonia call at Troas. (Acts 16:9-11).

ACT 16:9 And a vision appeared to Paul in the night: a certain man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him, and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."

ACT 16:10 And when he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.

ACT 16:11 Therefore putting out to sea from Troas, we ran a straight course to Samothrace, and on the day following to Neapolis;

1) The first time was on his 2<sup>nd</sup> missionary journey - 50-52 A.D..

2) His second visit was on his 3<sup>rd</sup> missionary journey - 53-57 A.D..

3) This letter, 60-62 A.D, was written a few years after his last visit to Philippi. (Acts 20:1-6).

d. The church at Philippi had these people as its beginning membership.

1) Lydia and her household, the jailer and his family, perhaps a few others close to Lydia and the jailer.

2) “Household” could include helpers or servants, but details are not given of the makeup of these households.

3) All details are nothing more than assumptions.

e. It helped support Paul in other locations. (Phil. 4:14-17).

PHI 4:14 Nevertheless, you have done well to share with me in my affliction.

PHI 4:15 And you yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone;

PHI 4:16 for even in Thessalonica you sent a gift more than once for my needs.

PHI 4:17 Not that I seek the gift itself, but I seek for the profit which increases to your account.

#### 5. **Purpose**

a. The letter was written to express gratitude and love to these saints and to encourage them.

b. This church had been and continued to be a great blessing to Paul and others

c. It was written to exhort the brethren to be joyful “in the Lord.”

d. The word “joy” or “rejoice” is used a number of times in this epistle.

1) “joy” - (Phil. 1:4,25; 2:2, 17, 18, 29, 4:1).

2) “rejoice” (Phil. 1:18, 2:17, 18, 28; 3:1; 4:4).

d. The letter to the church at Philippi is often called “the epistle of joy” or some other such description.

e. Christians are not to be anxious or disgruntle, but are to be trustful, joyful and thankful.

## Salutation

1:1-2

**PHI 1:1 Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus, to all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons:**

1. Paul does not call himself an apostle here, but does frequently in his epistles. (Rom. 1:1; 1 Cor. 1:1; 2 Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:1, etc.).

2. He refers to Timothy who was an outstanding servant of the Lord and a great help to Paul. (Phil. 2:19-23).

a. We learn some facts about the family of Timothy in 2 Timothy. (2 Tim. 1:5).

2TI 1:5 For I am mindful of the sincere faith within you, which first dwelt in your grandmother Lois, and your mother Eunice, and I am sure that it is in you as well.

b. Timothy had a Greek unbelieving father. (Acts 16:1,2).

ACT 16:1 And he came also to Derbe and to Lystra. And behold, a certain disciple was there, named Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman who was a believer, **but his father was a Greek,**

ACT 16:2 and he was well spoken of by the brethren who were in Lystra and Iconium.

1) We know nothing more about his father.

2) There is no record of his conversion or his participation in the spiritual training of Timothy.

3. He refers to himself and “Timothy” as “bond-servants of Christ Jesus.”

a. The word “bond-servants” is from the Greek “doulos” [**do**o lahs] meaning “slave, bond-servant.”

b. Paul is here declaring to whom he and Timothy belonged - “Christ Jesus.”

c. The name “Timothy” means “venerating, honoring God.”

d. This name, given to him at birth, described this fine, faithful servant of the Lord.

4. “To all the saints in Christ Jesus” - Paul is addressing this letter to saints.

a. This is another word for believers, Christians, and is used twice in this epistle. (Phil. 1:1; 4:22).

b. The word “saint” is from the Greek “hagios” [**hah** gee ahs] meaning “holy one.”

1) It refers to those who have been cleansed by the blood of Jesus. (Eph. 1:7; 2:13; Col. 1:20; Rom. 5:9; Heb. 9:14; 1 Pet. 1:19; 1 Jn. 1:7).

2) It does not denote sinlessness or some special class of believers.

3) No Christian can live above sin. (1 Jn. 1:8-10).

c. Paul frequently refers to believers as “saints.” (Rom. 1:7; 8:27; 12:13; 15:25, 26,31; 16:2, 15; 1 Cor. 1:2; 6:1,2; 14:33; 16:1, 15; 2 Cor. 1:1; 8:4; 9:1, 12; 13:13; Eph. 1:1, 15, 18; 2:19; 3:8, 18; 4:12; 5:3; 6:18; Phil 1; 4:22; Col. 1:2, 4, 12, 26; 1 Thess. 3:13; 2 Thess. 1:10; Phile. 1:5, 7).

5. “who are in Philippi” - The letter is written to the saints in Philippi.

a. Paul had converted Lydia and her household there. (Acts 16:13-15).

ACT 16:13 And on the Sabbath day we went outside the gate [of the city] to a riverside, where we were supposing that there would be a place of prayer; and we sat down and began speaking to the women who had assembled.

ACT 16:14 And a certain woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul. She sold purple-dyed garments from Thyatire in Philippi.

ACT 16:15 And when she and her household had been baptized, she urged us, saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay." And she prevailed upon us.

1) On the Sabbath day Paul encountered Lydia and the other women who had assembled at “a riverside” for prayer. It does not appear that there was a Synagogue in Philippi. This suggests that there were a small number of Jews there. It required at least 10 men before you could have a Jewish Synagogue.

2) Lydia was “a worshiper of God.”

- Like Cornelius, she was a very religious person.
- She was still lost as the account of her conversion reveals. She needed to believe in Jesus as Lord and Savior and be baptized. (Acts 16:15).
- Jesus is the only way to heaven. (Jn. 14:6; Acts 4:12).
- See also Rom. 10:1-3 that reveals being religious alone is not sufficient for salvation.

3) She was most likely a Gentile who had embraced Judaism as a God-fearer - “a worshiper of God.”

- It possible she was a Jew. There is not enough information to be absolutely sure.
- She was a believer in God. See Heb. 11:6.

4) She may have been a widow as her husband is not mentioned and she was a householder.

5) “The Lord opened her heart” - No details are given on how this was done. She listened carefully to the gospel message of Paul and she and all her family were baptized responding “to the things spoken by Paul.”

6) Their conversion came from hearing and obeying the gospel. (Rom. 1:16; Jas. 1:18, 21; 1 Pet. 1:23).

7) Nothing miraculous is indicated in her conversion. There is no indication of the direct operation of the Holy Spirit on her. There is no record of Paul performing miracles leading to her conversion. “The Lord opened

her heart” and the hearts of the others by Paul preaching the gospel to them. This was why Paul received the call to preach in Macedonia. (Acts 16:10).

8) The text reveals this fine lady was also a hospitable lady. (Acts 16:15).

b. He had also converted the jailer and his family. (Acts 16:22-34).

ACT 16:22 And the crowd rose up together against them, and the chief magistrates tore their robes off them, and proceeded to order them to be beaten with rods.

ACT 16:23 And when they had inflicted many blows upon them, they threw them into prison, commanding the jailer to guard them securely;

ACT 16:24 and he, having received such a command, threw them into the inner prison, and fastened their feet in the stocks.

ACT 16:25 But about midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns of praise to God, and the prisoners were listening to them;

ACT 16:26 and suddenly there came a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison house were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened, and everyone's chains were unfastened.

ACT 16:27 And when the jailer had been roused out of sleep and had seen the prison doors opened, he drew his sword and was about to kill himself, supposing that the prisoners had escaped.

ACT 16:28 But Paul cried out with a loud voice, saying, "Do yourself no harm, for we are all here!"

ACT 16:29 And he called for lights and rushed in and, trembling with fear, he fell down before Paul and Silas,

ACT 16:30 and after he brought them out, he said, "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?"

ACT 16:31 And they said, "Believe in the Lord Jesus, and you shall be saved, you and your household [family]."

ACT 16:32 And they spoke the word of the Lord to him together with all who were in his house.

ACT 16:33 And he took them that very hour of the night and washed their wounds, and immediately he was baptized, he and all his household.

ACT 16:34 And he brought them into his house and set food before them, and rejoiced greatly, having believed in God with his whole household [family].

- 1) It is thrilling that the family of the jailer came to Christ. Luke emphasizes with the words “all” and “whole.” (Acts 16:33, 34). He and his family likely had little knowledge, if any, of Jesus.
- 2) It is important to stress Paul preached to them to produce the faith he emphasized was necessary to have salvation. (Acts 16:32).
- 3) It is important to mention that the jailer and his family did not delay obeying Christ. Baptism is not something to be delayed. (Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; 22:16). See Acts 2:41; 8:35-39; 10:48; 22:16).
- 4) It is urgent that one have his sins forgiven and come into saving relationship with Jesus without delay. (Prov. 27:1; Jas. 4:14).
- 5) Repentance is not specifically mentioned, but it is inferred by his actions. (Acts 16:33). No one can be saved without repentance. (Lk. 13:3, 5; Acts 2:38; 17:30).
- 6) This passage does not support infant baptism. Every “household” does not have infants. Those baptized must be able to believe, repent, and confess Christ. Infants can do none of these things. They are sinless and do not need baptism. Furthermore, it would be without meaning to immerse one who had no idea of what was being done.
- 7) This passage does not support faith only. Both repentance and baptism are required for salvation. (Lk. 13:3, 5; Mk. 16:16; Acts 2:38; Tit. 3:5; 1 Pet. 3:21).

**Notes:**

- The church at Philippi was composed of baptized believers.
  - From a study of the pronoun “we” we know that Luke was with Paul at Philippi. He took part in the conversion of Lydia and her family. (Acts 16:12-15). He was with Paul when he cast “the spirit of divination” from the slave girl (Acts 16:16-18), but was not arrested and cast into prison along with Paul and Silas.
  - He was not present at the conversion of the jailer and his family, but he remained at Philippi likely to teach and build up the new church that had been established there. See pronoun “they” referring to Paul and Silas leaving Philippi, but Luke remaining behind. (Acts 17:1).
- c. This church was one of the great churches of the 1<sup>st</sup> century. It was a church that was a blessing to Paul and others and it is still a blessing to those who study what the word of God reveals about it.
6. “including the overseers and deacons” - It was God’s plan that churches have both “bishops” and “deacons.”
- a. The word “bishop” is from “episkopos” [eh **pis** kah pahs] meaning “bishop, overseer.”
    - 1) This word is used several times in the New Testament. (Phil. 1:1; Acts 20:28; 1 Tim. 3:1).
    - 2) Bishops are also known as:

Elders (Acts 14:23; Tit. 1:5; 1 Pet. 5:1).	Presbyters (1 Tim. 4:14). plural “presbytery”
Pastors or shepherds (Eph. 4:11; 1 Pet. 5:1-4; Acts 20:28)	Stewards (Tit. 1:7).

- 3) It is significant to mention that this congregation had a plurality of overseers [elders, shepherds] according to the pattern of the New Testament. (Acts 14:23).
  - 4) The qualifications of “bishops” is found in 1 Timothy an Titus. (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:5-9).
- b. “Deacons” is from “diakonos” [dee **ah** kah nahs] meaning “servant, minister.”
    - 1) The qualification of these special servants are found in 1 Timothy 3:8-13.
    - 2) Deacons assisted the overseers and were of great value to the church.
    - 3) The exact nature of their work is undefined, but was left to the overseers.
    - 4) Deacons are outstanding Christians who can serve the church in a host of different ways.
    - 5) They work under the leadership and authority of the overseers.

**PHI 1:2 Grace [favor] to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.**

1. “Grace to you” - Paul wants these brethren to receive the “grace” [the spiritual blessings] of God. See Eph. 1:3.
2. “peace from God our Father” - Jesus taught us to address God “as Father.” (Matt. 6:9).
  - a. “peace” refers to inner and outer peace, but especially inner peace.

- b. The heavenly Father is called “God.”
- c. This does not mean His Son is not Deity. (Phil. 2:5-8).
  - 1) See Isa. 9:6, 7; Col. 1:15; Col. 2:9.
  - 2) See also John 1:1; 10:30; 14:9; 20:28.

3. “And the Lord Jesus Christ”

- a. “Lord” is from “kurios” [**koo** ree ahs] meaning “lord, ruler.”
  - 1) Jesus is not an ordinary Ruler, but He is the “Lord of lords and the King of kings.” (1 Tim. 6:15).
  - 2) He is the One who sits at the right hand of God. (Acts 2:33-35; 5:31; Eph. 1:20; Heb. 1:3).
  - 3) He is the One who has all authority. (Matt. 28:19).
  - 4) He is the One to whom every knee shall bow. (Phil. 2:9-11).

PHI 2:9 Therefore also God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,  
 PHI 2:10 that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth,  
 PHI 2:11 and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

- b. “Jesus” is from “iesous” [ee ay **soos**] - The name Jesus means “Savior.” (Matt. 1:21).
- c. “Christ” is from “christos” [kree **stahs**] - meaning “the anointed one.”
  - 1) Most often Jesus is referred to as “Lord.”
  - 2) This title is used a number of times in this epistle. (Phil. 1:1,14; 2:11, 19, 24, 29; 3:1, 8, 20; 4:1,2, 4, 5,10, 23).
- d. “God” is used to refer to God, the Father. (Phil. 1:2, 3, 8, 11, 12, 28; 2:6, 9, 11, 13, 15, 27; 3:3, 9, 14, 15, 19; 4:6, 7, 9, 18, 19, 20).

"Scripture taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE®,  
 © Copyright 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation  
 Used by permission." ([www.Lockman.org](http://www.Lockman.org))

