

## PHILIPPIANS

### The Letter of Joy

#### INTRODUCTION TO THE LETTER OF PHILIPPIANS

- Every relationship has a beginning... and it has its own story. Every church you or I have had the joy and privilege of being a part, has its own unique memories, special relationships, and has made markings and imprints on who we are and what we've become. THINK ABOUT THAT?
- We already feel the loving imprint on our hearts from your impact on us. We love this church, and we feel the love of this church. That's the way it should always be as Christians. "Little Christs"
- One of the greatest impacts in making who you and I are is found in godly friendships, relationships, and the body of Christ. The local church is the expression of that. The New Testament churches were perfect examples of that. A small or large group made up of individuals just like you and me trying to love and lead a lost world to Jesus.
- When I read the New Testament, I can see and feel the differences and nuances of those churches through the writings and descriptions of Paul. Philippi was special! If I can call it this, it was the joy of Paul's heart. It was the crowning Jewel of his ministry. It's the church I want us to model after.
- Acts 2:42-47... and the church of Philippi. This is what I desire for First A/G.
- Paul's letter to the Philippians is also my personal favorite Pauline letter. As I've researched, I've found many others share my passion for it. I hope you will understand why even in the first chapter or two.

#### PHILIPPI

##### A. THE HISTORY OF PHILIPPI

- Philippi was founded by Philip, who was the father of Alexander the Great.
- It was founded on an ancient city called Krenides which means "The Wells or Fountains".
- There were streams coming off the mountains and hills that made life in the city possible.
- Philip founded it because there was no greater strategic site in all of Europe to have a base out of.

##### B. THE ROME AWAY FROM ROME

- One of the greatest military battles in history was fought here in 42 B.C. It was here that Antony defeated Brutus and Cassius. It was here that the future of the Roman Empire was decided.
- Soon after, Philippi was granted the great honor of becoming a Roman Colony.
- It was the leading city in the entire district of Macedonia in Paul's time.
- It was an attractive city because of its access to the main road Via Egnatia, the port at Neapolis, and because of the fertile fields and gold and gem mines in the area.

- Roman colonies became colonies through military conquests. They were started by Roman veterans who had received citizenship for their loyal service to Rome. With citizenship came great honor and benefits.
- Typically, these colonies started with 300 veterans accompanied by their wives and children.
- Roman colonies emulated and duplicated the Roman culture in every way.
- The Roman language was spoken. The Roman dress was worn. Roman customs, currencies, titles, laws, entertainment, ceremonies, and everything else was the norm.
- They had Roman bath houses and their own coliseum where gladiatorial fights and other entertainment would've taken place.
- They had a large library, gymnasium, a hero cult monument, a temple to the Emperor, a temple to the Greek and Egyptian pantheon of gods, a monuments deifying Julius and Augustus Caesar.
- They were unashamedly Roman in every way and wore their citizenship like Paul as a badge of honor.

### **C. THE HISTORY OF PHILIPPI AND PAUL- ACTS 16**

- Paul's relationship with the people of Philippi started on his 2<sup>nd</sup> Missionary Journey around the year 50 A.D. Paul was urged to come here through a dream he had of a man in Macedonia asking for help.
- In Acts 16 we read the story of his first encounters with three different people that were the birth of the church in that incredibly important city.
- It was on the Lord's day that Paul and his companions went down to the river to find a place to pray.
- There was no synagogue which meant less than 10 Jewish families existed in the city at that time.
- It's so beautiful to see that part of our rest is to simply stop what we are doing and spend time in focused intimacy with God. Prayer is one of our greatest privileges and one of our greatest weapons.
- Paul and his companions saw a group of woman down by the river and began to speak with them about the Lord. As they spoke, a woman named Lydia, who was a worshiper of God, had her heart opened by God to the words of Paul. She and the members of her household were all baptized.
- Lydia was an Asiatic and a seller of purple. She was extremely wealthy.
- The slave-girl was a native Greek. She was considered the property of her masters, so owned nothing.
- The jailor was a Roman citizen, and was more than likely representing the middle class.
- Three different types of people, different ethnicities, from different social classes. They were different in every way, but yet God was going to use these encounters to birth a united family of believers.
- God's power is displayed by revealing the gospel of Jesus to Lydia, setting a seemingly worthless slave girl free from demonic possession and a supernatural earthquake leads a jailor to the Lord!

- God’s call, plan, and leading doesn’t always make sense. Where He leads us, we must follow.
- Out of this crazy set of unplanned yet God ordained circumstances birthed the most beautiful New Testament church outside of the church of Jerusalem in Acts 2.
- Out of this eclectic group of people, came the church family that Paul so dearly needed the encouragement and love of in his final days.
- Out of this incredibly unique set of events birthed the first Christian church in Europe and became the “metropolis for Christianity.”

## **A LETTER FROM A FRIEND AND BROTHER (1:1-2)**

- Philippians is called the Epistle of Excellent Things and the Epistle of Joy.
- In 2 Corinthians 11:9 he called the Philippians “My brethren whom I love and long for”
- Now, Paul is at the end of his life. He is sitting on death row waiting for death and eternity.
- Early Christian Polycarp wrote to the Philippians speaking of Paul “When he was absent he wrote letters to you”. The Book of Philippians is only one of those letters. But, it’s divinely inspired.
- What does this mean for you and I? This isn’t just some moving historical story to be read.
- (vs1) The opening to Paul’s letter has a different structure and tone to it. Paul does not assert his official position as an Apostle. Which gives the listener who doesn’t know him the sense of “you need to listen to me”. This letter is more intimate, and Paul knows his listeners will already listen and receive his words lovingly as one who receives a letter from a close family member or friend.
- (vs1) Paul purposely uses the Greek word “doulos” to describe himself not just as a servant but a slave. A servant is free to come and go; but a slave is the possession of his master forever. Jesus said once to His disciples “I no longer call you servants. I call you friends”.
- But, Paul offered his commitment to be a possession of Christ willingly. He belonged fully to Christ. He answered and obeyed to the voice of One. Christ’s will was his will. As he states in Galatians “I no longer live but Christ lives in me.”
- How can one live like that? They no longer belong or answer to themselves.
- In the Kingdom of God, the life of a servant or slave to Christ is a higher one than Apostle. Whoever is the least is the greatest, according to the words of Christ Himself.
- There is a Latin saying “Illi servire est regnare”. In English it means “to be His slave is to be a king!”
- (vs1). “Holy people” Other translations say saints. “Hagios” means holy with a connotation of being different from other things or people. It means to be set apart for a special purpose.
- This word is used in Leviticus 21:6 describing holy priests, Leviticus 27:30,32 to describe the holy tithe, and the holy Temple in Exodus 26:33. A people set apart for a special purpose, God’s ten percent to be set apart for special needs, and God’s House set apart for a special place of intimacy.
- The commentary writer says it’s not as much about being pious as it is beautiful. The Saints or Holy people of God are like the beautiful stained glass windows in a church.
- Paul from the very first sentence is affirming and proclaiming high praise and calling on those he loved.

- (vs1) Paul lets us know through the phrase “in Christ Jesus” that He is the defining characteristic for everything we are as a people of God, and everything we do is found in Christ.
- Paul in his letters wrote “In Christ Jesus” 48 times, “in Christ” 34 times, and “in the Lord” 50 times.

***“When Paul spoke of the Christian being in Christ, he meant that the Christian lives in Christ as a bird in the air, a fish in the water, the roots of a tree in the soil.***

***What makes the Christian different is that he is always and everywhere conscious of the encircling presence of Jesus Christ.” --Marvin R. Vincent***

- (vs2) “Grace and peace to you...”. When Paul used these two words to greet the Philippians church he did something incredibly beautiful. He used both the Greek and Jewish words used for greetings in their own cultures and combined them! that they used in their own cultures in letters.
- Grace- “Charis” meaning joy, pleasure, brightness and beauty be unto you.
- Peace- “Eirene” meaning total well-being, everything that makes for a person’s highest good.
- Paul in my opinion is saying “may everything good from God’s heart and hand be yours”

## **THE JOY OF BEING IN THE CHURCH (1:3-11)**

- (vs3-5) Paul found incredibly comfort and joy while in prison just thinking about his church family.
- As he poured out his concerns to the Lord for them, God filled him with His joy when He thought about how much they meant to him, how they were living out the Life he had so lovingly introduced them to.
- When he thought of them there was no hurt but just happiness. No regret, just thankfulness.
- They were not a church who just heard the gospel, they lived it out. And with that, comes a promise...

## **POWER VERSE: (VS6) “BEING CONFIDENT IN THIS, THAT HE WHO BEGAN A GOOD WORK IN YOU WILL CARRY IT ON TO COMPLETION UNTIL THE DAY OF CHRIST JESUS”**

- The Greek words Paul used for “begin” and “complete” that are used for the beginning and end of a ritual sacrifice. There is an underlying atmosphere of God is working in us to be a perfect sacrifice to the Lord on His return. This journey we are on is a sacred one that is holy unto God.
- Romans 12:1 “to present our bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable unto God.”
- Like an artist who is still perfecting his work, God is lovingly, intricately, and beautifully finishing His work in and through your life!