



Introduction to Philippians

Before we get started expositing Paul's epistle to the Philippians, it's good practice to take a quick look at the setting and recipients of the letter so we have a clearer understanding of its context and purpose.

The city of Philippi was located in ancient Greece (aka Macedonia) and was under the rule of the Roman empire. The town was famous for its goldmines, fertile soil, and springs, and was on an important trade route to Rome. Most of the population was made up of Gentiles, and the few Jews in the city did not worship at a synagogue, but instead went outside of town and met by a nearby river (cf: [Acts 16:13](#)).

While not specifically mentioned by name, evidence from Luke's accounts in the book of Acts tells us that Paul helped establish the church in Philippi on his second missionary journey to Macedonia, around 50-51 A.D (see [Acts 16](#)). Lydia, a wealthy seller of purple fabrics, was one of the first converts and provided Paul, Silas, Timothy, and Luke with room and board during their stay ([Acts 16:15](#)). During their time in the area, their exorcism of a young slave girl caused such a ruckus in town that Paul and Silas were thrown into jail ([Acts 16:16-24](#)). Then an earthquake struck and opened the doors of the cells and unshackled the prisoners, which ultimately allowed Paul and Silas to lead the jailer and his family to Christ ([Acts 16:27-34](#)). The men's journey to the region of Philippi was full of amazing events orchestrated by the Lord!

Paul wrote the epistle of Philippians while imprisoned in Rome about 10 years later (60-61AD), along with the letters to the Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon – aka the 'prison epistles'. The overarching themes in Philippians are thankfulness, joy, humility, generosity, and unity in Christ. Unlike many other apostolic epistles (such as Galatians or 1 Corinthians), Philippians contains very little correction, instead focusing on the church's strengths and reinforcing the truths they were already living out. The Philippian church was overall pretty healthy. Yet, we still find many parallels to Paul's other epistles threaded through this letter, like living our lives in a manner worthy of our calling ([Phil 1:27](#)), proper behavior as believers ([Phil 2:1-4](#)) and the deity and humility of Christ our Savior ([Phil 2:6-11](#)).

An interesting side note is that Paul did not directly quote from the Old Testament in this epistle, although there seems to be a contemplative reference to Job having confidence that the Lord would eventually deliver him through his trials ([Job 13:15-16](#); [Phil 1:19](#)). It is possible he chose not to tag the O.T. simply because so few of the converts in this early church were Jews. Paul knew his audience and what would resonate most with these young believers in Christ.



While not Paul's shortest letter, Philippians is an easy and pleasing read, broken out into just four chapters, and yet is bursting at the seams with a continuous message of joy and hope that every believer can take to heart and put into action in our daily walk.

I hope you will be blessed and enriched as we walk verse by verse through this magnificent portion of Scripture!

~Associate Pastor Jeremy Preece