

# THE PHILIPPIANS STUDY

THE LETTER OF JOY & FRIENDSHIP

“For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.” (1:21)



## **AUTHOR:**

The Apostle Paul, along with Timothy (1:1)

## **DATE:**

Probably the early 60s AD

## **BACKGROUND:**

The city of Philippi was named after Philip II of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great. He fortified it and exploited its mineral wealth, having conquered it in 360 B.C. The city became a Roman colony in 167 B.C. Its population was a mixture of indigenous Thracian, Greek and Latin families. Consequently there was a great variety of divinities and religious cults. There was a Jewish community to whom were attached the Gentile “Godfearers”, who worshipped the God of the Jews.

A description of the foundation of the church at Philippi is found in Acts 16:9–40. Here we learn that Paul was specifically instructed to go into Macedonia region to preach the gospel there. When he preached in Philippi and founded a church there he was accused of introducing an alien cult. This was because Christianity, unlike Judaism and other religions, did not have the sanction of the state as a religion and was thus technically unlawful.

Having founded the church Paul kept in touch with it and, as this letter reveals, received various gifts from the members. The letter has been dated around 62 A.D while Paul was imprisoned in Rome (Acts 28:16). When he was in prison there, His imprisonment was more like what is called today “house arrest” and so he was free to employ a scribe and obtain papyrus to write his letters.

The obvious reason for his writing this letter was to thank the Philippians and the church for various aids given to Paul through Epaphroditus when he was in need. It is also a very personal letter sent to his first converts on European soil.

The book of Philippians is known as a letter of joy or friendship between the apostle Paul and a beloved church in the Philippi. It is impregnated with the themes of joy, confidence in God, Christ-centred Humility, Security in Christ, Purpose of Gospel-driven living, our Faithfulness to God’s work, Unity in Christ and Perseverance in the Christian life and faith as Paul urges the Christians to live humbly and worthy of their calling as disciples of Christ.

# READ Philippians Chapter ONE

Philippians Chapter ONE is where the Apostle Paul tells of his longing to see the Philippians and explains how his sufferings have resulted in glory for God Almighty.

Paul started the letter by greeting the church in Philippi and expressing joy and thanksgiving for their partnership in the gospel. Paul also states that he is in prison. Though he cannot travel and preach the Word, the Kingdom of God is advancing and his situation has given courage to many others.

He goes on to say that regardless of what happens to him in the future that the only thing he wishes is he conducts himself in a way that Christ is glorified!

## DISCUSS: PHILIPPIANS ONE can be broken into 3 sections

### I. Philippians 1:1-11 "Paul's Greeting & Power of Prayer"

1. What are the implications for Christians of being "servants of Jesus Christ" and "saints of God" (v.1)?
2. Why is praying for others so important? What do we mean by the expression "the ministry of prayer"?
3. If we all sincerely prayed Paul's prayer in verses 9-11, what kind of improvements and changes would we expect to see in our Christ-centred fellowship?

### II. Philippians 1:12-18 "Sufferings Advance the Gospel"

1. Is a persecution/ suffering of Christians, whatever form it takes, always because of their commitment to Christ? Are other factors involved? How could we respond to such struggles and difficulties because of our commitment to Christ and use them to advance the gospel (v.13)
2. How important is the motivation of Christians in the proclamation of the gospel? Does God bless imperfect motivation (v.15-18)?
3. In verse 17, Paul tells the church that he is in chains. Chains not only used to keep prisoners in prison but are also used to bind things to one another and it is not necessarily a bad thing. We are all bound to a family because God has placed us there. We are bound to our school or university; we are bound to the sports club or math club we are involved with.
  - What are the places we have been 'chained/bound' to in our lives?
  - How can we make it known to others that we are Christ-followers?

### III. Philippians 1:19-30 - "Living a life worthy of the Gospel: Honouring & Glorifying Christ"

1. What are the two things Paul is torn between? Why? (v.21-26)
2. What does "fruitful labour" mean? Since we are still alive, are we being fruitful (v.22)? Has anything held you back from making it known/ producing a fruitful labour for God?
3. Read Phil 1:27a. What does 'Conducting Ourselves in A Manner Worthy of the Gospel of Christ' actually mean? (Be practical)
4. What does Paul say to the Philippians and us on this subject in v27b-30? What has been granted to us?