

# 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.

