

# THE PHILIPPIANS STUDY

## AUTHOR:

The Apostle Paul, along with Timothy

## 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 "God-fearers", 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 TWO

## EXAMINE:

As we have seen in Chapter ONE, Paul the Apostle was a single minded man. Paul had his priorities in order in his life. Although the circumstances in which Paul writes this book are certainly not ideal, we see a man who put Jesus Christ and the Gospel of Grace, first; others, second; and himself, last. Paul is a great example to us all!

In Chapter Two, Paul presents to us "The Attitude Of Christ" as he uses four examples: Jesus, Himself, Timothy and Epaphroditus to show us different aspects of what our attitude should be to the work of God.

Paul continues with the call for unity, providing reasons why we should desire unity, the nature of our unity, and attitudes necessary to maintain unity (1-4). Stressing the need for humility and sacrificial service towards others, Paul appeals to the example of Christ and expounds upon how far Christ was willing to go to save us (5-11).

He continues with another exhortation to "shine as lights in the world" as they work out their own salvation with fear and trembling. Doing all things without complaining and arguing, while holding fast the word of life, they will prove themselves to be children of God in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation. This will also prove to Paul that his labors have not been in vain, and any persecution he endures is viewed as a sacrifice in the service of their faith and a cause for mutual rejoicing (12-18). He then writes of his plans pertaining to Timothy and Epaphroditus. He will send Timothy shortly, that he might know of their condition. But Epaphroditus is coming at once in order to set their hearts at ease about Epaphroditus' brush with death due to a recent illness. (19-30)

In this chapter, we will learn to appreciate the importance of unity, and how it can be maintained by following Jesus' example of humility and to understand what is involved in "shining as lights in the world".

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

### I. The Attitude of Christ: Humility & Sacrificial Service (2:1-11)

- What does 'Being united with Christ' mean? And what should the outcomes when we are being united with Christ? (v.1)
- What are some of the factors which cause divisions and rivalries in today's churches?
- How should we act to unite the body of Christ in one spirit? (v.2-3)
- What does the biblical humility look like? How can you know that someone is humble? (v.3)
- Using Jesus as the role model, how are we to live out this attitude of humility? (v.5-11)

### II. Lights Of The World (2:12-18)

- What does 'Work Out Your Salvation' mean? What can we do now to work out our salvation with fear and trembling? (v.12)
- What are the results of living a life of obedience and following God with such a reverence attitude? (v.15-16)
- What does it mean to be the light of the world today? What should be the main features of Christian living and witness today which function as light in the moral and spiritual darkness?
- What does it mean when Paul said of his life "being poured out like a drink of offering"? (v.17)

### III. Timothy And Epaphroditus: Living Examples (2:19-30)

- What are the key qualities of Timothy described by Paul? What can we learn from the way he lives out his life? (v.19-24)
- What are the key qualities of Epaphroditus described by Paul? What can we learn from the way he lives out his life? (v.25-30)