

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 FOUR

EXAMINE:

Paul begins this section with the word "therefore", which means that it has to be read in the light of what he has written in 3:20-21. In the light of the great future, which is being prepared for the people of God, Paul begins to express his joy that that people has been joined by the Philippians due to his labours. The Philippian Christians are his crown, the sign of his success in the Lord's work (v.1)

DISCUSS:

PHILIPPIANS FOUR can be broken into 2 sections

I. PAUL'S PASTORAL RESPONSIBILITIES (4:1-9)

1. *Disagreements do happen in church. According to Paul's instructions in verse 2-3, why should we work out disagreements in the Church? And How?*
2. *How should we work out any potential disagreements in church?*
3. *How should we react to worry and anxiety (v.6-7)?*
4. *How should we pray?*
5. *What should we think about? Why? (v.8-9)*

II. "CONCLUDING REMARKS" (4:10-23)

1. *How can we bless those who are faithfully serving God and labouring in ministry for the Lord, especially those who have gone out for missions (v.10-14)?*
2. *What does Paul mean specifically by 'I can do everything through him who gives me strength'? (v13)*
3. *In verses 16-17, Paul thanked the Philippian Church for their gifts sent to him when he was in need. He also said that he didn't expect them to do that but was overwhelmed by their generosity and thoughtfulness through their gifts and support at the same time. What should we do when someone gives us support, kind help and generous assistance?*
4. *Who are 'all the saints'? Why did Paul emphasise the word, 'ALL' here? (v.21)*
5. *What do you think is the major lesson, which the 21st century church can learn from this whole letter to the Philippians?*