

Philippians Overview

Author: Paul

Date: Around 61 A.D., probably within 60-64 A.D.

Context: Paul writing from prison (possibly house arrest). It is one of his four “prison letters” along with Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon. It may have been written from Rome during his time there (Acts 28).

Acts 28:30 For two whole years Paul stayed [in Rome] in his own rented house and welcomed all who came to see him. NIV84

Recipient: The church at Philippi (a city in what is now northern Greece). Philippi was a Roman colony in the district of Macedonia which was named after Philip II (Alexander the Great’s father).

Paul first brought the gospel to Philippi in Acts 16 during his second missionary journey (~51 A.D.). Lydia and the jailer became Christians while Paul stayed there for several days.

Other biblical references:

Acts 16:12a From there we traveled to Philippi, a Roman colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia. NIV84

Acts 20:6 But we sailed from Philippi after the Feast of Unleavened Bread, and five days later joined the others at Troas, where we stayed seven days. NIV84

1 Thessalonians 2:1-2 You know, brothers, that our visit to you was not a failure. ²We had previously suffered and been insulted in Philippi, as you know, but with the help of our God we dared to tell you his gospel in spite of strong opposition. NIV84

Purpose:

- No serious issues
- Thanks for financial support (Phil. 1:5; 4:17-19)
- Strengthening them amidst persecution (Phil. 1:27-30)
- Update them on his situation (Phil. 1:12-26)
- Encouraging them in unity (Phil. 2:1-11; 4:2-5)
- Update on Epaphroditus’ illness (Phil 2:25-29)
- Warnings about false teachers (Phil. 3:2)

Key passage:

Philippians 3:10-11 I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death,¹¹ and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. NIV84

Themes:

Christian living, joy/rejoicing (~14 times), humility, righteousness, thankfulness

Classic passage on Jesus coming to earth and being exalted to heaven (Phil 2:5-11)

Unique features:

- It could be said that it is more of a personal letter than a strongly doctrinal one.
- Paul does not quote from Old Testament in Philippians. This may be because of unfamiliarity with the Old Testament because Philippi was a Roman colony and there were not enough Jews there to have a synagogue.
- The Philippian marketplace mentioned in Acts 16:19 and the gate mentioned in Acts 16:13 have been excavated. Archeologists have also discovered the jail (possibly where Paul and Silas were imprisoned in Acts 16), theater, acropolis, forum, and the Philippian baths. The Gangites River (Acts 16:13) is where Paul shared the gospel with Lydia.
- Phil. 2:6-11 may have been a hymn on the identity and actions of Jesus.
- Some people believe that Luke (the author of Luke and Acts) may have been from Philippi and that he may have been a pastor or leader in that church when it started. Note how he quits using “we” and “us” after they left Philippi. (Compare Acts 16:16-17 to Acts 17:1.)

References:

Halley’s Bible Handbook, ©1965
Holman Illustrated Study Bible, ©2006
Thompson Chain Reference Bible ©1983
The New Defenders Study Bible, ©2006
The NIV Study Bible, ©1995
<http://www.bibleplaces.com/philippi.htm>

Philippians 1:1-11

^{1:1}Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus,

To all the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi, together with the overseers and deacons:

²Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

³I thank my God every time I remember you. ⁴In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy ⁵because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, ⁶being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

⁷It is right for me to feel this way about all of you, since I have you in my heart; for whether I am in chains or defending and confirming the gospel, all of you share in God's grace with me. ⁸God can testify how I long for all of you with the affection of Christ Jesus.

⁹And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, ¹⁰so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, ¹¹filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ — to the glory and praise of God. (NIV 84)

Philippians 1:9-10 And this is my **prayer**: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, ¹⁰so that you may be able to **discern what is best** and may be **pure and blameless** until the day of Christ, ¹¹**filled with the fruit of righteousness** that comes through Jesus Christ — to the glory and praise of God.

Colossians 1:9-11 For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped **praying** for you and asking God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding. ¹⁰And we pray this in order that you may **live a life worthy of the Lord and may please him in every way: bearing fruit in every good work**, growing in the knowledge of God, ¹¹being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might... NIV

Ephesians 1:17-18 I keep **asking** that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. ¹⁸I **pray** also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, NIV

God wants us to _____.

Knowing God is not _____.

Knowing God relates closely to knowing what _____.

Knowing God relates closely to living the _____.

James 1:22 Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. NIV

What happens when we don't know God?

- When we don't know God we don't understand spiritual teachings.
 - Luke 8:9-10 His disciples asked him what this parable meant. ¹⁰He said, "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to others I speak in parables, so that, "though seeing, they may not see; though hearing, they may not understand." NIV
- When we know _____ we know _____.
 - John 14:7 "If you really knew me, you would know my Father as well. From now on, you do know him and have seen him." NIV
 - 1 John 5:1 Everyone who believes that Jesus is the Christ is born of God, and everyone who loves the father loves his child as well. NIV
- When we don't know God we _____ when we are confused, hurt, or doubting.
 - John 6:68-69 Simon Peter answered him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. ⁶⁹We believe and know that you are the Holy One of God." NIV
- When we don't know God we can _____ far off _____.
 - John 16:1-3 "All this I have told you so that you will not go astray. ²They will put you out of the synagogue; in fact, a time is coming when anyone who kills you will think he is offering a service to God. ³They will do such things because they have not known the Father or me. NIV

When we don't know God fully...

How do we get to know God?

Acts 2:42 They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer. NIV