

PHILIPPIANS

Between AD 61 and AD 63, Paul was forced to stay put in the imperial city of Rome while he waited for a hearing before Caesar's court. But he wasn't cut off from the outside world. Even though a soldier was guarding him day and night, Paul enjoyed a measure of freedom that enabled him to continue his teaching and writing ministry. During this lengthy stay, Paul wrote four letters that God chose for the New Testament, and Philippians is one of those four "Prison Epistles."

THE CITY OF PHILIPPI

The city of Philippi was an important city in the eastern Macedonia (northeastern Greece) which was founded about 400 years before Paul arrived during his _____ [a] missionary journey and planted the first church on European soil. In its earliest days, Philippi was a small settlement called Crenides (Greek for "fountains" because of the many springs in the area), but in 356 B.C. the father of _____ [b] the Great, Philip II of Macedon, annexed the town to his empire, fortified it, and renamed it after himself (Philippi means "city of Philip"). In case you're wondering what attracted the interest of Philip II to this town, it was in large part the presence of _____ [c] in the nearby mountains.

Almost two centuries later, around the year 168/167 B.C., the Romans conquered _____ [d], and the area was made into a Roman province, and Philippi was incorporated into the Roman province of that name. The city remained relatively insignificant until 42 B.C. when it became the site of one of the most crucial battles in Roman history. In that year, Julius Caesar's assassins, Brutus and Cassius, were defeated in battle just outside the city by the forces of Mark Antony and Octavian ("Caesar Augustus"; Luke 2:1). That battle, known historically as the Battle of _____ [e], marked the end of the Roman _____ [f] and the beginning of the Roman _____ [g] as the Senate declared Octavian emperor in 29 B.C. (after Octavian defeated Mark Antony again in 31 B.C.).

After the civil war, the city of Philippi was enhanced to honor Octavian ("Caesar Augustus"), and many army _____ [h] were settled there. It was also given the coveted status of a Roman _____ [i] (Acts 16:12). To be given the status of a Roman colony was a high privilege that came with great benefits. The citizens would be considered Roman citizens which meant they had the right to own and transfer property, they were also exempt from certain _____ [j], and they could request

trial by Caesar. The city would have copied Roman architecture and style of dress, their coins would have borne Roman inscriptions, and Latin would have been the city's official language (although _____[k] was also spoken).

Philippi also owed its importance in Paul's day to its strategic location. One of the most important roads of the time called the Via _____[l] (i.e., the Egnatian Way) ran east-west through Philippi. This road also connected Philippi with the nearby _____[m] city of _____[n], guaranteeing a steady stream of both commerce and great intellectual variety.

THE CHURCH IN PHILIPPI

As I said earlier, the church in Philippi was the first church that Paul planted in _____[o]. The origin of the church there is recorded in Acts 16:6-40. Paul came to Philippi on his second missionary journey, but it wasn't on his original itinerary. While he was staying in _____[p] on the western coast of Asia Minor, he had a vision (Acts 16:8-9). In the vision, a man from _____[q] urged Paul to "Come over to Macedonia and help us." Paul soon left Troas and sailed across the Aegean Sea and landed at the port town of _____[r]. At Neapolis he followed the Egnatian Way about nine miles inland until he came to the city of _____[s]. Philippi was probably a city of about 10,000 residents at the time.

Philippi had only a few _____[t] as is evident by its lack of a synagogue. Jewish law required _____[u] Jewish men to establish a synagogue. If there had been a synagogue in town, the women that Paul initially encountered would not have been meeting for prayer outside the city on the _____[v]. At one of these Sabbath prayer meetings that Paul and his companions attended, Paul spoke to the women (apparently the group of worshipers consisted of all women). One of the women, _____[w], was a somewhat prosperous proselyte who dealt in the sale of purple cloth. She accepted Paul's message about Jesus and was baptized into Christ (Acts 16:13-15). After her conversion, Paul and his companions then lodged at her house until their departure. How long Paul remained in Philippi isn't clear, but it doesn't appear that he stayed for long (probably only a few _____[x]).

Another dramatic conversion in Philippi was prompted when Paul was arrested for casting a _____[y] out of a slave girl. The girl was being used by her owners as a _____[z] teller and was "the goose that laid the golden egg" for them. As you can imagine, this healed woman was now useless to her masters and they were furious with Paul. So, they brought Paul and Silas to court and accused them of being Jewish

troublemakers. After the magistrate had them stripped and beaten, they were thrown into _____[aa] (Acts 16:22-24). Around midnight, as the beleaguered missionaries were _____[bb] praises to God, a massive _____[cc] released Paul and the other prisoners (Acts 16:25-26). The _____[dd], fearful for his life in the aftermath of the earthquake—he assumed they had all escaped—found reassurance from Paul and Silas. This opened his heart to the gospel and he and his family were baptized into Christ (Acts 16:27-34). As a result, the church in Philippi had new members.

The next day when the magistrates had discovered that they had beaten Roman _____[ee] without due process, they knew they could be in trouble. So, they personally escorted Paul, Silas, and Timothy out of town. Apparently, _____[ff] stayed in Philippi to carry on the work. This conclusion can be drawn from the fact that, in his narrative, Luke went back to the third person (“he” and “they”) when Paul left Philippi (note Acts 17:1). Luke didn’t return to using the first person (“us” and “we”) until Paul later passed through Philippi again (note Acts 20:6).

CONTENT OF PHILIPPIANS

By the time Paul wrote Philippians, the church had been in existence for over a decade and had steadily grown from its humble beginnings as a small house church in Lydia’s home (Acts 16:40). In Philippians 1:1, Paul mentions not only the “saints” but also the “_____ [gg] and _____ [hh]” of the congregation there.

There are several reasons Paul wrote this letter. First, it was a _____[ii] you letter to the Philippians for their support of his ministry. They had heard about Paul’s imprisonment and sent him money to ease his discomfort (Phil 4:10-14, 18) through one of their own members, Epaphroditus (Phil 4:18). Not only did Epaphroditus bring the financial help from the Philippian church, but he also personally helped Paul in his ministry (Phil 2:25). And speaking of the Philippians helping Paul financially in his present condition of imprisonment, this congregation already had an established a pattern of _____[jj] to help alleviate Paul’s financial needs. While he was first at Thessalonica, they sent him money (Phil 4:16). Later, while he was at Corinth, they continued to share with him financially (Phil 4:15; 2 Cor 11:8-9).

A second reason Paul wrote was to share news about _____[kk]. While Epaphroditus was in Rome serving Paul, he had become very “ill, near to death” (Phil 2:27). Obviously, the news of his dire condition had gotten back to Philippi and the church was overwhelmed with concern (Phil 2:26). Paul eased their mind by writing and sending Epaphroditus back to them. Epaphroditus probably carried Paul’s letter himself.

A third reason for writing Philippians was to address a serious problem of _____[ll] within the church. Paul names two women in the church who evidently didn't get along (Phil 4:2), but there are other indications that the problem was wider than these two women. Paul urged the Philippians to be "of the same mind" (Phil 2:2), to "count others more significant than yourselves" (Phil 2:3), and that each should "look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others (Phil 2:4). Paul then quotes what might be an early Christian hymn which shows that Christ exemplified what it means to look after the interest of others (Phil 2:5-8).

A fourth reason Paul wrote was to give them a general warning about _____[mm] teachings. The Philippians were facing the same thing that the churches in Galatia were facing—_____ [nn]. These Judaizers were trying to compel them to submit to circumcision. Paul calls these Judaizers "dogs" (Phil 3:2) because, like wild dogs on the streets of many ancient cities, they were scavengers, stealing anything left unguarded. He also called them "those who mutilate the flesh" and "evildoers" (Phil 3:2). Fortunately, it appears that the congregation was not in nearly as much danger to succumbing to these false teachers as the churches in Galatia, but it was very important to warn the Philippians of the potential danger.

A fifth reason for writing was to _____[oo] the Philippians to stand firm in the faith. Paul had been mistreated in Philippi, and evidently that _____[pp] carried over to the church. So, he urged them to keep "striving side by side for the faith of the gospel" and to not be "frightened in anything by your opponents" (Phil 1:28). He then went on to say, "it has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in Him but also suffer for His sake, engaged in the same conflict that you saw I had and now hear that I still have" (Phil 1:29-30).

A sixth and final reason Paul wrote is to encourage the Philippians to _____[qq] in the Lord. It is usually difficult to capture the essence of a letter in one word, but in the case of Philippians, it's not difficult. That one word is "_____ [rr]." Paul didn't write to answer any profound theological question, solve some knotty practical problem, or deal with a specific sin. Instead, he wrote largely to express and encourage joy. In a way, the book of Philippians is—as some have described it—a showcase of joy. The words "joy" and "rejoice" are found fifteen times in the letter (sixteen in the KJV) There are additional words in the letter that also relate to joy, like "thanksgiving," "peace," and "content." But Paul makes it clear that our joy is not a fleeting feeling of exhilaration. Rather, biblical joy is the settled _____[ss] that God sovereignly _____[tt] all things and so our future is _____[uu].

LESSONS FROM PHILIPPIANS

- Don't be content with a _____[vv] relationship with Christ. Paul wanted to know Him better and better. It was his main _____[ww] in life (Phil 3:7-11).
- When we _____[xx], we immediately go be with Jesus (Phil 1:21-23).
- _____[yy] is not connected to our circumstances (Phil 4:11-12). It flows from _____[zz] with Jesus.
- God's people must work as a _____[aaa] to advance the gospel (Phil 1:27). Realize we're part of a team that we must support.
- Good, faithful Christians don't always get along, and sometimes need help working through the _____[bbb] (Phil 4:2-3).
- Hang on to God, He's the _____[ccc]. He started your salvation and He'll finish it (Phil 1:6).
- Never stop thinking about _____[ddd] (Phil 20-21).
- Real faith is reflected in _____[eee], not just words (Phil 4:9).
- The deepest _____[fff] is found in Christ, period (Phil 3:7-9).
- The key to joy in Christ is _____[ggg] (Phil 1:6).
- We are what we _____[hhh] about (Phil 4:8-9).

KEY PASSAGES FROM PHILIPPIANS

- Philippians 1:6
- Philippians 1:21
- Philippians 2:5-8
- Philippians 3:7-11
- Philippians 3:12-14
- Philippians 4:4-7
- Philippians 4:11-13

FILL-IN-THE-BLANK ANSWER KEY

[a] second	[ss] conviction
[b] Alexander	[tt] controls
[c] goldmines	[uu] secure
[d] Macedonia	[vv] superficial
[e] Philippi	[ww] business
[f] republic	[xx] die
[g] empire	[yy] contentment
[h] veterans	[zz] union
[i] colony	[aaa] team
[j] taxes	[bbb] differences
[k] Greek	[ccc] finisher
[l] Egnatia	[ddd] heaven
[m] port	[eee] action
[n] Neapolis	[fff] joy
[o] Europe	[ggg] knowledge
[p] Troas	[hhh] think
[q] Macedonia	
[r] Neapolis	
[s] Philippi	
[t] Jews	
[u] ten	
[v] Sabbath	
[w] Lydia	
[x] weeks	
[y] demon	
[z] fortune	
[aa] prison	
[bb] singing	
[cc] earthquake	
[dd] jailer	
[ee] citizens	
[ff] Luke	
[gg] overseers	
[hh] deacons	
[ii] thank	
[jj] giving	
[kk] Epaphroditus	
[ll] division	
[mm] false	
[nn] Judaizers	
[oo] encourage	
[pp] persecution	
[qq] rejoice	
[rr] joy	