

Cover to Cover: From Genesis to Maps
Sermon # 50 – “Philippians”
March 15, 2009

Philippians: Some Background Information

The Audience: Paul addressed this letter to the “saints” at Philippi “together with the overseers and deacons” (1:1), which points to the likelihood that the Philippian church by this time had become a structured and well organized body of believers. The Philippian church was the first church in Europe. It had been established as a result of Paul’s obedience to the vision of the man from Macedonia (Acts 16). **NOTE:** Paul’s very first converts in Philippi had been a diverse group—a prosperous businesswoman and her household, a spirit-possessed slave girl, and a pagan jailer along with his whole family.

The Date of the Letter: This letter—along with Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon—is one of Paul’s “Prison Epistles”, written during the time of his first incarceration in Rome (Acts 28). It is clear that Paul wrote it from prison since he speaks of his “chains” (1:13), his hope of being released (1:19, 2:24) and his witness to the palace guards (1:13). The date of the letter is believed to be A.D. 61 or 62.

The Purposes of the Letter: (1) Paul wished to thank the Philippians for their love gift to him; (2) Paul wanted to relate his current situation to them in order to ease their anxiety about his condition; (3) Paul sought to encourage them to rejoice always in the Lord; (4) Paul also saw this as an opportunity to address some problems in the church.

The Theme & Tone of the Letter: The central theme of the letter is joy in Christ! This is Paul’s most Christ-centered and most warmly personal letter.

Philippians: An Outline

1. Encouragement for living the Christian life. Philippians 1

- Paul’s introduction. 1:1-2
- Paul’s praise for the saints at Philippi. 1:3-8
- Paul’s prayer for the saints at Philippi. 1:9-11
- Paul’s presentation of himself to the saints at Philippi. 1:12-30
 - Paul’s pressing circumstances: “*In chains for Christ.*” v. 12-14

- Paul's priority: "*Christ is preached.*" v. 15-18
- Paul's "predicament": To live or die. v. 19-26 (It's a win-win situation!)
- Paul's proposition: Live a life that is consistent and worthy. v. 27-30

2. Examples for living the Christian life. Philippians 2

- The Son of God: Imitate His attitude of humility. 2:1-18
- The servants of God: Emulate these men of honor. 2:19-30
 - Timothy. v. 19-24
 - Epaphroditus. v. 25-30

3. Exhortations for living the Christian life. Philippians 3

- Put no confidence in the flesh. 3:1-6
- Be passionate about knowing Christ. 3:7-11
- Press on toward the heavenly goal. 3:12-14
- Live up to your position in Christ. 3:15-4:1

4. Enablement for living the Christian life. Philippians 4

- The importance of reconciliation. 4:2-3
- The practice of constant joy. 4:4
- The manifestation of true peace. 4:4-9
- The lesson of inner contentment. 4:10-12
- The provision of divine strength. 4:13
- The promise of met needs. 4:14-19
- The power of an authentic witness. 4:20-23