

TO LIVE AND DIE
PREACH THROUGH THE BIBLE: PHILIPPIANS
Philippians 1:21

I. BACKGROUND

A. CITY AND PEOPLE

1. LOCATION

- a. Roman province of Macedonia
- b. On *via Ignatia*—east-west road of Macedonia
 - Controlled land route to Asia
- c. Between Strymon and Nestos Rivers
- d. Ten miles from seacoast—[port city Neapolis]
- e. Abundant natural resources—gold mine in surrounding hills
- f. Next to 750 foot rock cliff, overlooking city, with carvings of religious cults on it

2. HISTORY

- a. Ancient name—Crenides = ‘springs’—abundant water supply
- b. Capital of Philip and Alexander’s Greek empire—from 359 BC
- c. Roman era
 - 1. Romans conquered Macedonia 168 BC—made it a province in 148 BC
 - 2. Philippi declined in importance until about 40 BC
 - 3. Battle of Philippi—42 AD—Antony/Octavian defeated Brutus/Cassius nearby—after Julius Caesar’s murder
 - 4. Antony established Roman colony—Roman army veterans settled there
 - 5. Octavian gave it *ius Italicum* status = citizens had same rights as on Italian soil
 - 6. Territory of Philippi was 730 square miles—with several villages
 - 7. Never became quite as important as Thessalonica—100 miles away

3. PEOPLE –LANGUAGE—CULTURE

- a. Three main ethnic groups
 - 1. Thracians—native to region—before Philip conquered it
 - 2. Greeks—colonized it under Philip and Alexander

3. Romans—settled late 1st century BC and afterward
- b. Language—in first century AD
 1. Latin—became official language of Roman colony
 2. Greek—remained the commercial language
- c. Culture
 1. The most Romanized city Paul had visited—before he went to Rome itself
 2. Little or no Jewish presence
 - No evidence of a synagogue
 - Believers were not ethnic Jews—but Gentile ‘God-fearers’
 - Possibly Jews were expelled under Claudius’s edict for Rome—49 AD
 - Paul visited there about 50-51 AD—following that edict

B. RELIGION

1. ANCIENT THRACIAN RELIGIONS

- a. Barbaric—animal-worship—sometimes human sacrifice—and orgies
- b. Three main local gods
 1. **Liber Pater** (liberating father)
 - Wine god—like Bacchus (Rom) and Dionysius (Gk)
 - Greatest local god of Philippi
 2. **Thracian Rider**—god of the hunt—depicted on horse
 3. **Bendis**
 - Goddess of hunt/healing—moon goddess
 - Associated with Diana/Artemis
 - But chaste—unlike fertility cult in Ephesus
 - Worship involved orgies

II. PHILIPPIAN CHURCH

A. FOUNDATION

1. BY PAUL DURING SECOND MISSIONARY JOURNEY—ABOUT 50-51 AD
2. PRECEDING EVENTS
 - a. Parting of ways between Paul and Barnabas—over dispute concerning John Mark

- b. Silas accompanied Paul to Lystra and Derbe—then Timothy joined them
- c. Macedonian vision at Toras—Acts 16:6-7—where Luke joined them (16:10)
- d. Landed at Neapolis (in Samothrace) and walked to Philippi

3. THREE KEY FOUNDATIONAL EVENTS—ACTS 16:11-40

- a. Conversion of the God-fearer Lydia—from Asian city of Thyatira
- b. Exorcism of demon-possessed slave girl
 - Her predictions made money for her masters
 - Paul and Silas were dragged to court—Paul’s first Roman trial
 - Paul and Silas were beaten and thrown into jail
- c. Conversion of Philippian jailer—apparently became church member

4. FIRST BIBLICAL EVIDENCE OF PAUL’S PRESENCE IN PHILIPPI

- **I Thess 2:2**—written about 50 AD from Corinth

B. LUKE’S ROLE

1. PROBABLY STAYED IN PHILIPPI—AFTER OTHERS DEPARTED

2. TRACED IN LUKE’S ‘WE’ NARRATIVES

- a. ‘We’ narratives of Acts start at **16:10**
- b. They are suspended at **16:17**—because the account focuses on Paul and Silas
- c. “They departed” passage is **16:40**
 - Paul, Silas and Timothy left—Luke remained in Philippi
 - 17:14—Silas and Timothy were with Paul in Berea—then Paul left for the coast
 - Then Silas and Timothy re-joined Paul in Corinth—**18:5**
- d. “We” passage resumes at **20:6**—they reunited at Philippi and set sail

C. EPAPHRODITUS

1. ANOTHER KEY MEMBER OF THE PHILIPPIAN CHURCH

2. SEE—**Ph 2:25** and **4:18**

D. PAUL’S ON-GOING CONTACT WITH PHILIPPIANS CHURCH

1. HE VISITED—DURING THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY

2. CHURCH SENT FINANCIAL HELP

- To Paul—**Ph 4:15** and **II Cor 11:9**
- To Jerusalem church—**II Cor 8:1-5**

3. WHILE PAUL WAS PRISONER IN ROME

- Philippians sent Epaphroditus—to minister to him
- Paul sent them Timothy—and planned to visit them after his trial

E. CHARACTERISTICS OF CHURCH

1. FIRST CONVERTS WERE GENTILES

2. WOMEN PLAYED KEY ROLE IN IT

- Lydia
- The slave girl (probably)
- Euodia and Syntyche (co-laborers with Paul)

3. SET EXAMPLE OF GENEROSITY FOR MACEDONIA/ACHAIA—II Cor 8:1ff

4. LOYAL AND HELPFUL TO PAUL—ITS FOUNDER

III. COMPOSITION

A. PAULINE AUTHORSHIP

1. ATTRIBUTED IN TEXT—**1:1**

2. NO CREDIBLE SCHOLAR DISPUTES PAULINE AUTHORSHIP

B. DATE AND PLACE OF ORIGIN

1. DURING PAUL'S IMPRISONMENT—MENTIONED 3 TIMES IN CHAPTER ONE

2. MOST SCHOLARS SAY FROM ROME—ABOUT 60-62 AD

3. PROBABLY THREE OTHER LETTERS WRITTEN DURING THIS TIME

- Ephesians
- Colossians
- Philemon

4. POSSIBLY AFTER THE OTHER LETTERS—LATE IN IMPRISONMENT

- Paul was ready to be poured out as a drink offering—**2:17**

5. OTHER THEORIES ABOUT ORIGIN/DATE

- a. From Corinth—about 50-51 AD—immediately after leaving Philippi

- b. From Ephesus—about 54-57 AD—during Third Missionary Journey
- c. From Caesarea—about 58-60—before Paul went to Rome

C. CIRCUMSTANCES

1. PAUL IN PRISON—PROBABLY IN ROME—ABOUT 60-62
2. TIMOTHY WAS WITH HIM
3. HE HAD RECEIVED FINANCIAL HELP FROM PHILIPPI
 - He had to pay for his housing and food
 - No way for him to work
4. EPHAPHRODITUS
 - Brought Paul support from Philippi
 - Fell ill—nearly to death
 - Paul ministered to him; he recovered
5. PAUL’S OPPONENTS
 - a. Evidence—of opposition—found in—**1:15-17; 1:27-28; 3:2; and 3:18-19**
 - b. Chapter 1
 - Preachers of Christ with questionable motives
 - Minor differences with Paul
 - Preaching gospel out of envy and strife
 - Hints of disunity in Philippi
 - c. Chapter 3
 - Legalists who preached another gospel
 - Possibly tinged with Gnosticism
 - Worldly persons

IV. THEMES AND OCCASION

A. MAIN THEME

1. GOD’S GIFT OF JOY RESIDING IN BELIEVER’S HEARTS
2. NO CIRCUMSTANCE IN LIFE IS GREATER THAN THIS GIFT
3. KEY PHRASE—‘JOY [IN CHRIST]’—APPEARS IN DIFFERENT FORMS 18 TIMES

B. OCCASION

1. Paul wanted to express his concern about signs of disunity in the church—**4:2-4**
2. Paul warned them about threat posed by Jewish false apostles of legalism—3: 1ff
3. He was sending Epaphroditus back to encourage them—after his recovery
4. He wanted to thank them for their gift to support him—**4:10-20**
5. He took this opportunity to instruct them in principles of stewardship
6. He thanked Philippians for sending Epaphroditus to minister to him
7. He informed them of Timothy’s impending visit—they should prepare for it —**2:19**
8. He notified them that he might visit also—**2:24**

F. OTHER MAJOR THEOLOGICAL THEMES

- **1:12-26**—Optimism about life, knowing that Christ is magnified even in adversity
- **1:27-2:18**—Exhorting the church to unity in Christ
- **3:2-21**—Warnings about encroaching legalism
- **4:10-20**—Principles of stewardship

V. OUTLINE/ORGANIZATION

INTRODUCTION	1:1-11
SALUTATION	1:1-2
THANKSGIVING	1:3-8
PRAYER	1:9-11
PAUL’S SITUATION	1:12—26
ENCOURAGEMENT	1:27-2:30
STAND FAST IN CHRIST	1:27-30
CALL TO HUMILITY	2:1-4
CHRIST’S EXAMPLE	2:5-11
CALL TO OBEDIENCE	2:12-18
TIMOTHY	2:19-24
EPAPHRODITUS	2:25-30
BEWARE FALSE TEACHERS	3:1-4:1
WARNINGS AGAINST HERESY	3:1-2
SOLUTION: FOLLOW MY EXAMPLE	3:3-4:1
FINAL ENCOURAGEMENT	4:2-13
CALL FOR UNITY	4:2-3
LIVE CHRISTLIKE LIVES	4:3-8
Rejoice	4:3
Yield	4:4
Don’t Be Anxious	4:5-7
Produce fruits of holiness	4:8

FOLLOW MY EXAMPLE	4:9-13
THANKSGIVING AND BLESSING	4:14-20
FINAL GREETINGS AND CLOSING	4:21-23

VI. BIBLICAL TEXT

18 *What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed; and in this I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice, 19 for I know that this will turn out for my deliverance through your prayers and the provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ, 20 according to my earnest expectation and hope, that I will not be put to shame in anything, but that with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. 21 For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. 22 But if I am to live on in the flesh, this will mean fruitful labor for me; and I do not know which to choose.*

VI. EXPOSITION

A. OVERVIEW—verses 21-26

1. ASSERTION OF FACT—v 21—TO LIVE IS CHRIST—TO DIE IS GAIN!
2. STRUGGLE WITH IMPLICATIONS—DILEMMA—TO LIVE **OR** DIE—vv 22-24
3. PROBLEM RESOLVED—vv 25-26—I WILL ‘LIVE’ LONGER TO SERVE YOU

B. TWO OPPOSITE PERSPECTIVES

1. **WORLDLY** VIEW—AND/OR
 - a. Sequential—and Inevitable
 - We live—**and**—[then] we die
 - One is good (life)—one is bad (death)
 - b. Existential—mutually exclusive option
 - It’s a matter of life—**or**—death
 - Either we exist—or we cease to exist
2. **CHRIST-FOLLOWING** VIEW
 - a. The ‘either-or’ problem—has been settled
 1. We have already **died** to self—to follow Christ—**Lk 9:23**
 - The ‘either-or’—has become the ‘both-and’
 - We continually die to self—and—we live in Christ

2. We now **live** in and for Christ

Gal 2:20—*I have been crucified with Christ, and it is no longer I who live, but Christ live in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.*

b. Death has no dominion over us—and should cause us no fear

Rom 6:8-11—*Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him, knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, is never to die again; death no longer is master over Him. For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. Even so consider yourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus.*

c. Promise of eternal life—being raised from the dead

Rom 8:11—*But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.*

II Cor 4:14—*knowing that He who raised the Lord Jesus will raise us also with Jesus and will present us with you.*

d. Conclusion

- We die and live—simultaneously—die to self & live in/for Christ—who lives in us
- We live and [then] die—live in/for Christ—but our mortal bodies will die
- We die and [then] live—we will be raised to eternal life by God’s Spirit

C. IMPLICATIONS

1. THIS DOES NOT MEAN ‘DEATH’ ITSELF IS GOOD

- Death is necessary—to enter eternal life
- Death is still an enemy—but God has defeated it—and taken away its sting

2. THIS DOES NOT RESOLVE ALL THEODICY

- Many deaths are tragic and unexplainable

3. PHYSICAL DEATH IS NOT ‘GAIN’ AT EVERY MOMENT FOR EVERY BELIEVER

- a. It is not a timeless truth—that death at *any* moment is *always* good
- Death is right—only if it is according to the Lord’s timing
 - He is time-keeper! Not we!
 - So we must labor—not give up—until He calls us to His rest—in His time
 - The same applies to His return—we must be found working!—**I Th 3**
- b. Paul was speaking for himself—“**For me to live is Christ**”—at that very moment

c. Paul was *ready* to die—he knew his appointed time was coming soon

Ph 2:17—*But even if I am being poured out as a drink offering upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I rejoice and share my joy with you all.*

d. Yet Paul still struggled—was this the *Lord's* timing for him—or not?—see **1:22-26!**

4. THIS NOT A GUARANTEE OF 'GAIN' TO EVERYONE

○ Only those 'in Christ'—have hope of eternal life

5. DEATH IS NOT 'GAIN' FOR THOSE LEFT BEHIND

○ Mourning and sadness—profound loss—accompany death—for 'survivors'

6. LIFE IN CHRIST PROVIDES 'GAIN' HERE ON EARTH—NOT JUST *AFTER* DEATH

e. **Gain**—**κερδος**

1. Used only 3 times in NT

2. Once—negatively—**Titus 1:11**—*filthy* lucre/gain—[earned by deceptive legalists]

3. Twice positively—only in Philippians—**1:21** and **3:7**

f. Paul spoke in the present tense—of what he had lost and gained—here on earth!

Ph 3:7-11—**7** *But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. 8 More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, 9 and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, 10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; 11 in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.*

7. THERE IS MORE 'GAIN' BEYOND—THAN SIMPLY 'LIVING' ETERNALLY

a. Losses here—[loss of loved ones]—will be made up there—we will be re-united!

b. There will be 'rewards'—**I Cor 3:10-15**

▪ To serve and reign eternally—**Rev 22:3, 5**

c. Life there will be qualitatively better—infinately—see **Rev 21-22**