

Philippians

Purpose: “To express joy at the faith being lived out in the Philippians.”

Outline: 1:1-11 – Thanksgiving and Prayer

1:12-30 – Joy that Christ is Being Preached and Practiced

2:1-18 – Imitating Christ’s Humility

2:19-30 – Timothy & Epaphroditus

3:1-11 – The Gospel vs. Legalism

3:12-4:1 – The Gospel vs. Antinomianism

4:2-23 – Thanksgiving and Benediction

Author: Paul

Date: 60-62 AD while imprisoned in Rome

Highlights:

Philippians – along with Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon – are called the “prison epistles” because they were written during the time that Paul was imprisoned in Rome.

The beginning of Paul’s involvement with the church in Philippi is recorded in Acts 16. Paul, himself, returned on at least two more occasions (cf. Acts 20:1-6 and 2 Corinthians 2:13). As in Paul’s letter to the Ephesians, there are no pressing issues in the Philippian Church, this affords Paul the freedom to just give thanks to the Philippians for their support of his ministry and to express his joy at the faith being lived out in Philippi. The word “joy” occurs sixteen times in this short letter.

The letter starts out with uplifting words of thanksgiving and a prayer for the Philippians (1:1-11). 1:6 is a good verse to memorize. It reminds us that the work of salvation that has begun in us will be carried to completion. We cannot lose our salvation because we didn’t find it. God found us and his purpose is to guide us through this life until the day of Christ.

Paul goes on to rejoice in the fact that Christ is being proclaimed – even in the strangest ways. His imprisonment (vv. 12-14), envious preachers (vv. 15-18), prayers of the people (vv. 19-26), and the Christian faith being practiced by the people (vv. 27-30) is causing the Gospel to be advanced. {I smell a four part sermon – Prison, Preachers, Prayers, Practice}.

Chapter 2 of Philippians is a favorite for many. While Paul is making a point about humility, he does so through the poetic (even lyrical) words of verses 6-11. Reading about Christ’s humility fills you with a desire to exalt Christ and give glory to God.

2:12-13 contains statements that seem to contradict themselves. Paul says, “*work out your salvation* with fear and trembling, for it is *God who works in you* to will and to act according to his good purpose.” Are we supposed to do the work, or is God doing the work? The theological term for this seeming contradiction is “biblical antinomy.” On the surface it seems to contradict, but as you study the statements separately, then together, and then in the context of the whole of Scripture you come to see that God is working in us so that we can do the works that we are called to do. God works faith in us, which allows us to do works of faith. The book of James helps to clarify this theme.

Since Paul is in prison and can’t visit the church in Philippi, he intends to send Timothy and Epaphroditus to Philippi. 2:19-30 give us an interesting glimpse at these two men of God, their ministry, and their closeness to Paul.

In chapter 3, Paul sets the Gospel up against false gospels. First he explores the freedom of the Gospel versus the legalism of Judaizers (3:1-11). Then he explores the need to live out the Gospel versus the antinomianism of Libertines (who lived as though there were no moral law).

The fourth chapter is filled with more joy and thanksgiving, especially in terms of the Philippians support of Paul’s ministry. Philippians 4:13 (“I can do everything through him who gives me strength”) is another verse many people enjoy memorizing.