

The Book of Philippians



A Bible Reading Journal

What is this book?

It is a personal letter from the apostle Paul to the church in the city of Philippi. It's basically a thank you note. He is writing to thank them for their gift that was brought to Rome for him by a messenger. (1:5; 4:10-19) They had a relationship of great friendship and affection because Paul established the Philippian church on his travels spreading the gospel (See Acts 16). Paul was in a period of imprisonment in Rome, and they sent financial support. He sends back thanks and encouragement for continuing to love, support and pray for both him and the spread of the gospel.

Why is it important?

It helps us see clearly the mindset and values of Paul even as his life is in danger and his freedom has been taken. He reveals the source of true joy and how it is gained through Christ and not in favorable earthly circumstances. This is BY FAR Paul's most joyful, grateful letter and he is sitting in a prison! The content of the letter helps us understand how that kind of joy is possible with a mind and heart centered on Jesus Christ.

Who wrote it? Who'd they write it for?

It was written by the Apostle Paul to the church at Philippi, a Roman city where there weren't many Jews. There was a strong Greek/Macedonian influenced culture and population in Philippi due to its location.

Acts 16:9-40 tells the story of the establishment of this church first with a dream and with the first convert named Lydia. Paul experienced great trouble in this place when he freed a demonized slave girl and ended up in jail. But he clearly bonded deeply with this church.

What is unique about this letter?

It is warm, joyful, and full of Paul's heart. Paul's mindset in this letter is that the gospel can overcome anything, so go ahead and rejoice! It is simple, straightforward and more relational than deeply theological. There are no quotes from the Old Testament and the theology in the letter is given to instruct and encourage practical application among the people.

When was it written?

Around AD 62. We know that because of the obvious imprisonment and our ability to date that in Paul's life. It was the last of his prison letters—Philemon, Colossians, and Ephesians came first.

What is the content outline?

Ch 1.

Joy in Living for Christ: Joy is possible even when limited in bad circumstances and conflicts or when you're not getting what you want.

Ch 2.

Joy in Serving in Unity: The best attitude is others-focused and comes with understanding what Jesus did. We are called to imitate him and we find joy when we do.

Ch 3.

Joy in Knowing Christ: Paul's mindset and personal goal is to know Christ above all else. He warns them of false gospel teachers who don't think the same.

Ch 4.

Joy in Resting in Christ: Joy in Christ comes with contentment, peace, and unity among brothers and sisters in the body.

Themes & Key Words

Christ - over 40 times!

Joy - in every chapter!

Mind

Partnership

Act

Key Verses

1:6

...he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.

1:21

For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

2:3-4

Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.

2:10-11

at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,
and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.

2:14

Do everything without grumbling or arguing.

3:7

But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ.

3:13-14

... But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.

3:20a

But our citizenship is in heaven.

4:4

Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!

4:6-7

Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

4:8

Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy — think about such things.

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