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Philippians (Overview) - Part 1



Bible Book Overviews - Steve Gregg

In this insightful overview, Steve Gregg explores the book of Philippians in around 10-12 minutes. The letter highlights the apostle Paul's confidence in the good work of the gospel, expressing his hope for the salvation and spiritual growth of the Philippian church. Gregg delves into the historical context of Paul's missionary journeys and his interactions with the city of Philippi, emphasizing the importance of following Christ's example and fostering unity within the church community. While there are challenges and concerns, Paul's deep joy shines through, reminding believers to hold fast to the word and rejoice in the day of Christ.

Transcript

Tonight, we're going to be talking about the book of Philippians, and each month we take a different book of the Bible, and I generally promise to give an introduction and an overview of the book. This was such a short book that as was some of the others before that were short, we really actually do go through the book, maybe not exactly verse by verse, but with somewhat more detail than we have the opportunity of doing with a large book, something like Genesis or Isaiah or a big book like that. We simply have to scan it.

But with a book like Philippians, we can look at the whole thing with a little more detail. In fact, I thought I would do something different that I haven't really done with the other books, and not that it couldn't have been done with some of them, but I just didn't think of it. And that is, I'm going to read the whole book first.

It's short enough. It takes about between 10 and 12 minutes to read through it. And that way we can see the whole train of thought.

And then we'll go, then we'll have the introduction, and then we'll bring out features in the book. So because I can't assume that everyone here has read Philippians recently, and if we read it together, I'll know that you have, and we will then be able to allude to things that we've heard as recently as tonight. So I'm going to read Philippians through, and as I said, it won't take too long.

Paul and Timothy, servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus, who are in

Philippi with the bishops and deacons, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine, making requests for you all with joy for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this very thing, that he who has begun a good work in you will complete it until the day of Jesus Christ, just as it is right for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart and as much as both in my chains and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you are all partakers with me of grace for God is my witness. How greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ, and if I pray that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and in all discernment that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ to the glory and praise of God.

But I want you to know, brethren, that the things which happened to me have actually turned out for the furtherance of the gospel, so that it has become evident to the whole palace guard and all the rest that my chains are in Christ and most of the brethren in the Lord, having become confident by my chains are much more bold to speak the word without fear. Some, indeed, preach Christ even from envious strife and some also from goodwill. The former preach Christ from selfish ambition, not sincerely supposing to add affliction to my chains, but the latter out of love, knowing that I'm appointed for the defense of the gospel.

What then only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached and in this I rejoice. Yes, and I will rejoice for. I know that this will turn out for my salvation through your prayer and supply of the spirit of Jesus Christ, according to my earnest expectation and hope that in nothing I shall be ashamed, but that with all boldness, as always, so now also Christ will be magnified in my body, whether by life or by death.

For to me to live is Christ and to die is gain. But if I live on in the flesh, this will mean fruit from my labor. Yet what I should choose, I cannot tell, for I'm hard pressed between the two, having a desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better.

Nevertheless, to remain with you in the flesh is more needful for you. And being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy of faith that you're rejoicing for me, maybe more abundant in Jesus Christ by my coming to you again. Only let your conduct be worthy of the gospel of Christ so that whether I come to see you or I'm absent, I may hear of your affairs that you stand fast in one spirit with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel and not in any way terrified by your adversaries, which is to them a proof of perdition, but to you of salvation and that from God for to you, it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for his sake, having the same conflict which you saw in me and now here is in me.

Chapter two. Therefore, if there is any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the spirit and of any affection and mercy, fulfill my joy by being like minded, having the same love, the same being of one accord and of one mind. Therefore, let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind, let each of the others better than himself.

Let each of you look out not only for his own interest, but also for the interest of others. Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus, who being in the form of God did not consider robbery to be equal with God, but made himself of no reputation, taking the form of a servant and coming in the likeness of men and being found in appearance as a man. He humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.

Therefore God also has highly exalted him and given him a name. The name which is above every name that at the name of Jesus, every knee should bow of those in heaven and those in earth and those under the earth, and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God, the father. Therefore, beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for his good pleasure.

Do all things without murmuring and disputing that you may become blameless and harmless children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain. Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. For the same reason, you also be glad and rejoice with me.

But I trust in the Lord to send Timothy to you shortly that I also may be encouraged when I know your state, for I have no one like minded who will sincerely care for your state for all, seek their own, not the things which are of Christ Jesus. But you know his proven character that as a son with a father, he served with me in the gospel. Therefore, I hope to send him at once as soon as I see how it goes with me.

But I trust in the Lord that I myself shall also come shortly. Yet I considered it necessary to send to you a paraphrodite is my brother, fellow worker and fellow soldier. But your messenger and the one who ministered to my need, since he was longing for you all and was distressed because you heard that he was sick for indeed he was almost to death.

But God had mercy on him and not only on him, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. Therefore I sent him the more eagerly that when you see him again, you may rejoice and I may be less horrible. Receive him therefore in the Lord with all gladness and hold such men in high esteem or simply in a state because for the work of Christ, he came close to death, not regarding his life to supply what was lacking in your

service toward me.

Chapter three. Finally, my brother rejoiced in the Lord for me to write the same thing to you is not tedious, but for you it is safe. Beware of dogs.

Beware of evil workers. Beware of the of the mutilation. For we are the circumcision who worship God in the spirit rejoicing Christ Jesus and have no confidence in the flesh.

Though I also might have confidence in the flesh, if anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I'm more so circumcised the eighth day of the stock of Israel of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews concerning the law, a Pharisee concerning zeal, persecuting the church concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. But what things were gained to me, these I counted lost for Christ. But indeed, I also count all things lost for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus, my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is true faith in Christ and the righteousness which is from God by faith that I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings being conformed to his death.

If by any means I may attain to the resurrection from the dead, not that I have already attained or already perfected, but I press on that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended, but one thing I do forgetting the things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead. I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Therefore let us as many as are perfect or mature have this in mind, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule. Let us be of the same mind.

Brethren join in following my example and note those who so walk as you have asked for a pattern. For many walk of whom I've told you often and now tell you even weeping that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly and whose glory is in their shame, who set their mind on earthly things for our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to his glorious body, according to the working by which he is able even to subdue all things to himself to perform. Therefore, my beloved and long for brethren, my joy and my crown, so stand fast in the Lord, beloved.

I am for you, and I'm forced into being to be of the same mind in the Lord, and I urge you also my true companion. Help these women who labored with me in the gospel with Clement also and the rest of my fellow workers whose names are in the book of life.

Rejoice in the Lord always again.

I will say rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to all men. The Lord is at hand.

Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with Thanksgiving. Let your request be made known to God and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are good report.

If there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy, meditate on these things. The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do and the God of peace will be with you. But I rejoice in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished again, though you surely did care, but you lacked opportunity.

Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am to be content. I know how to be a base and I know how to about everywhere and in all things. I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. Nevertheless, you have done well that you shared in my distress. Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving, but you only for even in Thessalonica, you sent aid once and again for my necessities.

Not that I seek to give, but I seek the truth that abounds here. Count. Indeed, I have all in a bound and full having received from a papyrus, the things which were sent from you, a sweet smelling aroma and acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God and my God shall supply all your need according to the riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Now to our God and father, the glory forever and ever. Amen. Greet every saint in Christ Jesus.

The brethren who are with me greet you. All the saints greet you, especially those who are Caesar's household. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all.

Amen. I sometimes think it'd be valuable if this happened more in church that we just read through an epistle even without comment, although we will have promised, but I mean, the epistles were written for that most people didn't have copies to read at home. They didn't have printing presses for that or Xerox machines or computers with printers and things like that.

We do, but they they listened. The letters were read out loud to the congregations and almost certainly in their entirety at one sitting, because it was just one flow of thought which the apostle wanted to communicate to the church. So you just listen to the whole

letter read, even if nothing else were said, I think would be valuable.

We certainly have more literacy in the Bible. If large chunks of the Bible were read and paid attention to more frequently in church services, but that's not exactly what we're doing. We're going to actually talk about it.

I wanted to read the whole thing, and I think probably every time of a short letter, it might be a good idea to do that at the beginning, just so we have the whole flow of thought in mind. And now we can look at it and we can see the things that we're going to allude to in the context in which each thing is found. So I give you some notes there and we want to talk, first of all, about the historical background for this letter for the existence of this church.

The city itself, Philippi, was named after Philip II, Alexander, the great father who had, I think, established it in his own name in about six three sixty B.C. Later, the Romans conquered it. Of course, they conquered all the territory the Greeks had run and Philip I became a Roman colony, a military colony in thirty one B.C. Or actually, forty, just saying, you know, it's forty two or something like that. I got from one source, I read thirty one B.C. and from another forty something B.C. So there must have been two phases of it becoming a colony.

But it became a Roman colony, which means well, actually, Luke refers to it in Chapter 16 of Acts as the first city of the region. But by first, he doesn't mean the primary city, because the capital city was Thessalonica. This was a city in Macedonia, which is what we would today call northern Greece.

Greece is a peninsula and the Romans had the peninsula divided into a northern and southern province, the northern province of the peninsula is Macedonia and the southern province called Achaia. Philip I, Thessalonica, Beria. These were up in the up in Macedonia in the north cities like Athens, Corinth and such were in the south in Achaia.

But Philip, I was actually the first church planted in Europe on Paul's second missionary journey. And we read about this in Chapter 16 of Acts. He and his team, which included himself and Silas and Timothy, were seeking some direction to go when they're on the eastern edge of Asia.

They were actually I mean, the western edge of Asia. They were in Troas in Asia Minor. Now, both his first and second missionary journeys had done some work in Asia.

It says in Acts Chapter 16, they endeavored to go into Asia, I guess maybe other parts of Asia, maybe further to the north than they've been before. But the Holy Spirit forbade them. So they tried to go to Bithynia, another place north, and it always forbade them to do that.

And then they were kind of sitting around puzzle. Well, where should we go then? And

one of them had a dream where they saw a man of Macedonia saying, come over and help us. And so they figured out that's the word of the Lord.

And that makes this frankly, the only city that they visited, as far as we know, that was specifically directed by divine revelation that they should go there on their first and second mission journeys. And third, we do not read of special guidance being given them except when they were sent out from Antioch in Acts 13. The Holy Spirit said, separate us to be Barnabas and Saul for the ministry of called them to.

And that's not the only information we have about divine guidance as to what they should do. But that was very general. But this this city, apparently God wanted Europe to be evangelized because if they had gone to Asia, Bithynia, it might be that they had never had a chance to go to Europe.

As it turns out, we know from later history, Europe, Western Europe is almost associated with Christianity as a synonym because, of course, of the Roman Church, especially. But but this is when the gospel penetrated Europe for the first time. They took sale from a kayak or from, excuse me, from Asia and from Troy's.

And they came over to Neapolis in Europe. They didn't apparently set a church up in the office. They then went to fill up by a more significant city as it was a military colony because it was a colony.

The inhabitants of that city had Roman citizenship. And you might remember that Paul, this comes up in the book of Acts a couple of times. His Roman citizenship is something that is very valuable to him.

And the first time was actually when he's in Philippi. The second time was when he was in Jerusalem. But if you have Roman citizenship, which was a coveted thing and not everyone had it.

But if you're born with it, it's because maybe you're born in a colony or you had a parent who had it or you could be awarded it by the emperor. If you did some great exploits for Rome in war or something like that, you could receive the gift of citizenship. A Roman citizenship meant that you had special rights.

Others didn't have. Mainly legal rights. You could not, for example, be crucified.

If you if you committed a crime worthy of death, you had the privilege of being decapitated instead, which might say that doesn't sound like a great privilege. But if you had a choice between crucified and decapitated, you'd think that's a very great privilege. Also, you could not be beaten or bound if you were arrested.

They couldn't bind you or beat you to interrogate you until you'd had a court trial and then found guilty. So until you you're kind of innocent until you're found guilty. If you had

Roman citizenship, that became significant in Paul's actions and his claims for his citizenship.

But then also a Roman citizen had the right of appeal to Caesar for his case, like like in our country, at least supposedly a person who doesn't feel like he gets justice at lower points in the court system can appeal to the Supreme Court. Now, that's more theoretical and true. The Supreme Court is very picky about which cases they'll take and they can't take them all.

But our Constitution has that as part of an American citizen. If the lower courts rule badly, he can appeal to the Supreme Court. Roman citizen in the Roman Empire could appeal to Caesar, the highest authority.

Others who were not Roman citizens didn't have that opportunity. And Paul pursued that to to save his own life. His Roman citizenship saved him from beating from being beaten on one occasion and from and being delivered over to the Jews, one to kill him on another occasion.

So he was very fortunate he was born a Roman citizen when he first played well, when he pleaded his Roman citizenship in Jerusalem, the centurion, the head judge, says, Are you really a Roman centurion, a Roman citizen? And Paul said, I am. And the centurion said, I paid a lot of money to get my citizenship. And Paul said, I was born with it.

You know, so we don't know why Paul was a Roman citizen. His father apparently had done something for Nero or for the Tiberius or someone and gotten it. But Paul had that advantage, just like you being an American citizen, have advantages that people with other citizenship might not have.

So it was a colony and the people in Philippi had citizenship and they were proud of it. In fact, we read in Acts, Chapter 16. That the objection they raised to Paul before the leaders and to the other citizenry is that he was teaching things that were contrary to Caesar.

Now, there's a very similar charge made against him in Thessalonica, the capital of Macedonia, where they said he's saying things that are seditious against Caesar, saying there's another king, one Jesus. Now, we don't have them saying that whole thing about him here, though no doubt that is the nature of what they were saying. Let me just I need to find the place I was looking for on book in Acts, Chapter 16.

This is the whole story of Philippi, actually. And Paul coming to Philippi with his team. And it says in verse 21.

The outcry against Paul and his companions by the people was saying this about them, they teach customs which are not lawful for us being Romans to receive and observe. So the Philippians were Romans, but not everyone was a Roman. They weren't racially

Roman.

They were Greeks, actually, but but they were in a Roman colony that made them have the status of Romans. And they said, you know what these guys teach your customs, contrary to what we can observe. Now, I can't think of anything the apostles taught that would go against what Romans were supposed to do.

I mean, the apostles didn't teach any criminal behavior. It's not clear exactly what Romans were forbidden to do that Paul was advocating, unless it is, of course, making Jesus the supreme law. Now, they don't we don't have them telling they don't we don't have them naming that.

But really, there's nothing that Christianity teaches that would have been offensive to Romans, except the religious aspects of serving one God instead of many. And and making Jesus the supreme Lord, as opposed to Caesar. So no doubt that was the objection.

Now, unlike most other cities that Paul evangelized, there were not many Jews in Philippi in the book of Acts, when Paul went to a new city to evangelize, he first went to the synagogue because that's where he would find people who are primed for the gospel. First of all, Jews who believed in the God that he was going to preach about. They already believed in God.

They also believed in the Old Testament scriptures, which which Paul would use to prove Jesus to be the Messiah. And even the pagans or the Gentiles that were in the synagogues were God's fears, and therefore they already had some conditioning favorable toward the God of Israel. So the synagogue was a natural place in a Gentile city for Paul to begin his his ministry locally, although he's usually kicked out of the synagogue shortly afterwards and then mostly did his work among the Gentiles only.

But it was a good place to get a core of believers. And so he did. However, when it came to Philippi, there was no synagogue there.

Now, from the time of the exile, which is 500 years before Christ, every Gentile city that had 10 or more adult male Jews had a synagogue. All it would take would be 10 house heads of households who were Jewish and it down to justify a synagogue. If they didn't have that many, I'm not sure why they didn't have one with fewer like with nine, maybe because they tithe, maybe 10 tithing families would support one rabbi.

I'm not really sure how they justified that particular number, but that's the way it was. And many cities, I suppose, at least Philippi was one of them, didn't have enough Jews to have a synagogue. But there were some Jews anyway.

And the Jews who were there would still get together on the Sabbath to worship God. And generally speaking, they'd meet under a tree or by a river bank and just a few

people. In this case, it was mostly women.

Most of the Jews in the town were women. And one of the women who is probably not Jewish, but a proselyte was Lida or Lydia. And she was actually from Thyatira, an Asian.

She was Asiatic and she was a businesswoman. She was a merchant of purple cloth. And we don't know why she was in Philippi.

She may have set up shop there. She had a house there. She must have just moved from Thyatira to set up a semi-permanent business in that town.

And she, the Bible says in chapter 16 of Acts, God opened her heart to listen to Paul. She became a believer and she begged Paul and his team to move into her house to use it as the headquarters for their ministry in Philippi. It's very possible it also became the place where the church met in Philippi.

We don't know where they met otherwise, but many of these churches met in homes, especially small ones. Apparently, the church grew considerably, but mostly from Gentiles, since there weren't very many Jews in the town. And Paul got into trouble in that town because he cast a demon out of a slave girl who was a fortune teller.

And when he cast the demon out of the girl, she no longer had the power to be a fortune teller. It was a demonic power. And when the demon was gone, so were her powers.

And she was a slave and her master had used her to make money, telling fortunes. And now he couldn't. And so he is angry at Paul and Silas, and he stirred up the authorities to have them put into prison.

And they were thrown in jail. They were beaten. Now, Paul could have avoided that, at least the beating by simply, I'm a Roman citizen.

You can't do this to me. But for some reason, he kept his mouth shut and he took a beating unnecessarily. And it was probably a severe one.

He was not only he and Silas were not only beaten, but they were put in stocks and very uncomfortable in that prison. But the Bible says in the middle of the night, they were singing and praising God at midnight. And there was a great earthquake.

They shook the prison. The doors of the prison opened on their own from the apparently from the disruption. The jailer woke up from sleeping and saw the doors open.

But he has and he assumed the prisoners had escaped. And he was going to kill himself because he would be put to death by his peers if he lost his charges. So he drew his sword to kill himself.

And Paul apparently could see him or knew of it by revelation. He said, don't hurt

yourself. We're all here, which means not only Paul and Silas, but the other prisoners stayed put, too, even though the doors were open, which is a remarkable thing.

Seems like the prisoners were both once the doors were open. And that's what the jailer assumed they had done. But they hadn't.

I suspect it had something to do with them being impressed by Paul and Barbas, you know, in chains with their backs bleeding, singing praises to God. There must have been some kind of impact that was having in any case, God didn't let the prisoners escape. And so the jailer came running in and saying, men, what must I do to be saved? And Paul famously said, well, believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you should be saved in your house.

And so the man took Paul and Silas out of the prison to his own house and washed their wounds and got converted. He and his whole house believed and were baptized that night. Then he took him back to the jail.

I suppose he might have let them go, but they wouldn't let him get in that kind of trouble. So they willingly went back to jail. And the next morning, the city authorities assumed that the beating they had the night before was probably enough to teach them a lesson.

They probably have no more trouble from them. So they came and said, you can leave now. You can leave the prison.

Paul said, not so quick. We're not leaving here until you publicly vindicate us, publicly apologize, because I'm a Roman citizen and you beat me without a trial. And the leaders of the city were terrified, realizing they breached his rights as a Roman citizen.

That was a very, very serious breach on their part. And so they were really at his mercy. It is now that I've got you at my mercy.

Here's what I want you to do. Lead us publicly out and vindicate us in front of everybody and then we'll leave. And they did.

Now, that was a strategy Paul must have had in mind when he kept his mouth shut the night before, when he let them beat him. He knew he was going to use that. And why was he just ornery? No, because the gospel is a new a new message in Philippi.

And it had been publicly, if the main message been publicly arrested as criminals, this would put a blot on the reputation of the Christian movement, which was brand new. And so he says, listen, you have blotted our reputation. You vindicate our reputation and we'll leave.

You tell everyone we're OK and then we'll go. And so he did. And so that's that's how

things went.

Now, when Paul left the church in Philippi, he left Luke there. We know this because of what we call the we sections of Luke, sometimes Luke who wrote Acts. I said it looked like Acts in Acts.

There are some sections for the writer who Luke says we went here, we went there. Other sections, they went there and doesn't include himself. The it's very subtle.

The writer hardly brings attention to it. But in Chapter 16, for example, in verse 12. He says this when they came to Philippi, he says from there to Philippi.

But I guess we do the verse 11, therefore, sailing from Troas, we ran straight, of course, to Semo, Tracy, and the next day came to Neapolis and from there to Philippi. So we that's the first time we appears in the Book of Acts, which means it's the first time Luke appears in the Book of Acts. Where was he? Well, he sailed with them to fill to Greece.

They sailed from Troas. Now we read that they arrived in Troas, but we left Troas. That is, say, Paul and his other companions, Silas and Timothy, came to Troas.

And when they left Troas to go to Philippi, Luke was with them. So he must have picked him up in Troas as a companion. Now, this may have been because he was a doctor.

We know from Colossians Chapter four that Luke was a physician. And some think that Paul might have been having some early onset of the problems that gave him trouble later on a sickness. And he may have engaged Luke as a physician to travel with him.

But it's clear that Luke was a was a convert. Some scholars think Luke was from Antioch, which is the church that Paul and Silas had left, but that he hadn't left when they did. But he joined them in Troas.

And he might have been one that they already kind of trusted as a companion. But it's not clear. Some think that Philippi was Luke's home and that he had traveled for some reason on business or whatever to Troas had gotten converted and then returned with to his own home in Philippi later.

There are some reasons to think this could be true, but we don't really know. In any case, Paul trusted Luke enough. By the time they left Philippi to leave Luke in Philippi as the overseer of that new church there, we see this when Paul leaves Philippi in verse 16, verse 40 of Acts.

Versus so they went out of prison and entered the house of Lydia, and when they had seen the brethren, they encouraged them and departed. Not we, they. So we came to Philippi, but they left.

We didn't look safe and apparently looked in Paul again for another five years, almost

because Paul then spent 18 months in Corinth and three years in Ephesus before he came back to Philippi and accepted 20. But when he came back to Philippi and accepted to join Luke, joined him and we see in Acts chapter 20 and verse six Luke says, but we failed away from Philippi after the days of unleavened bread and in five days joined them at Troas. So so Luke joined them initially at Troas went to Philippi when Paul and his commander was thrown out of Philippi.

Luke stayed. Why? I mean, if Paul was a problem, why wouldn't Luke be in danger there? Well, maybe he lived there. That might have been his home.

Maybe it's natural for him to be in that town. Or maybe he was just such an obscure team member that the authorities hadn't. He was off their radar.

We don't know. But he apparently stayed in the church for about five years until he left Philippi with Paul and the companions going west again to Troas and then back to Antioch. So Luke, from that time on, really stayed with Paul.

Luke is with Paul right to the end of his imprisonment in Rome, which is at the end of the Book of Acts. Luke is still with him as the Book of Acts closes. So but when you think that Paul left Luke to be more or less Paul's agent to oversee an infant church in Philippi and left it for five years there without much contact.

Probably he must have really trusted that Luke must have been a stable guy. And we know again that Luke was particularly loyal to Paul in later life, too. It may well be that Luke was converted in Antioch, as some people think.

And therefore, Paul and Siles may have known him even before they made their missionary journey. And he may have joined them in trust. These are all speculations we don't know.

But but Luke is a major figure here. And he might be alluded to in Philippians, because. One thing Paul says in Philippians, 320, is that he's sending Timothy, but he says, I have no one like Timothy who's like minded, which means Luke, who certainly was like my new Paul, must not have been with him at this time.

Paul was in prison when he wrote this. He mentions his chains frequently. We'll talk more about that moment.

But when he mentions Timothy in chapter Philippians, chapter two, verse 20, he says, for I have 19 and 20. But I trust in the Lord Jesus to send Timothy to you shortly that I also may be encouraged when I know your state, for I have no one like minded who will sincerely care for your state for all. Seek their own, not the things that are of Christ.

That's pretty unflattering statement about the other people who are with him. They were all speaking their own, not the things of Christ. Now, I suspect this might be what we call

a limited negative, where it really means all others are not only concerned about the things of Christ.

They also have their own personal concerns, might even be saying they have businesses and families and other concerns of their own besides their their pursuit of the things of Christ. That would be a possible way of reading that. But still, if he says I have no one like minded with me, he must not have Luke with him because Luke would certainly be included as like minded.

So where was Luke? Well, he might have been in Philippi when Paul wrote this from prison. Paul was not in Philippi. He was in prison.

We'll talk about where he was in a moment. But but there is reference in Philippians four. Three.

Or Paul says, I urge you also true companion, help these women who labor with me. This true companion is not named in the heat in the King James, I think is a true yoke. So because in the Greek it means one who shares a yoke, that is, who labors together to oxen under yoke, were yoke fellows of each other, partners in the project.

This person he calls true companion in the Greek, he refers to someone who's been under the same yoke with Paul, they pulled the plow together. They've been side by side partners. That would make him someone almost like a fellow apostle or something like that.

Certainly something more than a local church leader, because he had plowed and worked alongside Paul. And he doesn't say who it is, but we know that. Luke had had frequent connections to Philippi, and it may well be that Luke is the one he has in mind.

There's very few people we know of in the book of Acts who were as as frequently partners with Paul as Luke was. Now, if Paul was running from Rome, we might say, well, then Luke was with him in Rome. It says in Acts, Chapter 28, that Luke was that's one of the reflections that Luke was in Rome with Paul.

But Paul was said to be there for two years. While Paul was cooling his heels in prison for two years, he might well have sent Luke back briefly to check on the church in Philippi. And so forth.

So, I mean, it's possible that Paul wrote from Rome that Luke was at the time in Philippi. And that would make sense, too, because the Philippian epistle begins with him addressing. He says, Paul and Timothy, servants of Jesus Christ.

Interesting that he just say Paul and Timothy, he wouldn't mention Luke or anyone else that was with him. So it's hard to say. It looks like Paul and Timothy were more or less alone where Paul was in prison and Luke was not probably among them.

It would seem we can't say much more about that because we don't know more about that. Now, another thing that led to this letter being written was that there's a man named Aphrodite that we know nothing about except from this letter. But he is highly commended in this letter.

We are told that he brought a gift from the church of Philippi to Paul in prison. And it wasn't the first time the Philippians had done so. When from when Paul left Macedonia, he said, and even though he's still in Macedonia, he was in Thessalonica.

They had sent gifts to him from that church twice. Now, this is the infant church. He just got to Philippi, planted the church, moved his team into Lydia's house for a while.

They got thrown out of town. We don't know how much later, but they left a relatively young church, came to Thessalonica. And while they were there, the church in Philippi spent money to him twice.

But apparently some time had lapsed and they hadn't sent him anyway. He says, I know you would have, but you didn't have opportunity. He says that in chapter four, verse 10.

I rejoice in the Lord greatly that now at last your care for me has flourished. And he means you've shown your care for me by sending this money that he mentions, though you surely did care, but you lack opportunity. Well, Paul had planted that church possibly as much as 10 years earlier before he wrote this.

How would they not have opportunity to send him money? And all the time they sent him money twice while he was in Thessalonica right after he left Philippi. Why would there be such a long gap? And he said you didn't have opportunity until now. Well, very possibly, as we read in 2 Corinthians chapter eight, because Paul had been taking up collections among the Gentile churches, not for himself and his needs, but for the church in Jerusalem.

And he tells in the opening verses of 2 Corinthians eight that the churches of Macedonia, of which Philippi would be the chief one, had almost impoverished themselves. He said they were already in deep poverty, but they gave more than they were able to afford to give and even urged him to accept their gifts. Apparently, Paul was reluctant to take such generous gifts from people who are already so poor.

He says they urged us to receive it, to give to the churches in Judea. So it's very possible the lack of opportunity they had was that they were broke. And what money they had to give, they had given to help the church in the collection.

Paul took for the Judean church, so they didn't have opportunities and him money during that time because they were pretty much tapped out, you know, because of their other giving. I think that's a probable way to understand them being that way. Now, Aphrodite, as I mentioned, brought a gift.

And he says that in chapter four in verse 18. Indeed, I have all in a bound. I'm full having received from a path for guidance, the things which were sent from you.

Now, a path that I just brought the gift, but apparently on his trip to Paul or while visiting with Paul, it passed. I got very sick. I mean, deathly ill.

And Paul makes reference that in chapter two. He says in verse twenty five, I consider it necessary to send you a path for guidance, my brother, fellow worker and fellow soldier, but your messenger and the one who ministered to my need, meaning he's the one who brought the money to minister to Paul's physical need that way since he was longing to you because he was distressed because you had heard that he was sick. Now he got sick.

Apparently, the church in Philippi heard that he got sick. The path has heard that the church in Philippi heard that he was sick and that they were concerned, so he was distressed because they had because they were distressed. And he says, yeah, he indeed, he was sick almost to death.

But God had mercy on him and not only on him, but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow. So he says he almost died. Fortunately, God was merciful and I almost lost him.

Now, it's interesting because some people think that healing in Paul's day was a very much more common thing and that sickness actually was more uncommon. There are certainly people who think that Jesus purchased universal healing from diseases when he was at the whipping force and that therefore no Christian has any business being sick anymore than we have any business being unforgiven because Jesus at the whipping post and across paid for our sins. Our sicknesses, they say, I don't believe this doctrine in the Bible doesn't teach it, but it's a widely held doctrine.

However, the Bible makes it clear that there's a difference in when God forgives than when he heals. In first John one nine, it says, if we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins. Why is that just? Because that was purchased for us to withhold from us what was purchased on our behalf by Christ would certainly be an injustice.

When you pay a ransom and you don't get the person afraid that's an injustice. So it's a matter of God's justice that he forgives us for Christ's sake. He doesn't owe it to us, but he owes it to Jesus because Jesus paid for it.

So forgiveness of sins is something Jesus paid for. And it's a matter of justice that God cannot withhold it without being unjust. But healing is not owed to us.

That's why Jesus, what Paul said, God had mercy on him. By definition, mercy is not owed. Mercy is something that is graciously given to someone who is not entitled to it.

So the Bible speaks about forgiveness of sins as something that is owed to us because of what Jesus paid for. Healing is not owed to us because Jesus apparently didn't pay for that. That when God heals, he does it as a individual act of mercy, not a contractual obligation on his part based on the atonement.

So Paul is rejoicing when he said he was sick. It's obvious that Paul didn't believe in positive confession because the positive confession teaches that we're faced as you never say I'm sick. That's a negative confession.

Even if you are dying with all the symptoms, sickness, you must say, I am well, because if you say you're sick, well, then you'll have what you say. They say so. But Paul had no problem.

Yeah, he was sick. He was sick. He got well, but that was the mercy of God.

You know, Paul didn't hold this doctrine that somehow all Christians are supposedly well, or you better give an explanation why not. I mean, he said he's sick and no apologies, no apologies. Sometimes Christians get sick.

Paul had a thorn in the flesh. Timothy had frequent infirmities in his stomach. I mean, there's it's a normal thing in the Bible for people to be sick.

But it's also fairly common for them to be healed, but not always. Paul was not healed of his thorn in the flesh. Jesus said, no, my grace is sufficient for you to stick it as it is.

Paul said to Timothy, you've got frequent infirmities. Take a little wine for that, which is the best medicinal advice he can give. He didn't expect Timothy necessarily to be healed just because he was a Christian.

Interestingly, Paul refers to apophrodite in verse in Chapter two, in verse twenty five, as your in the New King James is your messenger. This is one of the few places where the word apostolos is translated messenger in the King James and the New King James Bible. Apostolos is apostle.

He refers to a path that I was your apostle. I put out something else here in Second Corinthians, Chapter eight and verse twenty three. Paul says, if anyone inquires about Titus, he's my partner and fellow worker concern you.

Or if our brethren are inquired about, they are messengers of the churches. Again, here's the word apostolate, apostles of the churches. He's talking about his team members.

Now, Paul would never call himself an apostle of the church because apostle is one who is sent by. And Paul was always an apostle of Christ because he was sent directly by Christ. So was Peter.

So the other. So were the twelve. They were apostles of Christ because Christ directly

sent them.

But other lesser workers on their team were also apostles, but not of Christ, but of the churches. That is, while Paul was sent by Christ, these team members were sent out by the churches. And with the authority of the churches behind them, Paul had the authority of Christ behind him.

His team members had the authority of the churches. They were sent by the churches. Now, in Second Corinthians, eight, twenty three, Paul refers to his team members as apostles of the churches.

In Philippians, two, twenty five, he refers to a paradise as the apostle of the church in Philippi, meaning they sent him. He was not an apostle on the level of Paul or Peter or James or John. There are numerous people in the New Testament called apostles besides those that we think of as the twelve and Paul.

Numerous people are called apostles, but they are no doubt seen in the secondary sense. Paul and the twelve were sent directly by Jesus Christ with his authority. The others were sent by churches.

They're what we call missionaries. You know. Churches send out missionaries.

A modern missionary sent out by a church could be called an apostle of the church that sent them up, but not an apostle of Christ in the sense that Paul was. But sent by the church with its authority, not with the same kind of authority Christ has given to Paul and the others. Paul, when he wrote this, was extremely happy.

This is the most joyful epistle Paul wrote. There's continual references in it to rejoice. Exhortations to rejoice, references to him rejoicing.

For example, in chapter one, verse four. He says, always in every prayer of my making requests for you all with joy when he prays for them, he has joy when he thinks of them. He thanks God and every member of them, and he has joy in his praying for them.

In chapter one, in verse 18. He says, what then only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached. And in this I rejoice.

Yes, I will rejoice. Got the word twice in that one sentence in the same chapter. Chapter one, verse twenty five.

Being confident of this, I know that I shall remain and continue with you all for your progress and joy in the faith. Chapter two, verse two, fulfill my joy by being like minded. Chapter two, verse 16, holding fast the word of life that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I've not run in vain.

And the next verse. Yes. And if I'm being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice

and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice.

And in verse 18 of the same chapter two, for the same reason, you also be glad and rejoice with me. There's much more references to rejoicing and being glad in this epistle than in any other in chapter two and verse twenty eight. He says, therefore, I sent him the more eagerly as a papyrus that when you see him again, you may rejoice and I may be less powerful.

Chapter three, verse one. Finally, my brother, rejoice in the Lord. Chapter three, verse three, for we are the circumcision who worship God in the spirit and rejoice in Christ Jesus.

Then in chapter four, verse one, therefore, my beloved and long for brother, my joy and my crown. Then for four, obviously rejoice in the Lord always again, I will say rejoice. So there's this constant refrain.

Every chapter has multiple references to rejoicing and being joyful. Now, the early church was a joyful community. And we read about the book of Acts also that they were known for their rejoicing.

It obviously changed, I think, largely when the church became more institutionalized. I believe that when people become more religious, they become less happy when worshiping God becomes a religious duty rather than an enjoyment of God, enjoyment of him because you love him and you have fellowship with him. I think that, frankly, religion becomes a burden.

And I think for many people, religion is a burden. In fact, people today who were raised in the Catholic Church, they call themselves recovering Catholics. And I'm sure that there's Protestant churches that would be every bit as guilty of providing an environment that people need to recover from.

Because religion isn't necessarily associated with joy as much as with maybe guilt or duty. These kinds of things, fear, maybe these are the opposites of joy. Now, you know, John said in chapter five, this is the love of God that we keep his commandments and his commandments are not burdensome.

Now, why would commandments not be burdensome? Because it's the love of God. I love God because I love God. I enjoy doing what he wants me to do.

But that is what pure religion or Christianity is supposed to be, a relationship with God where you love him and you enjoy his love. And you count on his promises and his forgiveness and his acceptance. And you see this as occasion for great joy and the fruit of the spirit.

Paul said in Galatians five includes joy, you know, love, joy, peace. This is the early

church was known to be a joyful, rejoicing community. And apparently the Philippian church didn't have anything really going wrong in it.

That was too terrible. There's maybe a couple of things that Paul's not happy about, but he doesn't have any real complaints about the church, not like Galatians or Corinthians or even Colossians. Or Thessalonians, there are problems in these churches and the epistles Paul writes are often to try to correct these problems.

There's no real problem in the church that Paul mentions this epistle, except something he mentions very briefly in Chapter four. And verse two, Philippians, four to he says, I implore you, Odia, and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. And I urge you also to companion or yoke fellow help these women who labored with me in the gospel and Clement also.

Apparently, they weren't. There are a couple of women in the church. We don't know their status or anything like that, but they were not happy with each other.

They were not of one mind in the Lord. And so there's a little disunity there. It must not have been a major system in the church, but also tell them to get along.

Tell those ladies to get along. I have a friend who sort of as a joke, but also as a preaching puppet, that was pretty clever by mispronouncing these women's names, pronouncing you Odia as you are odious and Syntyche as soon touchy. He said, wherever there's conflict in the church, it's usually because one person is you are odious and another person soon touchy.

You know, that is thin skin. Some someone is unpleasant. Or offensive.

The other person is easily offended. Soon touchy. Of course, those names have no such meaning.

It's just an accident of the Greek names sounding a lot like these English words. But that was a rather I laughed when I first heard some preach that point, because, of course, it's entirely artificial. But it's a true point.

Usually when there's a conflict, somebody's been too touchy and somebody's been too odious. And so that's the only only problem they have in the church. Now, there's some other things Paul is not happy about, but we're not told that they are in the church.

For example. While he was locked up, he said, it's a good thing. It's encouraged a lot of people to preach who might not preach otherwise.

My chains have encouraged brethren to be more bold in their preaching. But he says some of them don't really have the best motives. And he said that in Chapter one, he says in verse 15, some indeed preach Christ, even from envy and strife and some from

goodwill.

The former preach Christ was selfish ambition, not sincerely supposing that affliction to my chains, but the latter out of love, knowing that I'm appointed for the defense of the gospel. What then? Only that in every way, whether by pretense or in truth, Christ is preached. And this I will rejoice.

Yes, I will rejoice. Now, even this negative ends up with. I can see that there's a there's a silver lining around this cloud.

There's some people preaching Christ for the wrong reasons, but at least Christ is being preached. Now, it's hard to know who these are, but they don't appear to be in the Philippian church. In fact, most commentators would say these are probably in the location where Paul is imprisoned.

And many think it's Rome that in Rome that Paul had rivals there and they were taking advantage of the fact that he was out of circulation in prison. And they're promoting their own ministries and preaching and so forth. Is that at least people are hearing about Christ from them? There's different ideas of who these people are and why they're doing this.

Really a strange suggestion that there are people preaching Christ out of envy and strife for contention, not out of love and to hoping to add friction to Paul's chains. He says affliction. But the word affliction means friction, like the rubbing of the of the chains of the anklets and the bracelets against the skin.

You know, I'm in chains and they're just adding more friction and pain by doing this. And that's what they're intending to do. But I don't know anyone who would intend to do that to Paul about whom he said, well, at least a person, the gospel school.

You know, I mean, it had to be really bad people. It had to be really bad or false Christians. So there's no one really knows who these people are or exactly why they were doing what they're doing.

There are some suggestions I'd like to suggest, but I don't know which is true. One, we do know there were people who use the name of Christ to try to do the things Paul did in competition with him. Not we don't know that there were such in Rome.

There may have been. We know that, for example, in Ephesus, there were some actually believe that Paul wrote this from an imprisonment in Ephesus. That's one of the theories that the traditional views he's in chains in Rome.

But some think he was in Ephesus, and we know in Acts 19 that some Jewish exorcists who were being upstaged by Paul because Paul's activities in casting the demons were much more impressive than theirs and getting a lot more attention. They began to take

the name of Christ and they would say to demon possessed person, we adjure you in the name of Jesus, whom Paul preaches to come out. Obviously, they were trying to muscle in on his territory there, or maybe they saw him muscling in on theirs.

But there's some competition there. And then, well, we'll use this name, Jesus, that he's using. And remember, the demons said, well, we know who Jesus is.

We don't know who you are. And then it went badly for them. But it could be that there were people who saw that Paul had a big following preaching Christ.

And so they thought, well, I can get me a big following like that. And they're not even Christians like these sons of Stephen in Ephesus, or. They might be sectarian Christians, we know in Corinth, which is not where Paul was, there were some saying I'm a Paul and others saying I'm a Cephas, and some saying I'm of Apollo.

So they were some that were saying, yeah, I'm follower of Jesus, but I don't follow Paul. I'm more following behind Apollo or Cephas. And they were had a contention and a division among them.

And it's possible that in other places to wherever Paul was, that there were some doing that. Oh, Paul's out of commission. But these other kind of rival divisive groups that named themselves after other leaders other than Paul, they were taking advantage of that.

And so they might have been Christians, but carnal Christians. Paul said of the Corinthians, as long as you're saying I'm a Paul or I'm of Apollo, you're carnal. You're bathing Christ.

So they could have been just Christians who weren't very spiritual. And it's possible, too, that there were just some kind of competitors who are decent Christians, but not always of the best motives. I mean, Christians don't always have the best ones.

I'll tell you, when I was a leader in a church in Santa Cruz, California, back in the 80s, another church opened up and a lot of the people from town, including some of our own people, began to go over there. I remember one of our deacons being very upset because people were going there instead of our church. And I remember him saying to the elders, you know, we should forbid our people to go to that church.

What? We don't have the power to forbid people where they go to church. They don't belong to us. They're God's people.

They're not ours. So, I mean, I guess I'm such a carnal. I mean, when John the Baptist was told that there were more people now leaving John's mission being baptized by Jesus instead, John said, what are you jealous for me? He must increase.

I must decrease. I mean, John didn't have this rivalry, but ministers often do. And especially if they're different denominations, but they didn't have actual different denominations back then.

But they did have people probably had their own spheres of ministry, their own groups of audience and so forth. And they might think, oh, Paul's out of circulation. We can build our little group.

And that's certainly an attitude that exists in the modern church. I don't know if it did that. So we're not given enough information exactly who are these people that Paul said.

But he said at least Christ is preached. Now, I will say this. He doesn't say specifically the gospel is being preached.

He said some preach Christ. That is the name of Christ for bad motives. And but at least Christ is free.

Now, he might not even be committing himself to saying these people are really preaching the true gospel, but they're using the name of Christ. After all, Christ is getting publicity. There's no such thing as bad publicity.

You know, the sons of Sceva who are not Christians and we drew you in the name of Jesus, whom Paul preached. Well, OK, Jesus is getting some some attention. That's good.

I'm glad that people are here. Jesus is not he doesn't specifically say that the gospel is being preached by these people. They may be.

He doesn't say it's not. But I think it's interesting that in the whole conversation, he just says Christ is preached, meaning they are publicizing the name of Christ. And it's good for people to hear about Christ, even if no matter what circumstances they hear them.

Now, so we see Paul even see that as an occasion for rejoicing. The church is doing well. It doesn't have any false doctrines, as far as you know, there are people that Paul weeps about, he said in Chapter three, he says in verse 18, for many walk of whom I've told you often and now tell you even weeping.

So this is the only time he's not happy. He's weeping. But as he thinks about these people, he says, their enemies of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly and whose glory is in their shame, who set their mind on earthly things.

I'm not sure he's even talking about Christians there. He certainly doesn't say that there's people in the church like that or else he would have strongly addressed them. He's just saying there are people like that out there who, you know, they're hedonists.

They love their belly. They love earthly things. I weep to think about them.

But the the impression is not given that these people are in the church necessarily. So, again, he's happy with the church and he's got only really pretty much good things to say about it. I'm going to give you a break and I want to come back about 10 minutes and we're just going to take some other passages in Philippians before we're done.

There's just so many good passages. It'd be absurd to not say anything about any more than what we said about. So we'll come back and cover some more of the great passages in Philippians.

Then we'll be done.