

Rejoice!

Paul's Letter to the Philippians

Lesson 1

Background

The City of Philippi: Acts 16:12 states that Philippi is “a Roman Colony and the leading city of that district of Macedonia.”

Paul's first visit to Philippi: Paul visited Philippi on his second missionary journey which took place between 49-52 A.D. See Acts 16 for more details.

Date and place of writing: The letter was written from Rome around 63 A.D. during Paul's first Roman imprisonment.

Purpose: The nature of this letter is very personal as Paul expresses his joy and thanks for the Philippians. He writes to inform them of his present situation. Epaphroditus, a member from the Philippian congregation, had been sent to provide assistance for Paul. Paul sends him back to Philippi with this letter of thanks and encouragement to live in harmony with one another especially in the face of persecution.

Outline

Rejoice...

Ch. 1 ...In Christ's gospel!

Ch. 2 ...In Christ's humility!

Ch. 3 ...In Christ's righteousness!

Ch. 4 ...In Christ always!

Partners in the gospel

Read Philippians 1:1-11

What connection did Paul and Timothy have to the Philippians?

How would you describe Paul's feelings toward the Philippians? Why did he feel this way?

You might think Philippi was the perfect little congregation that had everything right, but what reminder does Paul give in his prayer (verses 9-11).

Discuss. Paul benefited from the fellowship he shared with the Philippians and considers them “partners in the gospel” (verse 6). How does fellowship with other Christians throughout our city, the country, and even world benefit us?

Advancing the gospel

Read Philippians 1:12-18

You'd think getting locked up would be a set back. However, Paul said that his imprisonment actually advanced the gospel. How could this be?

What false motives could one have for preaching the gospel or serving Christ?

In verse 18 is Paul saying that the end justifies the means? What exactly is he saying?

Discuss. It may seem that Christians have their hands tied in our society when it comes to proclaiming the truth of the gospel, but how can we view these challenges as opportunities to advance the gospel?

Living or dying for the gospel

Read Philippians 1:19-30

Paul was confident that "what has happened will turn out for my deliverance." Paul was released from prison for a time, but was later imprisoned again and eventually put to death. Does history prove him wrong?

What did Paul hope to accomplish by life and by death?

Why was he torn between the two?

Whatever the circumstance may be, Christians are encouraged to conduct themselves in a manner "worthy of the gospel" (verse 27). What does such a life look like?

Several times in this chapter Paul has referred to defending or contending for the gospel (verses 7, 16, 27). In what sense are we to defend and contend for the gospel? In what sense do we not need to defend the gospel?

Discuss. Often times a Christian might wonder if it's ok to wish to be taken out of this world to be with Christ in heaven. How might you use this section of Philippians to counsel that individual?