

THE CHURCH AT PHILIPPI

Introduction

- 1) **Philippians 1:1-2** – Paul’s greetings to the saints at Philippi as he begins his epistle
- 2) There are many lessons to learn from this first century church, both in the record of its beginning and in the epistle written to them by the imprisoned apostle

I) **The Beginning of the Church at Philippi** (*Acts 16:6-40*) (*see history of city on back)

- A) The Macedonian call at Troas during Paul’s 2nd missionary journey [AD 49-50] (vv. 6-10)
- B) Paul, Silas, and others came to Philippi and stayed some days (vv. 11-12)
- C) Conversion of Lydia and her household – power of the gospel preached (vv. 13-15)
- D) Paul and Silas beaten and imprisoned (vv. 16-24; “spitefully treated” (1 Thess. 2:2)
- E) Conversion of jailor and his household – belief and obedience (vv. 25-34)
- F) Paul and others depart after release from jail and a final visit with the brethren (vv. 35-40)
- G) Paul leaves Luke in Philippi – end of “we” passages
- H) Later contacts
 - 1) Paul journeys through that area again on his third missionary journey (20:1-3)
 - 2) Paul writes an epistle to the church while imprisoned in Rome (61-63 AD)

II) **Lessons from the Epistle to the Church at Philippi**

A) ***Divine Organization for the Local Church*** (1:1)

- 1) Saints, with the *elders* and *deacons* – scriptural organization
- 2) Divinely-authorized offices with divinely-given qualifications (1 Tim. 3:1-13; Tit. 1:5-9)
- 3) Too many congregations today satisfied to be without qualified leadership – problem!

B) ***Abounding in Knowledge and All Discernment*** (1:9-11)

- 1) Spiritual knowledge (God’s word) and ability to apply that truth to daily life
- 2) “Approve the things that are excellent” – discern the ways of righteousness (Heb. 5:14)
- 3) Obtained only through a careful study and diligent application of the word of God

C) ***Esteeming Others Better Than Ourselves*** (2:1-8)

- 1) Humility of mind is essential to maintaining the fellowship of joy among brethren
- 2) Selfishness seeks one’s own good before another’s; this is not the *mind of Christ*
- 3) Must learn to esteem others better than self; look out for others’ interests – a love that prompts us to build up in the faith *and* to warn of error that threatens souls (cf. 3:17-19)

D) ***Shining as Lights in an Immoral World*** (2:12-16)

- 1) Godly morals must be found in us if we are to shine forth, *by holding fast* the word of life
- 2) Part of “working out our salvation” – moral living is essential to godliness (4:8-9)
- 3) Avoid works of flesh (Gal. 5:19-21) – found in modern dancing, mixed swimming, immodest dress, pornography, gambling, social drinking, unscriptural divorce & remarriage, etc.

E) ***Pressing Toward the Goal*** (3:12-14)

- 1) The Christian life = forget what was left behind and reach [press] forward
- 2) Takes strenuous effort [reaching, pressing] – cannot be distracted from effort (Lk. 9:62)
- 3) We must never forget our main labor and goal – lay hold of spiritual victory (vv. 20-21)

F) ***Heaven Citizenship*** (3:20)

- 1) Only in Philippians where there was great pride in Roman citizenship does Paul use language of civil and political identity for Christians
 - a) *Politeuesthe* (1:27) – conduct themselves as citizens worthy of the gospel
 - b) *Politeuma* (3:20) – a Christian’s citizenship is in heaven
- 2) Must see themselves as Christians first and Romans second – spiritual citizenship greater

G) ***Fellowship in the Work of the Lord*** (4:10-19; 1:3-5)

- 1) *Fellowship* = a relationship with spiritual joint-participation based on God's truth
- 2) Church at Philippi sent aid to Paul in Thessalonica and when he departed from that region
- 3) Philippi was only church giving – *not* a sponsoring church funneling funds from elsewhere
- 4) *Local church* must be concerned about maintaining a proper fellowship within the scope of its work; *individual Christians* also must maintain proper fellowship as individuals in relation to other Christians (Gal. 2:9; 1 & 2 Timothy, Titus, 2 & 3 John)

Conclusion

Many more lessons could be learned, but these will help us to be pleasing to God according to His inspired Word (1:27). May we always strive to follow God's original pattern of truth and learn from these early churches like the one at Philippi.

***History of the city of Philippi**

- A) Town first occupied in the sixth century BC, then named by Philip II of Macedon (father of Alexander the Great) ca. 358 BC
- B) Brought under Roman rule in 168 BC
- C) Roman colony founded by Augustus after the battle of Philippi, fought between Antony and Octavius (Augustus) vs. Brutus and Cassius (42 BC)
- D) Seen as a "foremost city of that part of Macedonia" (Acts 16:12)
- E) Citizenry were Romans who enjoyed special privileges as colonists having great devotion to and pride in the Roman Empire
- F) Paul declared his Roman citizenship here to shame the magistrates (Acts 16:37-39)
- G) Lies on the Via Egnatia, the major Roman road in that region
- H) Archaeological and Biblical interests:
 - 1) Roman theater (4th century BC)
 - 2) Ruins of the Agora (marketplace) and ancient basilicas (church buildings)
 - 3) Traditional site of Philippian jail and Gangites river located one mile west of town
- I) City abandoned and fell into ruin after AD 1387