

THE PHILIPPIANS

1. Philippi was a “little Rome” in Macedonia.

- a. Philippi was located at the far eastern end of a large fertile plain in central Macedonia.
 - (1) It straddled the Egnatian Way, 16 kms inland and across a low range of coastal mountains from the seaport of Neapolis (modern Kaválla).
- b. It was founded by Greek colonists from the island of Thasos around 360 bc but taken over and renamed by Philip of Macedon (father of Alexander the Great) in 356 bc.
- c. It was a strategic location because of: (1) the large agricultural plain of Datos; (2) its protective acropolis; and (3) the mineral deposits, especially gold, at nearby Mount Pangaion.
- d. Philippi (and all Macedonia) came under Roman control in 168 bc.
 - (1) **Ac 16:12** 12 ...From there to Philippi, which is a leading city of the district of Macedonia and a Roman colony.
- e. In 42 bc, two major battles were fought in the nearby plain—between Cassius and Brutus (the assassins of Julius Caesar) and the victors, Octavian (later the emperor Augustus) and Mark Antony. Octavian honoured Philippi by refounding it as a Roman military colony, endowing its populace with Roman citizenship. He populated the town with discharged veterans from the war. This both alleviated a population problem in Rome and ensured allegiance to the Roman empire at this strategic spot.
- f. The Philippian residents were proud of their city, their ties with Rome, their Roman customs and laws, and their Roman citizenship.
 - (1) “Philippi was a reproduction of Rome.”
 - (2) Philippi’s “Romanness” is an important factor in Acts 16.
 - (a) Ac 16:12, 21, 37-38.

2. The Philippian church was evangelised into existence by Paul in 49 ad.

- a. During Paul’s second missionary journey (49-51 ad), the Spirit directed him to Macedonia.
 - (1) **Ac 16:9-10** 9 A vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia was standing there, urging him and saying, Come over to Macedonia and help us. 10 And when Paul had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go on into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.
- b. There was no Jewish synagogue in the city, so God-worshipers like Lydia met at a place of prayer by the riverside (Ac 16:13, 16). Thessalonica, by contrast, had a synagogue (Ac 17:1).
 - (1) Ac 16:13, 16; 17:1
- c. Lydia and her family are the first recorded believers in Europe.
 - (1) **Ac 16:14** 14 One who heard us was a woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple goods, who was a worshiper of God. The Lord opened her heart to pay attention to what was said by Paul.
- d. A gathering of believers began meeting in Lydia’s house/villa.
 - (1) **Ac 16:15** 15 ...After [Lydia] was baptised, and her household as well, she urged us saying, If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come to my house and stay. And she prevailed upon us.
 - (2) The church in Lydia’s house/villa became the “First Church of Europe.”

- e. Later, Paul commanded an evil spirit to come out of a slave girl. This slave girl likely trusted in Jesus and joined the church in Lydia's house (Ac 16:16-18).
- f. The owners of the slave girl eventually seized Paul and Silas and dragged them into the marketplace before the city rulers (Ac 16:19). A crowd attacked them, and the magistrates ordered them to be beaten (Ac 16:22). They were thrown in prison, and their feet were fastened in stocks (Ac 16:23-24).
- g. That night, about midnight, Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, with the other prisoners listening (Ac 16:25). A great earthquake suddenly occurred (Ac 16:26). The prison doors were opened, and all the prisoners' bonds were unfastened (Ac 16:27). That same night, the Philippian jailer and his family trusted in Jesus and were baptised (Ac 16:30-34).
- h. The next morning, Paul asserted the Roman citizenship of himself and Silas, and the magistrates came and apologised to them (Ac 16:37-39). After visiting Lydia and encouraging the new church, they departed for Amphipolis, Apollonia, and Thessalonica (Ac 16:40-17:1).

3. Paul and the Philippians continued to enjoy a close relationship.

- a. Paul proceeded to Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, and Corinth, supported financially by the Philippians.
 - (1) **Php 4:15-16** 15 You Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only. 16 Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again.
 - (2) Paul "robbed" the Macedonian churches in order not to burden the Corinthians.
 - (a) **2 Co 11:8-9** 8 I [Paul] robbed other churches by accepting support from them in order to serve you. 9 And when I was with you and was in need, I did not burden anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied my need.
- b. During Paul's third missionary journey (52-56 ad):
 - (1) Paul resolved to pass through Macedonia and sent Timothy and Erastus there.
 - (a) **Ac 19:21-22** 21 Now after these events Paul resolved in the Spirit to pass through Macedonia and Achaia and go to Jerusalem saying, After I have been there, I must also see Rome. 22 And having sent into Macedonia two of his helpers, Timothy and Erastus, he himself stayed in Asia for a while.
 - (b) **1 Co 16:5-6** 5 I will visit you [Corinthians] after passing through Macedonia, for I intend to pass through Macedonia....
 - (2) Paul went from Ephesus through Macedonia to Greece.
 - (a) **Ac 20:1-2** 1 After the uproar [in Ephesus] ceased, Paul sent for the disciples, and after encouraging them, he said farewell and departed for Macedonia. 2 When he had gone through those regions and had given them much encouragement, he came to Greece.
 - (3) Paul wrote 2 Corinthians from Macedonia.
 - (a) **2 Co 1:16** 16 I wanted to visit you [Corinthians] on my way to Macedonia, and to come back to you from Macedonia and have you send me on my way to Judea.
 - (b) **2 Co 2:13** 13 ...My spirit was not at rest because I did not find my brother Titus there [in Troas]. So I took leave of them and went on to Macedonia.

- (c) **2 Co 8:1** 1 We want you to know, brothers and sisters, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia....
- (4) Paul and his associates again experienced affliction in Philippi.
 - (a) **2 Co 7:5** 5 ...Even when we came into Macedonia, our bodies had no rest, but we were afflicted at every turn—fighting without and fear within.
- (5) Paul returned from Greece through Macedonia on his way to Jerusalem.
 - (a) **Ac 20:3** 3 There [Greece] [Paul] spent three months, and when a plot was made against him by the Jews as he was about to set sail for Syria, he decided to return through Macedonia.
- (6) Paul celebrated the Jewish festival of Unleavened Bread in Philippi.
 - (a) **Ac 20:6** 6 ...We sailed away from Philippi after the days of Unleavened Bread, and in five days we came to them at Troas....
- c. During Paul's first Roman imprisonment (60-62 ad):
 - (1) Paul lived in Rome under house arrest for two years.
 - (a) **Ac 28:16** 16 When we came into Rome, Paul was allowed to stay by himself, with the soldier who guarded him.
 - (b) **Ac 28:30** 30 [Paul] lived there [in Rome, under house arrest] two whole years at his own expense, and welcomed all who came to him.
 - (2) Paul continued to preach the gospel without hindrance.
 - (a) **Ac 28:23-24** 23 When [the Roman Jews] had appointed a day for [Paul], they came to him at his lodging in greater numbers. From morning till evening he expounded to them, testifying to the kingdom of God and trying to convince them about Jesus both from the Law of Moses and from the Prophets. 24 And some were convinced by what he said, but others disbelieved.
 - (b) **Ac 28:31** 31 ...Proclaiming the kingdom of God and teaching about the Lord Jesus Messiah with all boldness and without hindrance.
 - (3) The Philippians sent Epaphroditus to Paul with a financial gift.
 - (a) **Php 2:25** 25 I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need....
 - (b) **Php 4:18** 18 I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.
 - (4) Epaphroditus assisted Paul for some time and nearly died.
 - (a) **Php 2:30** 30 ...[Epaphroditus] nearly died for the work of Messiah, risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me.
 - (5) Paul sent back Epaphroditus with the thank you note we know as *Philippians*.
 - (a) **Php 2:28-29** 28 I am the more eager to send [Epaphroditus], therefore, that you may rejoice at seeing him again, and that I may be less anxious. 29 So receive him in the Lord with all joy, and honor such men....
- d. Between Paul's first and second Roman imprisonment (62-64 ad):
 - (1) Paul went again to Macedonia.
 - (a) **1 Ti 1:3** 3 As I [Paul] urged you [Timothy] when I was going to Macedonia, remain at Ephesus so that....
 - (2) Paul spent the winter near Philippi.

- (a) **Ti 3:12** 12 When I [Paul] send Artemas or Tychicus to you [Titus], do your best to come to me at Nicopolis [near Philippi], for I have decided to spend the winter there.
- (3) Paul was re-arrested at Troas, not far from Philippi.
 - (a) **2 Ti 4:13** 13 When you come, bring the cloak that I left with Carpus at Troas, also the books, and above all the parchments.
- e. Paul was re-imprisoned in Rome and eventually killed (64 or 68 ad).
 - (1) **2 Ti 1:8** 8 Do not be ashamed of the testimony (<μαρτύριον) of our Lord [Jesus] or of me his prisoner, but co-suffer with me for the gospel (<εὐαγγέλιον) according to the power (<δύναμις) of God...
 - (2) **2 Ti 1:16** 16 The Lord [Jesus] grant mercy to the house of Onesiphorus, for he often refreshed me and was not ashamed of my chains. 17 But when he was in Rome, he eagerly searched for me and found me.
 - (3) **2 Ti 4:6** 6 I [Paul] am already being poured out, and the time of my departure is imminent.

4. The Philippians supported Paul and his ministry consistently for many years.

- a. They partnered with Paul from the first.
 - (1) **Php 1:5** 5 ...Because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now.
- b. They prayed for Paul while he was in prison.
 - (1) **Php 1:19** 19 I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Messiah this will turn out for my deliverance....
- c. They consistently sent Paul financial gifts.
 - (1) **Php 4:15-16** 15 ...You Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only. 16 Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again.
 - (2) **Php 4:18** 18 I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent....
- d. They gave beyond their means to help the poor Jewish believers in Judea.
 - (1) **2 Co 8:1-5** 1 We want you to know, brothers and sisters, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, 2 for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. 3 For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, 4 begging us earnestly for the favour of taking part in the relief of the saints— 5 and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the desire of God to us.
- e. They sent Paul personal support through Epaphroditus.
 - (1) **Php 2:25** 25 ...Epaphroditus my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need....
 - (2) **Php 2:30** 30 [Epaphroditus] nearly died for the work of Messiah, risking his life to complete what was lacking in your service to me.

5. The Philippian church is led by overseers and deacons.

- a. Some are overseers and deacons (Php 1:1).
 - (1) **Php 1:1** 1 To all the saints in Messiah Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons.
- b. Clement, Epaphroditus, Euodia, and Syntyche, Paul's co-workers, probably serve in these roles (Php 2:25, 4:3).
 - (1) **Php 2:25** 25 I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother, fellow worker, and fellow soldier, and your messenger and minister to my need.
 - (2) **Php 4:3** 3 Yes, I ask you also, true companion [Epaphroditus], help these women [Euodia and Syntyche], who have laboured side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.
- c. *Church Governance.*
 - (1) Under normal circumstances, a local church is to be led by overseers and deacons.

6. The Philippians' justification is not in doubt.

- a. They are saints in Messiah Jesus (Php 1:1).
 - (1) **Php 1:1** 1 To all the saints in Messiah Jesus who are at Philippi, with the overseers and deacons.
- b. God has begun a good work in them and will complete it (Php 1:6).
 - (1) **Php 1:6** 6 ...I am sure of this, that he who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Messiah.
- c. They are all partakers with Paul of grace (Php 1:7).
 - (1) **Php 1:7** 7 ...I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel.
- d. They are Paul's brothers and sisters (Php 1:12; 3:1, 13, 17; 4:1, 8).
 - (1) **Php 1:12** 12 I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel,
 - (2) **Php 3:1** 1 Finally, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you.
 - (3) **Php 3:13** 13 Brothers and sisters, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead....
 - (4) **Php 3:17** 17 Brothers and sisters, join in imitating me....
 - (5) **Php 4:1** 1 Therefore, my brothers and sisters, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown, stand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.
 - (6) **Php 4:8** 8 Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true....
- e. Their salvation is from God (Php 1:28).
 - (1) **Php 1:28** 28 This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God.
- f. Their citizenship is in heaven (Php 3:20).
 - (1) **Php 3:20** 20 ...Our citizenship is in heaven, and from it we await a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Messiah....
- g. Jesus will transform their physical bodies to be like his glorious body (Php 3:21).
 - (1) **Php 3:21** 21 ...Who will transform our lowly body to be like his glorious body....
- h. *Eternal Security.*

- (1) As believers in Jesus, we are justified, we are being sanctified, and we will be glorified.
- (2) We may be sure of our own salvation and the salvation of others.

7. The Philippians have a reputation for obedience.

- a. They obey in Paul's presence and in his absence (Php 2:12).
 - (1) **Php 2:12** 12 ...My beloved, as you have always obeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation....
- b. They are Paul's joy and crown (Php 4:1).
 - (1) **Php 4:1** 1 Therefore, my brothers, whom I love and long for, my joy and crown....

8. The Philippians are experiencing some disunity.

- a. Euodia and Syntyche, Paul's co-labourers, are disagreeing about something (Php 4:2).
 - (1) **Php 4:2** 2 I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord.
- b. Paul wants Epaphroditus to be a peacemaker between them (Php 4:3).
 - (1) **Php 4:3** 3 Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women....
- c. Paul emphasises unity throughout the letter (Php 1:27, 2:2).
 - (1) **Php 1:27** 27 ...I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel....
 - (2) **Php 2:2** 2 ...Complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind.

9. The Philippians are engaged in conflict, just like Paul.

- a. They have opponents who are trying to frighten them (Php 1:28).
 - (1) **Php 1:28** 28 ...Not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is a clear sign to them of their destruction, but of your salvation, and that from God.
- b. They are suffering for Jesus' sake.
 - (1) **Php 1:29** 29 ..It has been granted to you [Philippians] that for the sake of Messiah you should not only believe in him but also suffer for his sake....
- c. They are threatened by Jewish legalists (Php 3:2).
 - (1) **Php 3:2** 2 Look out for the dogs, look out for the evildoers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh.
- d. Many around them walk as enemies of the cross of Messiah (Php 3:18).
 - (1) **Php 3:18** 18 For many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Messiah.

10. Above all, Paul wants the Philippians to advance to spiritual maturity.

- a. He wants them to be pure and blameless for the day of Messiah (Php 1:9-10).
 - (1) **Php 1:9-10** 9 ...It is my prayer that your love may abound more and more, with knowledge and all discernment, 10 so that you may approve what is excellent, and so be pure and blameless for the day of Messiah....
- b. They are to live lives worthy of the gospel (Php 1:27).
 - (1) **Php 1:27** 27 Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Messiah, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel....

- c. They are to be without blemish in the midst of a crooked generation (Php 2:15).
 - (1) **Php 2:14-16** 14 Do all things without grumbling or disputing, 15 that you may be blameless and innocent, children of God without blemish in the midst of a crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world.
- d. They are to press on toward the goal of knowing Jesus experientially (Php 3:14-17).
 - (1) **Php 3:14-16** 14 ...I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Messiah Jesus. 15 Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you. 16 Only let us hold true to what we have attained.
- e. They are to imitate Paul and others like him (Php 3:17, 4:9).
 - (1) **Php 3:17** 17 Brothers and sisters, join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk according to the example you have in us.
 - (2) **Php 4:9** 9 What you have learned, received, heard, and seen in me—practice these things, and the God of peace will be with you.