

Introducing Philippians

"Rejoice in the Lord always," the author of Philippians exhorts us, "I will say it again: Rejoice!" Coming from most people, such words might sound trite and simplistic, but this is the apostle Paul speaking, a man who was not writing from a padded-leather office chair surrounded by books on how to be happy. On the contrary, he was a prisoner awaiting news that could result in his death. It isn't hard to get behind the words of Philippians and see the tension and uncertainty there. Yet through all this we see the example of a man whose life is filled with joy.

As we study Philippians, we discover Paul's secret: that a life lived for the glory of God will overflow with joy. What a message for our hurting world!

Philippi was an important city because it straddled the great east-west highway known as the Egnatian Way. The population of this city was cosmopolitan, being made up of Tracians, Greeks, Romans and a few Jews. In the center of the city was a large forum surrounded by temples, a library, fountains, monuments and public baths.

In 42 B.C. Antony and Octavia defeated Brutus and Cassius near Philippi. In honor of his victory, Antony made Philippi a Roman colony. This provided the Philippians with special rights and privileges as Roman citizens, and they responded with a great deal of pride and loyalty. Women enjoyed a high status in Philippi—taking an active part in both public and business life. Because of this, women also had important responsibilities in the Philippian church.

Paul founded this church sometime around the year A.D. 50, during his second missionary journey (Acts 16:12-40). From the letter to the Philippians we learn that this church was taking its share of suffering (1:29), it was in some danger of division (1:27; 2:2; 4:2), it may have been leaning toward a doctrine of perfectionism (3:12-13), and it was threatened by the teaching of Judaizers—a group which insisted that all Christians adhere to Jewish laws and customs. But despite these problems, Paul's love for this church was obvious. He sincerely rejoiced at the progress they were making.

We know that Paul was writing to the Philippians from prison (1:12-14). Unfortunately, it is not clear which prison he was writing from. If he was writing during his imprisonment in Rome, then the letter can be dated sometime between A.D. 61-63. However, many scholars have pointed out that the conditions which Paul describes seem much harsher than what we know of the Roman imprisonment (Acts 28:16, 30-31). It could be that there was an earlier imprisonment not recorded in Acts. A good case has been made for Ephesus. If this is true, Philippians would have been written about A.D. 54.

Paul had several reasons for writing this letter. He wanted to explain why he was sending a man named Epaphroditus back to Philippi. He also wanted to thank the Philippians for the gift of money they had sent and to reassure his friends of his condition. Also, the news Paul had received concerning the Philippians made him long to encourage and advise a church he loved.

I hope that these quiet times will help you learn and apply Paul's secret to joyful living.

About These Questions

These are questions on the biblical text of Philippians. [Click here to find an EasyEnglish translation of Philippians.](#)

We hope that these questions will help you to understand the text. We also want to help you use the text in real life. These questions are not examination questions with right or wrong answers.

Chapter 1

- 1:1 Describe the groups of people that Paul and Timothy write to.
- 1:2 Explain 'grace' and 'peace' in your own words.
- 1:3 What does Paul show us about his relationship to God in this verse?
- 1:4 Who does Paul pray to God for?
- 1:5 In what ways can you help your Christian teachers?
- 1:6 What does Paul say that God will continue to do?
- 1:7 How may you share with your Christian teachers in their work?
- 1:8 In what ways is Paul's love for the Philippians special?
- 1:9 In what ways does Paul want the Philippians' love to increase?
- 1:10 Why does Paul want the Philippians' love to increase?
- 1:11 What is the main reason that you should want to have true goodness?
- 1:12 What has helped the *gospel to advance?
- 1:13 Why was Paul in prison?
- 1:14 Some good things have happened because Paul is in prison. What are they?
- 1:15 How can you speak about Christ for the wrong reasons?
- 1:16 What work does Paul say that God has given to him?
- 1:17 There are people who *preach about Christ from selfish ambition. What result do they want?
- 1:18 Why does Paul not care if people talk about Christ for the wrong reasons?
- 1:19 What two powerful things did Paul know about that made him happy?
- 1:20 In this verse, Paul says that he hoped for three things. What are they?
- 1:21 Is what Paul says true for you? In what ways is it true?
- 1:22 What were the reasons why Paul might choose to remain alive?
- 1:23 Why might Paul want to die?
- 1:24 Who is Paul especially thinking about?
- 1:25 How did Paul expect to be able to help the Philippians?
- 1:26 What should be the main result of Paul's planned visit?
- 1:27 Paul wants the Philippians to behave in a different way. How?
- 1:28 What will the courage of the Philippians show to their *opponents?
- 1:29 What honours have the Philippian Christians received?
- 1:30 Paul writes about a battle. Is that battle over yet, do you think? If not, how are you part of it?

Chapter 2

- 2:1 Paul give a list of the benefits when someone is a Christian. What are they?
- 2:2 What would happen if the Philippians agreed with each other with the same love?
- 2:3 What should Christians not do?
- 2:4 How should believers' behaviour be different from other peoples' behaviour?
- 2:5 How would you know you that you have the right attitude?
- 2:6 How is Jesus Christ always God?
- 2:7 What did Jesus do to appear as a man?
- 2:8 How did Jesus show that he was humble?
- 2:9 What is Paul referring to when he says 'For this reason'?
- 2:10 How may you give back proper honour to Jesus' name?
- 2:11 Do you declare that Jesus is *Lord? If you do, who does it honour?
- 2:12 What must be your attitude as you work out your own *salvation? How will other people see that this is true about you?
- 2:13 If you believe verse 13, what will be your attitude to your actions? What will other people notice?
- 2:14 How do you complain and argue? What can you do instead that would please God?
- 2:15 What are God's purposes for his children?
- 2:16 How does Paul want the Philippians to behave? Why does he want that?
- 2:17 What would Paul do gladly in order to help the *faith of the Philippians?
- 2:18 Write a list of all the reasons why the Philippians should share Paul's joy.
- 2:19 What does this verse tell you about Paul's trust in God?
- 2:20 Do you have the same kind of care for the *spiritual health of new Christians as Paul did? How do you know?
- 2:21 Why does Paul say that most people would not be able to help the Philippians?
- 2:22 Paul says that the Philippians know about Timothy's value as a Christian teacher. What evidence does Paul give?
- 2:23 Why did Paul not send Timothy immediately?
- 2:24 What difference might it make that Paul trusts the *Lord for his plans?
- 2:25 How does Paul speak about Epaphroditus? How would that help the Philippians to welcome Epaphroditus?
- 2:26 Why was Epaphroditus upset?
- 2:27 Who healed Epaphroditus?
- 2:28 Why is Paul sending Epaphroditus back to the Philippians?
- 2:29 Suppose that a person comes to help with the Christian work in your region. How do you need to receive that person? How do you need to support a person that you have sent to help in another region?
- 2:30 What did Epaphroditus do for Paul? How is that a picture of what Christ has done for us?

Chapter 3

3:1 Why does Paul say that he is writing the same things again? What is he writing again?

3:2 If you take notice of this verse, what difference will people see in your behaviour?

3:3 What is special about the kind of *worship that Christians should give to God?

3:4 Paul had human advantages that he could have trusted in. How does it help you to know that?

3:5 If you know these facts about Paul, how can it help you?

3:6 In what ways was Paul very good at the *Jewish religion?

3:7 Paul mentions his advantages in verses 5 and 6. Why does he say here that those advantages are worth nothing?

3:8 How do you compare your knowledge of Christ with all the other things in your life?

3:9 The law of Moses cannot make us right with God. What is the way to get a right relationship with Christ?

3:10 In what ways did Paul want to 'know' Christ?

3:11 How would you qualify for Christ to raise you from the dead?

3:12 What ideas does Paul's attitude give you that you might copy?

3:13 What should you do that Paul was doing?

3:14 Paul thinks that the Christian life is like a race. What must you do to win your 'race'?

3:15 In what ways do you have Paul's attitude?

3:16 Explain this verse in your own words.

3:17 Where should you look for an example of how to live?

3:18 Why did Paul cry when he told the Philippians about these people?

3:19 How does Paul describe people who live like enemies of the cross of Christ?

3:20 As citizens of heaven, how do you need to be?

3:21 What difference does it make to know the change in your body that will happen?

Chapter 4

4:1 How do you show your care for new Christians who live away from you?

4:2 How does Paul want Euodia and Syntyche to agree?

4:3 Why should Paul's companion work to help the women?

4:4 What does Paul tell the believers to do, whatever their circumstances?

4:5 How does Paul want Christians to behave?

4:6 What should you tell God about? Why should you do that?

4:7 What will be the effect of God's peace on your other experiences in life?

4:8 What does Paul say that you should think about?

4:9 How had Paul taught the Philippians?

4:10 How would you feel if Paul had said all this to you?

4:11 How had Paul learned to be in every circumstance?

4:12 What was it that Paul had to learn? How was he able to learn it?

4:13 What was Paul ready for? How was he able to be ready?

4:14 How did Paul show the Philippians that they had done well?

4:15 What had the Philippian church been the only church to do? Why did Paul tell the Philippians about that?

4:16 Would one gift have been enough for Paul? What would the Philippians have lost if they had given only once?

4:17 What did Paul want for the Philippians?

4:18 What made Paul so happy to receive the gifts that Epaphroditus had brought?

4:19 How would you tell someone about what God will supply?

4:20 Who should have great honour and *worship?

4:21 Who does Paul greet? Whose greetings does Paul send?

4:22 How might the Christians in Caesar's *household have heard the good news?

4:23 What is different when you have the grace of the *Lord Jesus Christ?