Philippians

I. Introduction

Philippians is the 11th book of the New Testament and 6th among those authored by Paul.

Philippians is part of the books most commonly called “Epistles” a word meaning “letter.”

· These books constitute the major doctrinal section of the NT

· Each of these books was written to a church or individuals to instruct them in who God is, and how to effectively live for Him and serve Him Galatians begins a series of shorter letters that can easily be read in one sitting over a cup of coffee.

The epistles are not written in chronological order.

Paul while in prison wrote Philippians shortly after the conclusion of the book of Acts.

Philippians along with Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon are commonly referred to as the “Prison Epistles” because they were all penned while Paul was incarcerated.

It is commonly believed that Paul wrote these from a prison cell in Rome at the close of the book of Acts. Others have suggested that they may have been written while Paul was being held in Caesarea prior to being sent to Rome. Either way, the fact that Paul is chained to a guard will shed some interesting light upon these letters.

Consider the following verses in light of the fact Paul was in prison.

Philippians 4:4 “Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!”

Philippians 4:1”Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content:”

This is only possible if contentment is in the Lord and not in circumstances

II. Setting

A. Background

At the close of the Jerusalem counsel, recorded in Acts 15, Paul and Barnabas determined once again to head out on what would be their second missionary endeavor. Their plans were interrupted when they could not agree on whether John Mark would accompany them. As a result the two missionaries split up; Barnabas taking Mark and going to Cyprus and Paul returning to Galatia with Silas. (It was on this trip that young Timothy joined them.)

After visiting the churches in Galatia and determined to take the Gospel to unreached people groups, the 3 missionaries began to head South from Galatian toward Ephesus. They journey was interrupted when the Holy Spirit forbid them to continue so they turned north toward Bithynia but were once again hindered by the Lord. Undaunted by the change in plans they continued west until they arrived at the end of the road and at the shore of Troas. It was here that Paul received a vision from heaven directing him to Greece.

> Acts 16:9 "And a vision appeared to Paul in the night. A man of Macedonia stood and pleaded with him, saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us."

I have never had a vision calling me to ministry in a foreign land. If I did I think I would have very high expectations of what the Lord was going to do.

We read earlier in Acts of a time when Philip was in Samaria and sent word to the Apostles for help. The reason he needed them was because of the vast number of people who were coming to Christ in what must have seemed like droves.

> I imagine Paul might have had expectations of great things being done as he made his way to Greece.

In light of this it is very interesting to read through the account in Acts 16 of Paul's ministry in Philippi. It is marked by difficulty and seemingly very little fruit.

We read of a few women coming to Christ as well as a jailer and his

family

This is all done at the expense of a brutal beating and a night spent in prison

> What Paul does not know is that when he crossed the Aegean Sea and carried the Gospel to Greece, world history would forever be changed.
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> > His ministry in Greece was the first time the Gospel reached Europe. From these small beginnings a continent would be transformed and the world would continue to be impacted for centuries by believers stemming from Europe.

B. Letter

We now find Paul, perhaps 10 years later writing a letter to a maturing church. From the days of small beginnings this church has grown into a church consisting of Saints, Bishops and deacons as well as a church that is having impact well beyond its boarders.

Philippians 1:1 "Paul and Timothy, bondservants of Jesus Christ, To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, with the bishops and deacons:"

- Saint – Hagios – holy ones; this is the second most common term used in Scripture for Christians. It refers to our condition because we have trusted in the finished work of Christ.
- Bishop – episkopos – over seer; this refers to those who serve in pastoral ministry
- Deacon – diakonos – servant; this refers to those who do the labor that makes the ministry possible. In NT times they served food to widows, in modern

Philippians 4:16 "For even in Thessalonica you sent *aid* once and again for my necessities."

I. Situation

Why Paul wrote the letter

1. Reflect upon what God has done
2. Thank them for their involvement in his ministry

Philippians 4:16 “For even in Thessalonica you sent *aid* once and again for my necessities.”

Paul only remained in Philippi for a short time, then made his way to Thessalonica. While there these few believers pooled their finances and sent aid to Paul as he ventured out with the Gospel.

This passage gives us valuable insight into the reason for giving to the church.

Philippians 4:17 “Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account.”

Too often giving is presented in a way that makes it look as though God were either broke or at least dependent upon us. If we value a ministry and want to see it continue we should at least consider becoming a financial partner. Paul suggests an entirely different reason for giving, he refers not to the work that will be accomplished through the money but the fruit that will be born in the life of the giver.

- Fruit is born when we are willing to trust God financially
- Fruit is also a reference to eternal rewards stored up in heaven for those who invest in the kingdom of God.

3. To teach us the proper way for us to think as believers in Christ

Philippians 4:2 “I implore Euodia and I implore Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord.”

Eudia and Syntyche are 2 women who once served Christ but that service has been hindered by a personal conflict between the two of them. There disagreement has become so great that it has captured the attention of the apostle who exhorts them to change their way of thinking for the sake of the Kingdom

The Book of Philippians gives some valuable insight into what the church is.

When God sought to describe who we are as a community of believers He used terms like:

Church – ecclesia – this is a compound word meaning "called out ones" and speaks of the fact that all believers are sinners saved by grace and called to live lives distinct from the cultures that surround us

Body – this speaks to the truth that we are all in this together. NO one believer can or should attempt to live in isolation from others.

The body is one, made up of many different parts and functions when each member does its part.

The problem with this concept is that each of us in one way or another is dysfunctional.

The body of Christ is a body where not a single member functions the way it should. We are all incomplete and broken in one way or another

The book of Philippians was written to deal with the problems that arise within the church because it is filled with incomplete and broken people.

To address the problem Paul will speak considerably about the mind. He wants us to learn how to think properly

How are we to think about one another?

A. We need to think properly toward others in the body?

Philippians 1:3-4 "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, always in every prayer of mine making request for you all with joy,"

a. Paul thanks God for what God has accomplished in their life
b. Paul prays for what has not yet been accomplished.

If we are going to get along we must look at others and thank God for what has been accomplished in them while looking to heaven

to finish the job.

Philippians 1:6 "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;"

Here is what happens in the church; a broken Christian does something wrong to unfinished Christian and we react unlike Christ.

When Jesus was mistreated he was silent as a lamb before His shearers. Instead of being silent we often lash out at the broken one showing that we have a whole lot of growing to do to become like Christ

Proper way to think about others is to remember that we are all broken and undone

B. We need to think properly toward the church?

Philippians 1:12-14 "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 to 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."

Paul is all about the furtherance of the Gospel.

- Philippi was started as a missionary endeavor
- Philippians joined Paul in the effort to reach other for the kingdom of God

It is important to keep in mind that purpose of the church on earth

1. Proclaim the Gospel to the unsaved
2. To disciple those who come to faith in Christ
3. To train up leaders to continue the ministry

One problem that causes difficulty in the church is that we forget the purpose of the church and think that the church is here to meet our needs, or to be a place to meet people or to have a stage where we can showcase our gifts. When these are not met we often become disillusioned and look for a new church or remove ourselves from church all together.

It is important to remember the church does not exist for you to have your needs met but that you are joining into the work of the Lord that He wants to accomplish in the world

The proper way to think about the church is that its purpose is to proclaim the Gospel.

C. We need to think properly toward ourselves?

This subject is addressed in Philippians 2

Phil 2:1-4

Paul says the solution is to have the mind of Christ. Taking the low place and serving others demonstrate this

The proper way think about ourselves is that we are to have the mind of Christ

D. We need to think properly toward life

Philippians 3:12 "Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me."

My life is that I am fixing my eyes on Jesus and moving ahead in life

Some let their past failures hold them back like anchors from ever moving ahead in the Lord.

Others allow past victories to keep them from moving ahead. A mission trip in the past may have been a great experience but it cannot be the highlight of your Christian experience. You must move on and move forward.

The proper way to think about life is that it is to be lived by moving ever closer to Christ

We need to think properly – just think.

Phil 4:8

II. This book is filled with great promises.

1:6

1:21

4:6

Our country is plagued with anxiety and the book of Philippians gives us the solution to the problem