

PHILIPPIANS

The Epistle of

Joy



The Epistle of Joy

“For The Furtherance of the Gospel”

Philippians 1:12-26

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The Apostle Paul started the first Christian Church at Philippi on his second missionary journey.

- God opened the hearts of Lydia and her family, as well as the Jailer and his family, to believe the gospel message the Apostle Paul was preaching and to receive Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord, becoming the first converts in Europe.
- God also used Paul’s deliverance of a young girl from demon possession and the massive earthquake that set him and Silas free from prison to convince many people of the authenticity of Paul’s ministry among them.
- Paul and his mission team stayed in Philippi for a few months, and then they traveled to Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, and Corinth, where Paul took a brief rest before launching out on his third missionary journey to Galatia, Phrygia, Ephesus, Macedonia, Greece, and then back to Jerusalem.

Over these years, the church at Philippi supported the Apostle Paul personally and his mission financially.

- In Philippians 4:15, Paul said no other church had done as much for him and his ministry as the church at Philippi, which is why Paul had a special place in his heart for them.
- However, what inspired Paul to write this letter was that the Philippians church had not only sent Paul another love gift but they had also sent Epaphroditus to be Paul's servant for as long as he needed him.
- Paul was so moved by their love and support that he wrote this letter, to which theologians refer as "The Epistle of Joy."
- Paul commended them for living a life worthy of the gospel that Jesus had died to give to them and of the gospel that he had proclaimed to him. By praying for him, and supporting him, they were assisting him in the furtherance of the gospel.

In Philippians 1:9-11, Paul described the characteristics of a life worthy of the gospel. Paul prayed that the Christians at Philippi would have the knowledge and discernment to:

- **Approve the things that are excellent.**
- **Be sincere and without offense till the day of Christ.**
- **Be filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ, so as to live to the glory and praise of God.**

1. The Circumstances of Paul's Ministry were according to the Sovereign Will of God – Verses 12-14 – Verse 12 – *"But I want you to know, brethren, the things which happened to me have turned out for the furtherance of the gospel."*

- Paul's heart's desire was to establish the base of his ministry in Rome, so that he could eventually reach into Spain with the message of the gospel.
- After being arrested in Jerusalem and imprisoned in Caesarea for two years, Paul was sent to Rome, where he was placed under house arrest and guarded each day.
- Paul said, under the circumstances, it might appear to the Philippians that his ministry had been hindered, but not so – in fact, God had used his incarceration for the advancement of the gospel to the people of Rome.

2. The Effectiveness of Paul's Ministry was Under the Authority of God – Verses 13-14 – *"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."*

First, to those outside the Church – the palace guard and those with whom they came in contact.

- Not being charged with a specific crime, Paul was placed in a private home but chained to a Roman guard 24-hours a day.
- In Acts 28:30, Luke said Paul was allowed to receive everyone who came to him, and he was free to preach the gospel and to give spiritual leadership to those who were in the Church at Rome.
- Seeing the effectiveness of his ministry, it became obvious to Paul and to those who visited with him that rather than being falsely imprisoned by the Roman Government, Paul was in prison for the **"cause of Christ."**

- The Greek word for “chains” is “halusis,” which describes a set of handcuffs with an 18-inch chain.



“As Paul was chained to the guard, so was the guard chained to Paul, so each time Paul shared the gospel, or explained some point of doctrine to a believer, the guards also heard it.”

- The whole Praetorian guard was being evangelized one guard at a time, not only by hearing the gospel from Paul’s lips, but more importantly, by observing the gospel of Paul’s life.
- The guards would discuss what they had seen and heard with the other guards back at the barracks, or at home with their families.
- Paul became known as the man who was in prison for the **“cause of Christ,”** and his zeal to share the gospel proved the truth of his message.

Second, to those within the church at Rome – *“the brethren of the Lord.”*

- The implication is that before Paul’s imprisonment, even the pastors and leaders of the local congregations were afraid to share the gospel openly, for there was open hostility toward those who had converted to Christianity because their way of life was making a difference in the culture.
- However, when they saw Paul’s boldness in preaching the gospel and the effect it was having on the Praetorian guards and on those with whom they associated, they became bolder in their witness, and the Christian Church in Rome began to grow beyond Nero’s methods to contain it.
- Therefore, Paul’s strength became their strength, Paul’s courage became their courage, and Paul’s boldness became their boldness, and they began to proclaim the word of the Lord without fear.

The Apostle Paul spent two years in a dungeon of a prison in the city of Caesarea and two more years in Rome under house arrest and chained to a Roman soldier, not knowing from day to day if he was going to be released or executed, yet he is the perfect model of the definition of real joy. Why?

- His joy was not related to his freedom.
- His joy was not related to his comfort.
- His joy was not related to his vanity or pride.
- His joy was not related to his success.

- His joy was not related to his reputation.
- Paul's joy was based upon ***"the furtherance of the gospel."***
- Philippians 1:18 – ***"Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is preached; and in this I rejoice, yes, and will rejoice."***
- The chains Satan thought would bind Paul from accomplishing his mission became the very channels through which the gospel was reaching those who had direct access to Caesar's Palace.
- Philippians 4:21-22 – ***"Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. The brethren who are with me greet you. All the saints greet you, but especially those who are of Caesar's household."***