THE R.U.S.H. BIBLE STUDY

PHILIPPIANS

KNOW WHAT YOU'RE TALKING ABOUT FAST

DREAM CITY CHURCH

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Philippians
An encouraging letter to the church of Philippi from Paul, telling them how to have joy in Christ.
Author: Paul

In Philippians – Jesus is our Joy

Philippians 4:19 **"My God will meet all your needs according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus."**

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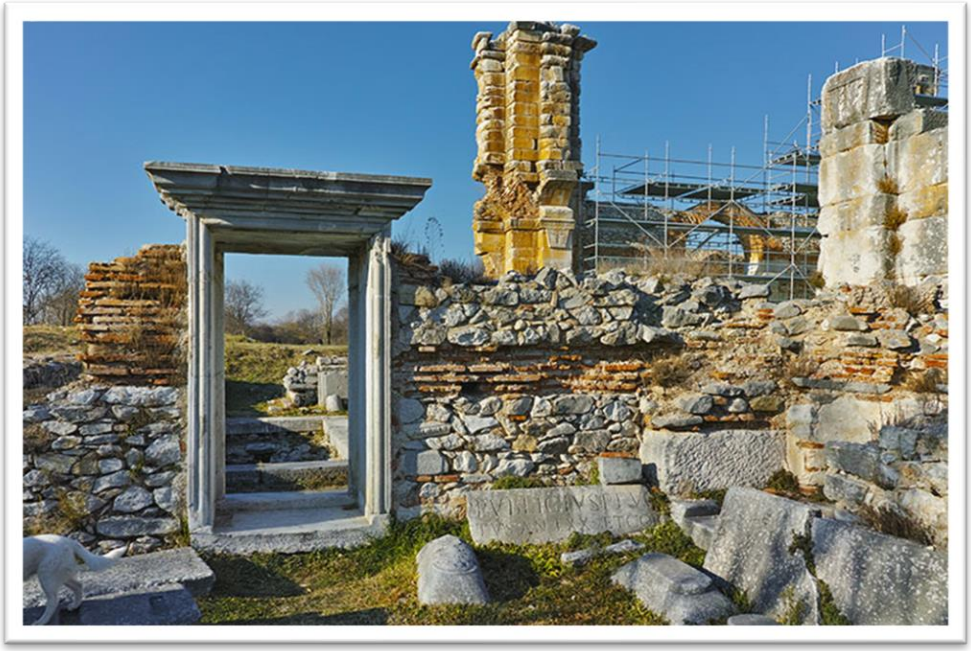
Basilica in the archeological area of ancient Philippi, Greece



Above: Ruins of a Christian church dating from 550 AD, known as Basilica B, Philippi, Greece
It was built on top of an earlier church that was less conspicuous.

The most instructive source with regard to the church and the development of Christianity in Philippi in the second century is Polycarp's epistle to the Philippians around AD 160 which we have mentioned in the R.B.S. on occasion when discussing Foxes book of martyrs. Polycarp was a bishop in Smyrna in the first decades of the second century. He was also a disciple of the Apostle John, and thus became the meddler for the Johannian tradition to flourish at Philippi. In one inscription, possibly from a cemetery, a certain Simon from Smyrna is mentioned. Elsewhere in his epistle, Polycarp reminded the Philippians of some people from their midst who had died because of their belief in Christ, (Polycarp, Phlp1:1; 9:1). These words show that the group of believers constituted a clearly identifiable community and that they had in some way or another achieved relative autonomy in regard to the Roman authorities. In any case, it is clear that the Christian community in Philippi did not practice their Christianity in secret, even though the new religion was still banned within the Roman Empire.

Later (around 200AD), Tertullian (an important early church leader and theologian who was responsible for the use of Latin in church so the romans could understand the Gospel) mentioned the church of Philippi along with the churches of Corinth, Rome and Ephesus as paragons, where the real apostolic epistles were read.

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TEACHER: 4 CHAPTERS

Philippi is in the region of Macedonia, near the border with Thrace in Greece. This was the 1st church in Europe!

This is one of four letters Paul wrote while under arrest. For this reason it is listed as 1 of the "Prison Epistles"

along with Ephesians Colossians and Philemon. Paul planted the church on his second missionary trip. He was in Asia Minor, and was planning to go to Bithynia, but the Spirit of God redirected him to Macedonia. (Acts 16). Philippi was a large city, prestigious, and was named after Philip of Macedonia, the father of Alexander the Great. On the journey Paul meets Timothy, converts him, baptizes him, and he joins Paul and Silas, then as they pass through Troas, Luke joins them and they plant the church in Philippi. Several years later, Paul is under arrest and hasn't been able to see them for a while, so he writes them this letter. Let's read.

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STUDENT:

CH. 1

From Paul and Timothy, servants of Christ Jesus—
To all God's people in Philippi who are in union with Christ Jesus, including the church leaders and helpers:
2 May God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ give you grace and peace. (GNT)

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TEACHER:

So with Paul being in prison, he knew the church would be worried about him, and the 1st thing he does is wish them grace, (the undeserved favor of God), and peace.

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STUDENT:

3 I thank my God for you every time I think of you; 4 and every time I pray for you all, I pray with joy 5 because of the way in which you have helped me in the work of the gospel from the very first day until now. 6 And so I am sure that God, who began this good work in you, will carry it on until it is finished on the Day of Christ Jesus. 7 You are always in my heart! And so it is only right for me to feel as I do about you. For you have all shared with me in this privilege that God has given me, both now that I am in prison and also while I was free to defend the gospel and establish it firmly. 8 God is my witness that I tell the truth when I say that my deep feeling for you all comes from the heart of Christ Jesus himself. (GNT)

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TEACHER:

Paul continues by encouraging them to grow more and more in Christ for God's glory.

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STUDENT:

9 I pray that your love will keep on growing more and more, together with true knowledge and perfect judgment, 10 so that you will be able to choose what is best. Then you will be free from all impurity and blame on the Day of Christ.
11 Your lives will be filled with the truly good qualities which only Jesus Christ can produce, for the glory and praise of God. (GNT)

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TEACHER:

Paul is really good at praying. He prays for:

1. **Growing love**
2. **Knowledge**
3. **Perfect judgement**
4. **Wise choices**

He then explains how even his arrest has been for God's glory.

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STUDENT:

12 I want you to know, my friends, that the things that have happened to me have really helped the progress of the gospel. 13 As a result, the whole palace guard and all the others here know that I am in prison because I am a servant of Christ. 14 And my being in prison has given most of the believers more confidence in the Lord, so that they grow bolder all the time to preach the message fearlessly.

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STUDENT:

15 Of course some of them preach Christ because they are jealous and quarrelsome, but others from genuine good will. 16 These do so from love, because they know that God has given me the work of defending the gospel. 17 The others do not proclaim Christ sincerely, but from a spirit of selfish ambition; they think that they will make more trouble for me while I am in prison.

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STUDENT:

18 It does not matter! I am happy about it—just so Christ is preached in every way possible, whether from wrong or right motives. And I will continue to be happy, 19 because I know that by means of your prayers and the help which comes from the Spirit of Jesus Christ I shall be set free. (GNT)

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TEACHER:

I love Paul. I see so many preachers slam other preachers on social media and I hate it. Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul says *"It doesn't matter what the motive is, as long as Jesus is preached"* in v. 18. And not only that it doesn't matter, but he is *happy* about it. When I see it on social media, it is almost always against prosperity preachers. Do they really think God wants people to preach the "poverty Gospel?"

And when they get a blessing, do you think for a second that they don't thank God?

Rather than pray for freedom, which is probably what I would have done, Paul prays for courage.

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STUDENT:

20 My deep desire and hope is that I shall never fail in my duty, but that at all times, and especially right now, I shall be full of courage, so that with my whole being I shall bring honor to Christ, whether I live or die. 21 For what is life? To me, it is Christ. Death, then, will bring more. 22 But if by continuing to live I can do more worthwhile work, then I am not sure which I should choose. 23 I am pulled in two directions. I want very much to leave this life and be with Christ, which is a far better thing; 24 but for your sake it is much more important that I remain alive. 25 I am sure of this, and so I know that I will stay. (GNT)

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TEACHER:

I like the way the King James Version puts that 21st verse. "To live is Christ, to die is gain."

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STUDENT:

27 Now, the important thing is that your way of life should be as the gospel of Christ requires, so that, whether or not I am able to go and see you, I will hear that you are standing firm with one common purpose and that with only one desire you are fighting together for the faith of the gospel. 28 Don't be afraid of your enemies; always be courageous, and this will prove to them that they will lose and that you will win, because it is God who gives you the victory. 29 For you have been given the privilege of serving Christ, not only by believing in him, but also by suffering for him. 30 Now you can take part with me in the battle. It is the same battle you saw me fighting in the past, and as you hear, the one I am fighting still. (GNT)

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TEACHER:

In chapter 2 Paul starts by encouraging them to grow in unity.

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STUDENT:

CH. 2

Your life in Christ makes you strong, and his love comforts you. You have fellowship with the Spirit, and you have kindness and compassion for one another. [2] I urge you, then, to make me completely happy by having the same thoughts, sharing the same love, and being one in soul and mind. [3] Don't do anything from selfish ambition or from a cheap desire to boast, but be humble toward one another, always considering others better than yourselves. [4] And look out for one another's interests, not just for your own. (GNT)

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TEACHER:

Paul says a startling phrase in verse 3,"*always considering others better than yourselves.*" How do you reconcile this with the current culture of promoting high self-esteem? In the King James Version it says "let each esteem others as better than themselves." Paul, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, tells us to esteem everyone as better than we are. He not only tells us to do this, but he does it himself as well. In 1 Timothy 1:15 he says "Christ came to save sinners, of whom I am the worst." The King James says "of whom I am chief." Notice carefully, he does not say I "was" chief among sinners, he says I "am" chief among sinners. Paul allows no wiggle room for this assertion by using Christ as his example. He points out that Christ, who is God, humbled Himself.

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STUDENT:

[6] He always had the nature of God,
but he did not think that by force he should try to remain equal with God.
[7] Instead of this, of his own free will he gave up all he had, and took the nature of a servant.
He became like a human being and appeared in human likeness.
[8] He was humble and walked the path of obedience all the way to death—
his death on the cross. [9] For this reason God raised him to the highest place above
and gave him the name that is greater than any other name.
[10] And so, in honor of the name of Jesus all beings in heaven, on earth, and in the world below
will fall on their knees, [11] and all will openly proclaim that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father. (GNT)

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TEACHER:

So Jesus ALWAYS had the nature of God, but divested himself of all He had, for our good. If we are His followers, we should be willing to do the same, and all this, to the glory of our Heavenly Father. Paul next deals with a Godly attitude. He strongly implies that this is a requirement of innocence and purity.

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STUDENT:

[14] Do everything without complaining or arguing, [15] so that you may be innocent and pure as God's perfect children, who live in a world of corrupt and sinful people. You must shine among them like stars lighting up the sky, [16] as you offer them the message of life. If you do so, I shall have reason to be proud of you on the Day of Christ, because it will show that all my effort and work have not been wasted.
[17] Perhaps my life's blood is to be poured out like an offering on the sacrifice that your faith offers to God. If that is so, I am glad and share my joy with you all. [18] In the same way, you too must be glad and share your joy with me. (GNT)

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TEACHER:

Next Paul tells them of his plans for them regarding Timothy, who they know very well.

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STUDENT:

[19] If it is the Lord's will, I hope that I will be able to send Timothy to you soon, so that I may be encouraged by news about you. [20] He is the only one who shares my feelings and who really cares about you. [21] Everyone else is concerned only with their own affairs, not with the cause of Jesus Christ. [22] And you yourselves know how he has proved his worth, how he and I, like a son and his father, have worked together for the sake of the gospel. [23] So I hope to send him to you as soon as I know how things are going to turn out for me. [24] And I trust in the Lord that I myself will be able to come to you soon. (GNT)

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TEACHER:

Epaphroditus, mentioned in this next segment, was the messenger who delivered the original epistle. This church in Philippi was his home church, and they sent him to serve with Paul. In that service Epaphroditus becomes deathly ill. He was chosen to deliver the letter so the Philippians could see that he had recovered.

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STUDENT:

[25] I have thought it necessary to send to you our brother Epaphroditus, who has worked and fought by my side and who has served as your messenger in helping me. [26] He is anxious to see you all and is very upset because you had heard that he was sick. [27] Indeed he was sick and almost died. But God had pity on him, and not only on him but on me, too, and spared me an even greater sorrow. [28] I am all the more eager, then, to send him to you, so that you will be glad again when you see him, and my own sorrow will disappear. [29] Receive him, then, with joy, as a believer in the Lord. Show respect to all such people as he, [30] because he risked his life and nearly died for the sake of the work of Christ, in order to give me the help that you yourselves could not give. (GNT)

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TEACHER:

We are ½ through this short letter, and Paul repeats warnings from earlier correspondence about false teachers who were promoting circumcision, which was often taught by the Jews, to Gentile converts. Chapter 3.

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STUDENT:

CH. 3

In conclusion, my friends, be joyful in your union with the Lord. I don't mind repeating what I have written before, and you will be safer if I do so. [2] Watch out for those who do evil things, those dogs, those who insist on cutting the body. [3] It is we, not they, who have received the true circumcision, for we worship God by means of his Spirit and rejoice in our life in union with Christ Jesus. We do not put any trust in external ceremonies. (GNT)

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TEACHER:

Paul shares his Jewish pedigree, to prove to any nay-sayers, that he was a better Jew than any of them, and how he counts it all a loss for Christ.

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STUDENT:

[5] I was circumcised when I was a week old. I am an Israelite by birth, of the tribe of Benjamin, a pure-blooded Hebrew. As far as keeping the Jewish Law is concerned, I was a Pharisee, [6] and I was so zealous that I persecuted the church. As far as a person can be righteous by obeying the commands of the Law, I was without fault.

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STUDENT:

7 But all those things that I might count as profit I now reckon as loss for Christ's sake. 8 Not only those things; I reckon everything as complete loss for the sake of what is so much more valuable, the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have thrown everything away; I consider it all as mere garbage, so that I may gain Christ 9 and be completely united with him. (GNT)

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STUDENT:

I no longer have a righteousness of my own, the kind that is gained by obeying the Law. I now have the righteousness that is given through faith in Christ, the righteousness that comes from God and is based on faith. 10 All I want is to know Christ and to experience the power of his resurrection, to share in his sufferings and become like him in his death, 11 in the hope that I myself will be raised from death to life. (GNT)

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TEACHER:

As Paul continues, he clarifies his viewpoint. He will not quit trying to improve.

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STUDENT:

12 I do not claim that I have already succeeded or have already become perfect. I keep striving to win the prize for which Christ Jesus has already won me to himself. 13 Of course, my friends, I really do not think that I have already won it; the one thing I do, however, is to forget what is behind me and do my best to reach what is ahead. 14 So I run straight toward the goal in order to win the prize, which is God's call through Christ Jesus to the life above. (GNT)

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TEACHER:

That is the golden ticket.

I have found in my life Satan tries to discourage me, get me to quit, from 2 different angles.

1st **He tries to stop me from moving forward in Christ by reminding me of things I have done.**
My past. True things. Sins I have committed.

2nd **He tries to get me to doubt the future. That God won't stick with me for some reason or another.**
That my past sins, or current struggles make me not worth the trouble. God will find someone better.

Paul was fighting the same battles with our common enemy that I battle with. And under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Paul writes his solution. It is the only solution I employ, and it is my advice to you.

"Forget the past, and do your best to reach toward what is ahead" from v. 13.

Paul delivers a dire ending for some of his countrymen, and a glorious ending for those of us who love the Lord.

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STUDENT:

18 I have told you this many times before, and now I repeat it with tears: there are many whose lives make them enemies of Christ's death on the cross. 19 They are going to end up in hell, because their god is their bodily desires. They are proud of what they should be ashamed of, and they think only of things that belong to this world. 20 We, however, are citizens of heaven, and we eagerly wait for our Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, to come from heaven. 21 He will change our weak mortal bodies and make them like his own glorious body, using that power by which he is able to bring all things under his rule. (GNT)

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TEACHER:

That passage (v.19-21) is how you know if you are saved. If you are proud of your sins, you are not, if you are ashamed of your sins, AND reaching forward, (not quitting) you are saved.
Your conscience bears witness to you.

Closing this final chapter, Paul ends with some personal notes, and mentions some names.
One such name is Clement. Clement is a big figure in the church at the end of the Apostolic era and we will discuss him is a second.

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CH. 4

STUDENT:

So then, my friends, how dear you are to me and how I miss you! How happy you make me, and how proud I am of you!—this, dear friends, is how you should stand firm in your life in the Lord.
2 Euodia and Syntyche, please, I beg you, try to agree as sisters in the Lord. 3 And you too, my faithful partner, I want you to help these women; for they have worked hard with me to spread the gospel, together with Clement and all my other fellow workers, whose names are in God's book of the living.
4 May you always be joyful in your union with the Lord. I say it again: rejoice! (GNT)

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TEACHER:

Regarding the mention of Clement. 2 early church fathers (Origen of Alexandria, and Eusibius of Caesarea) both testify this he referred to was Clement of Rome.

Irenaeus of Lyons also testified that Clement of Rome had heard many of the Apostles preaching personally, referring to the original 12.

Here is a quote from 1 Clement 32 that sure sounds like Paul's teaching was still ringing in Clements ears.

"And we, too, being called by His will in Christ Jesus, are not justified by ourselves, nor by our own wisdom, or understanding, or godliness, or works which we have wrought in holiness of heart; but by that faith through which, from the beginning, Almighty God has justified all men; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen"

In 1st Timothy 4:21, Paul mentions a man named Linus. Linus became the leader of the Roman church after Paul was martyred, then came Anacletus, and Clement then replaced Anacletus.

As far as the women go, Paul says they worked directly with Paul to build the church in Philippi, which we know from Acts 16, was started in a women's prayer meeting. They most likely were part of that group.

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STUDENT:

5 Show a gentle attitude toward everyone. The Lord is coming soon. 6 Don't worry about anything, but in all your prayers ask God for what you need, always asking him with a thankful heart. 7 And God's peace, which is far beyond human understanding, will keep your hearts and minds safe in union with Christ Jesus.

8 In conclusion, my friends, fill your minds with those things that are good and that deserve praise: things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, and honorable. 9 Put into practice what you learned and received from me, both from my words and from my actions. And the God who gives us peace will be with you. (GNT)

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TEACHER:

Paul thanks them for helping him financially.

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STUDENT:

10 In my life in union with the Lord it is a great joy to me that after so long a time you once more had the chance of showing that you care for me. I don't mean that you had stopped caring for me—you just had no chance to show it. 11 And I am not saying this because I feel neglected, for I have learned to be satisfied with what I have. 12 I know what it is to be in need and what it is to have more than enough. I have learned this secret, so that anywhere, at any time, I am content, whether I am full or hungry, whether I have too much or too little. 13 I have the strength to face all conditions by the power that Christ gives me.

14 But it was very good of you to help me in my troubles. (GNT)

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STUDENT:

15 You Philippians know very well that when I left Macedonia in the early days of preaching the Good News, you were the only church to help me; you were the only ones who shared my profits and losses. 16 More than once when I needed help in Thessalonica, you sent it to me. 17 It is not that I just want to receive gifts; rather, I want to see profit added to your account. 18 Here, then, is my receipt for everything you have given me—and it has been more than enough! I have all I need now that Epaphroditus has brought me all your gifts. They are like a sweet-smelling offering to God, a sacrifice which is acceptable and pleasing to him. 19 And with all his abundant wealth through Christ Jesus, my God will supply all your needs. 20 To our God and Father be the glory forever and ever! Amen. (GNT)

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STUDENT:

21 Greetings to each one of God's people who belong to Christ Jesus. The believers here with me send you their greetings. 22 All God's people here send greetings, especially those who belong to the Emperor's palace.

23 May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. (GNT)

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NEXT LESSON COLOSSIANS

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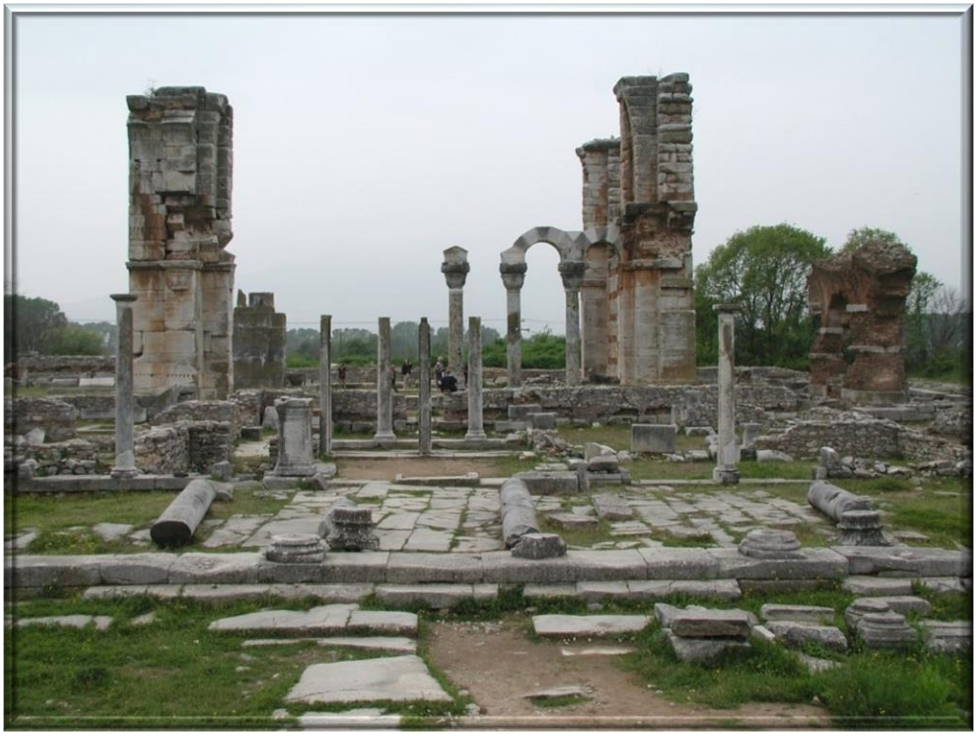
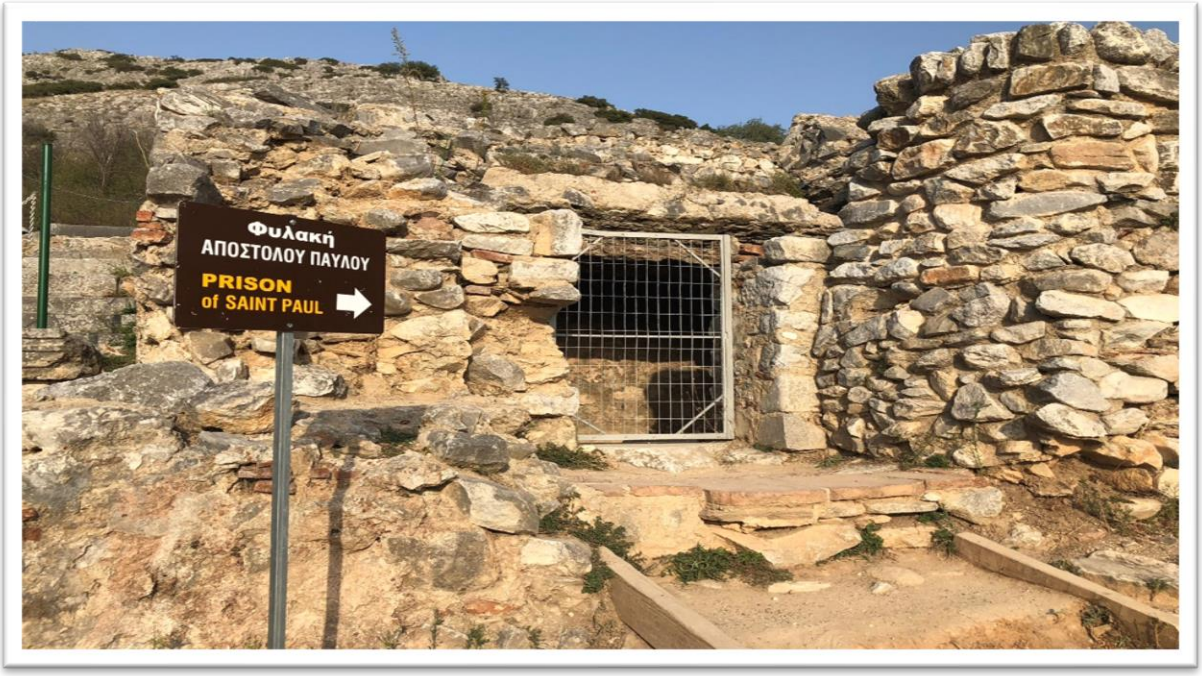
I can do all this through him who gives me strength.

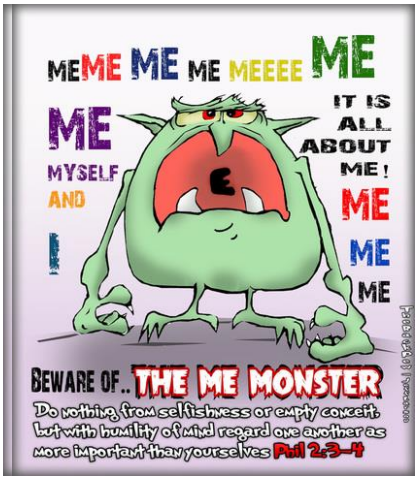
Philippians 4:13

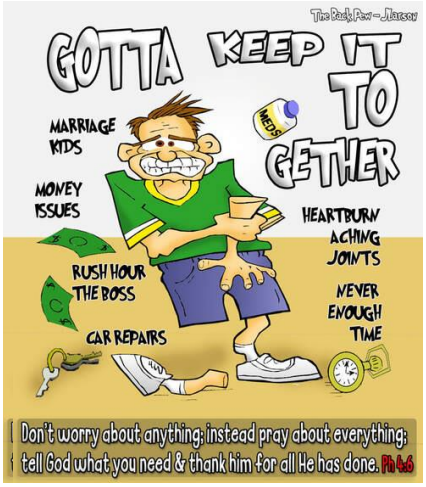
The church ruins at Philippi

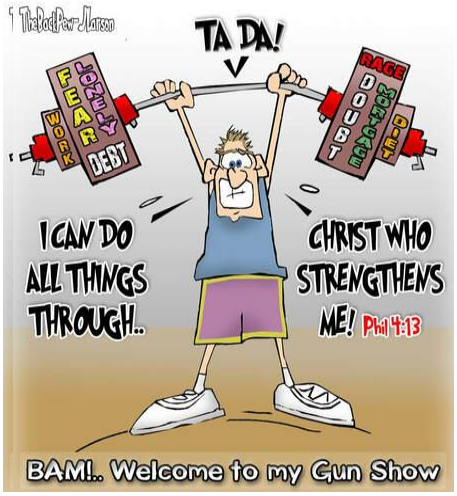


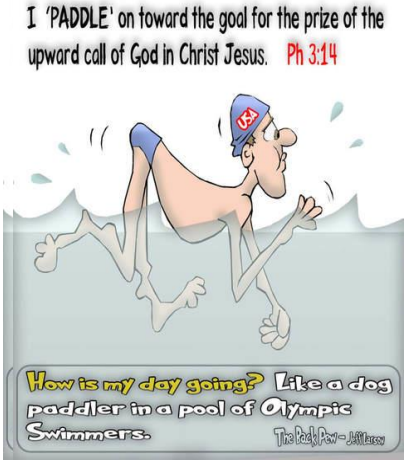
Paul's prison in Philippi.

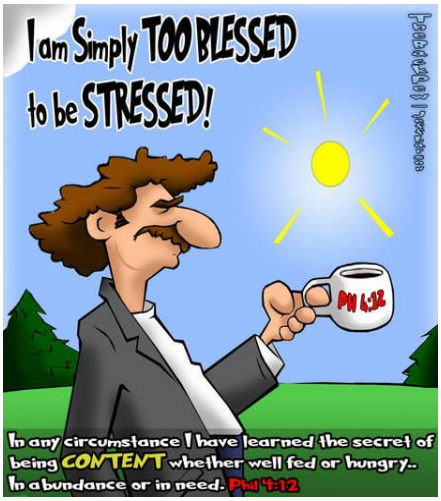












Before Rick Warren wrote the Purpose Driven Life, ET wrote the Purpose Driven Alien based on his paraphrase of Phil. 4:4-47