



Paul's Epistle to the Philippians

INTRODUCTION

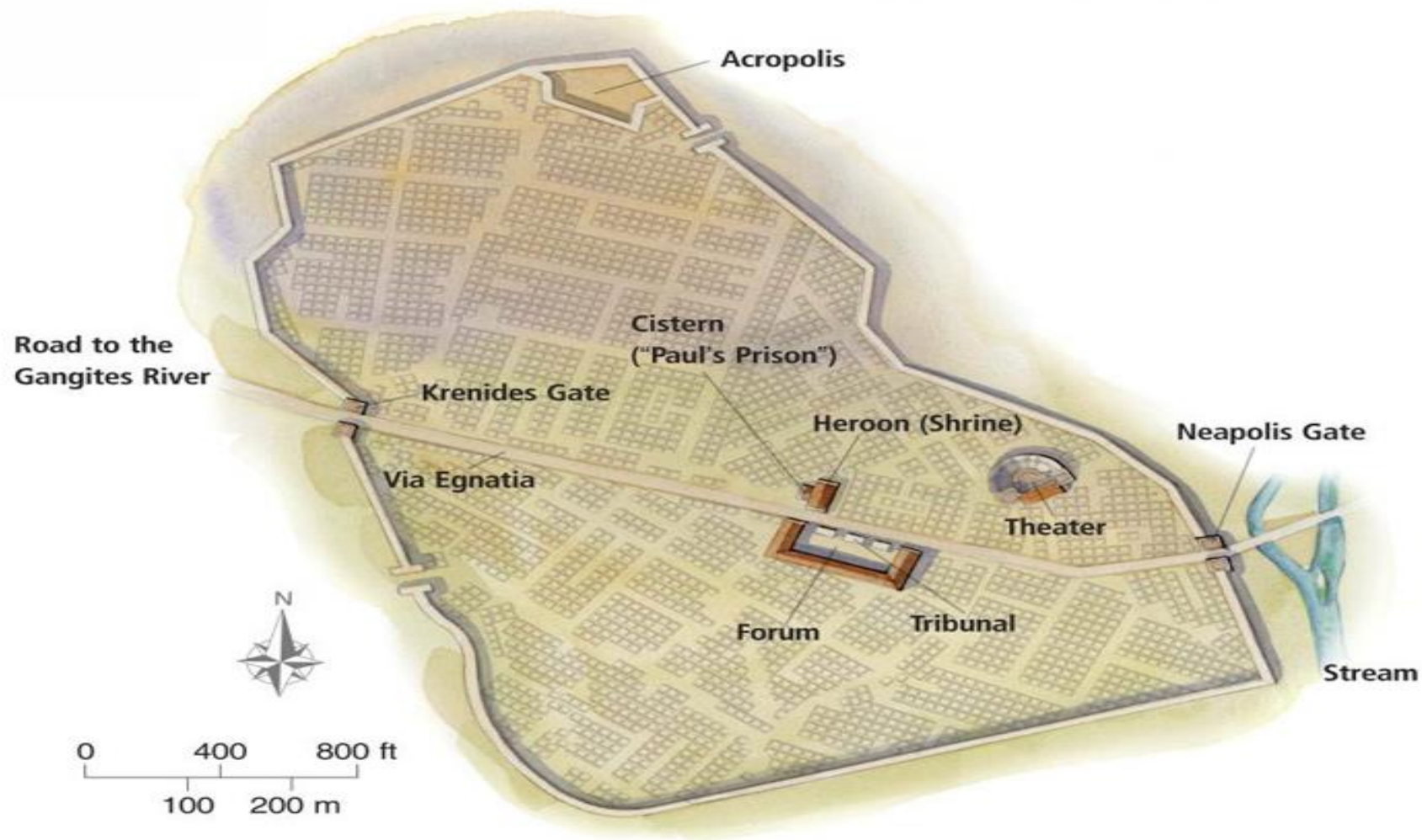
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Background Information on the City of Philippi

- Philippi was in eastern Macedonia, located about 10 miles inland from the Aegean Sea and situated between two rivers.
- The city, formerly Krenides, was originally under Greek control until Philip of Macedon (Alexander the Great's father) captured the city in 358 BC, renaming it after himself.
- Philippi, as well as all of Macedonia, eventually came under Roman control in 168 BC.
- While predominately Roman, the city also housed many Macedonian Greeks and a small Jewish population, indicating diverse religious beliefs and practices present in the city.
- Like other Roman colonies (Antioch, Lystra, Troas, etc.), Philippi resembled Rome itself in various ways, such as:
 - The layout of the city.
 - Architecture.
 - Currency.
 - Law, governmental structure, and customs (Acts 16:19-22, 35-38).

PHILIPPI IN THE TIME OF PAUL (c. A.D. 60)

The city plan below shows those features of the city of Philippi that archaeologists have so far identified as dating from the time of Paul. "Paul's Prison" is not believed to be an authentic site, but was a cistern later associated with Christian worship.



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Paul's Relationship with the Philippians

- Paul first visited Philippi during his second missionary journey (approx. 49-52 AD).
- This is the journey where Paul and Barnabas split their ministries (Acts 15:36-18:22).
 - Barnabas and John Mark went to Cyprus.
 - Paul and Silas revisited areas in Asia Minor, then traveled westward into Europe.
 - Starting in Antioch in Syria, they first visited Derbe, Lystra, and Antioch in Pisidia.
 - From Antioch, they traveled to Troas, where Paul received a vision of a Macedonian calling out to him (this vision, in part, brought them to Philippi).
 - After that, they traveled to Athens and Corinth in southern Greece, stopping in Thessalonica and Berea along the way.
 - Then, sailing to Ephesus and Caesarea, they visited Jerusalem before returning to where their journey started in Antioch of Syria.



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Paul's Relationship with the Philippians

Preaching in Philippi During the Second Missionary Journey

- The Philippian church was apparently the first church established in Europe.
- Silas, Timothy, and Luke were with Paul while he preached in Philippi.
 - Note the plural pronouns in Acts 16:1-17:1.
- While preaching outside the city, Paul converted Lydia and other members of her house (Acts 16:13-15).
- At some point after that, Paul healed a demon-possessed slave girl (Acts 16:16-18).
- The slave's masters, upset that their hopes of financial gain had been dashed, captured Paul and Silas, leading to their imprisonment (Acts 16:19-24).
- While imprisoned, Paul and Silas converted the jailer and other members of his house (Acts 16:25-34).
- The next day, Paul and Silas were released from prison and implored to leave the city (Acts 16:35-40).

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Paul's Relationship with the Philippians

Later Visit(s) to Philippi

- Roughly five years after first teaching in Philippi (approx. 56-57 AD), Paul visited the city again during his third missionary journey before traveling to Troas (Acts 20:6-7).
- It is possible that Paul visited Philippi on at least one other occasion while traveling through Macedonia (Acts 19:21, 20:1-3; 2 Cor. 2:12-13, 7:5-6).

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Paul's Circumstances at the Time of Writing

- Paul identifies himself as the author (Phil. 1:1).
- Paul wrote this letter while imprisoned (Phil. 1:7, 13, 19-26).
 - Scholars suggest he wrote the letter around 62 AD while under house arrest in Rome for two years (Acts 28:30).
 - This means the letter was likely written around the same time frame that Paul penned Ephesians, Colossians, and Philemon.
 - It is believed that Philippians was the last of Paul's "Prison Epistles," being written near the end of his imprisonment.
- Though Paul was confident of his release (Phil. 1:19, 24-26), he realized that his death was a very real possibility (Phil. 1:20-23).

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The Purpose for Writing

- There were several reasons why Paul wrote the letter.
 - Express gratitude for the Philippians' gifts they provided him (Phil. 4:10, 14-18).
 - Reassure the church that his circumstances were accomplishing much good (Phil. 1:12), and he would be victorious no matter what (Phil. 1:19-24).
 - Provide an update on Timothy and Epaphroditus.
 - Epaphroditus had been deathly sick but would still bring them Paul's message, with Timothy visiting shortly thereafter (Phil. 2:19, 23, 25-30).
 - Express desire to visit soon (Phil. 2:23-24).
 - Provide a warning about Judaizing teachers (Phil. 3:2-11).
 - A division between two sisters needed to be resolved (Phil. 4:2; 1:27; 2:1-2; 3:16).
 - Encourage them to remain strong in the face of persecution (Phil. 1:27-30).
 - Rejoice in the Lord (Phil. 1:25-26; 2:17-18, 28; 3:1; 4:4, 10-13).

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The Unique Nature of the Letter

- The letter shows an outpouring of love, confidence, and appreciation (Phil. 1:1-8, 2:12, 4:1).

“There is, perhaps, not one of the epistles of the apostle Paul which is so tender, and which abounds so much with expressions of kindness, as this. In relation to other churches, he was often under the necessity of using the language of reproof. The prevalence of some error, as in the churches of Galatia; the existence of divisions and strifes, or some aggravated case requiring discipline, or some gross irregularity, as in the church at Corinth, frequently demanded the language of severity. But, in the church at Philippi, there was scarcely anything which required rebuke; there was very much that demanded commendation and gratitude ... He expresses his grateful remembrance of all their kindness; he evinces a tender regard for their welfare; and he pours forth the full-flowing language of gratitude, and utters a father’s feelings toward them by tender and kind admonitions ... It breathes the language of a father, rather than the authority of an apostle; the entreaties of a tender friend, rather than the commands of one in authority. It expresses the affections of a man who felt that he might be near death, and who tenderly loved them; and it will be, to all ages, a model of affectionate counsel and advice” (Notes on the New Testament [Philippians], Albert Barnes, p.140).

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The Epistle of Joy?

- The letter is described as the Epistle of Joy due to numerous references to joy and rejoicing, with a focus on controlling our minds during times of trial.
 - “**Joy**” – 6 times
 - “**Rejoicing**” – 11 times
 - “**Thanksgiving**” – 2 times
 - “**Peace**” – 3 times
 - “**Mind**” – 10 times
 - “**Think**” – 4 times
 - “**Remember**” – 1 time

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The Epistle of Joy?

- While joy is a key theme of the letter, two other themes are equally prominent:

- Unity (Phil. 4:2; 1:27; 2:1-2; 3:16).

“The strong urgency for unity that permeates this book makes it unlikely that the main theme of Philippians is joy, as it is often maintained. The book radiates joy and happiness (‘joy’ or ‘rejoice’ are mentioned sixteen times altogether), but the subject of unity is the theme that dominates in connection with the problems Paul sees the church facing” (The Books of Philippians & Colossians, Walton Weaver, p.18).

- Service (Phil. 1:1, 12, 17, 19-26, 29; 2:3-11, 19-30; 3:7-8; 4:3, 10, 14-18).

“The form of a servant’ (Phil. 2:7) is the inspired phrase that, to this author, characterizes well the whole of the Epistle of Paul to the Philippians ... Paul wrote the Epistle ... to confirm and encourage the saints, bishops, and deacons at Philippi, and did so by teaching them the beauty of the servant’s heart. The servant’s heart describes the life-view of one who has the mind of Christ ... Each section of the book of Philippians seems to support this theme in one way or another” (The Book of Philippians, Paul Blake, p.5).

OUTLINE OF THE LETTER

Chapter One

- Salutation (1:1-2)
- Paul's Thanksgiving for the Saints (1:3-8)
- Paul's Prayer for the Philippians (1:9-11)
- The Progress of the Gospel (1:12-18)
- Magnifying Christ in Life & in Death (1:19-30)

Chapter Two

- Unity Through Humility (2:1-4)
- Humiliation & Exaltation of Christ (2:5-11)
- Continue God's Work in You (2:12-18)
- Commendations of Timothy & Epaphroditus (2:19-30)

Chapter Three

- Warning Against Judaizing Teachers (3:1-3)
- The Glory of Knowing Christ Jesus (3:4-11)
- Pressing On to Perfection (3:12-16)
- Enemies of the Cross (3:17-19)
- True Citizenship (3:20-4:1)

Chapter Four

- True Citizenship (3:20-4:1)
- Be United, Joyful, & Prayerful (4:2-7)
- Keys to Peace (4:8-9)
- The Philippians' Aid for Paul (4:10-20)
- Final Greetings (4:21-23)