

## Philippians

- 1. Who was the writer? What was his situation?** Paul names himself as the writer in chapter 1, verse 1. Historically, we can determine that he wrote the letter of Philippians somewhere around AD 60 from the confines of a Roman prison. Internal evidence within this book establishes that the letter was written by Paul while he was in prison -- 1:13.
- 2. Who were the recipients? What was their relationship with the author?** The recipients of this letter were "all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the overseers and deacons." Paul's first interaction with the Philippians occurred on his second missionary journey, as he ventured into Macedonia. Lydia, along with her household, was the first recorded person immersed into Christ in Europe. It was in Philippi that Paul and Silas were thrown into jail after casting out an evil spirit from a certain slave-girl. As a result of this imprisonment, the jailer and his household were also converted. These circumstances were the humble beginnings of the church at Philippi. The twentieth chapter of Acts informs us that Paul visited Philippi on his third missionary journey. From the beginning of their existence, the church at Philippi were committed to participating in the spread of the gospel -- see Philippians 1:5, 2 Corinthians 8:1. Paul was particularly thankful for the gift they sent through Epaphroditus to him in his imprisonment -- see Philippians 2:25, 4:14-18.
- 3. Where is the citizenship of the Christian?** Christians live in sharp contrast to those who are "enemies of the cross of Christ." Christ's enemies have their appetite as their god, and they set their mind on earthly things. On the other hand, Christians don't get caught up with the things of the world, because this world is not our home. Philippians 3:20 says, "For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ." First and foremost, we are citizens of a heavenly kingdom, and our loyalty and unwavering allegiance is to our King. We are Christ's ambassadors, and our purpose in this world is to further His cause!
- 4. Paul was hard-pressed from what two directions?** Paul was being pulled hard from two directions. First, he had a desire to depart and be with Christ. Paul had endured so much suffering for the cause of Christ; his body was ready to shut down. He looked forward with great anticipation to the reward that he would receive upon his death. On the other hand, he knew that his work in this life wasn't quite completed. He resigned himself to continuing to encourage the brethren and spread the word, trusting that Christ would bring him home when the time was right.
- 5. How would Paul's joy be made complete?** Paul's joy would be made complete as the church in Philippi carried out a few important requests. Paul asked that they:
  - Be of the same mind
  - Maintain the same love
  - Be united in spirit
  - Be intent on one purpose

**6. What attitude should the Christian have?** On two separate occasions in Philippians, the word attitude is used (3 times total). The first is in Philippians 2:5, which tells us to "have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus." That attitude is described as one of humility, putting the needs of others before our own, and being obedient to the will of God. The reward of this attitude is exaltation by God at the proper time. The second time that Philippians speaks of our attitude is in chapter 3, verse 15. The attitude that we are to have is "forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead." We are to "press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus."

**7. What did Paul say "finally" and "again"?** In Philippians 3:1, Paul says, "Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord." In Philippians 4:4, he says, "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice!" It is very clear that the Lord wants us to choose to be joyful, no matter the circumstances, knowing that God is in control. How is your attitude?

**8. Were Paul or any of the Philippians yet perfect?** This is an interesting question, for at first glance it seems that Paul gives contradictory information. In Philippians 3:12, he implies that he is not yet perfect, for he says "not that I have already become perfect." Yet in 3:15, he implies that he was already perfect when he says, "Let us therefore, as many as are perfect ..." Both times Paul uses this terminology, it comes from the same root in the Greek, so the confusion doesn't come about from inconsistent translation. There are three ways that perfection of a person is used in the Scripture:

- Perfection of conscience -- Hebrews 9:14, 10:1-4, 10:14, 10:22
- Perfection of character -- Matthew 5:48, Romans 6:12-18, 2 Corinthians 3:18 (inclusive of all 3)
- Perfection of the body -- Hebrews 5:5-10, Romans 8:18-25

The context dictates which of these areas of perfection is being described. In Philippians 3:12, it appears that Paul is speaking of perfection of the body, for the immediate context is that Paul had not yet attained the resurrection from the dead. In 3:15, either perfection of the conscience or perfection of character could be the meaning. Certainly the context of "forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead" fits the perfection of conscience. However, the phrase, "let us keep living by that same standard to which we have attained" would also lend itself to perfection of character."

**9. Where should the mind of the Christian live?** We have already seen that our citizenship is in heaven, so our mind is not set on earthly things. Philippians 4:8 gives us the particulars as to where our mind should dwell:

- Whatever is true
- Whatever is honorable
- Whatever is right
- Whatever is pure
- Whatever is lovely
- Whatever is of good repute

- If there is any excellence
- If anything worthy of praise

**10. What is impossible for the Christian?** According to Philippians 4:13, nothing is impossible for the Christian. Paul says, "I can do all things through Him [Christ] who strengthens me." As long as we rely on the power of the Lord, we can do anything. Of course, this is a conditional statement based upon our motives and decisions being consistent with the will of the Lord. Our faith must also be increased through prayer and fasting, so that we truly believe this.