

Philippians

A Message of Encouragement

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Acts 16:9-40; Philippians 1:4

———— Background and Preview of Philippians

What kind of letter would you write from prison to your good friends? Paul's letter in such circumstances may surprise you and give you valuable spiritual insights.

Paul's journey to Philippi began in Acts 13:2 when the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them," thus paving the way for Saul, who became known by his Latin name, Paul, to begin his missionary journeys. In Acts 16:9, Paul had a vision of a man begging him to come to Macedonia to help them. This one incident has affected the whole of civilization since, bringing the Good News, the gospel of Jesus Christ, not only to the Macedonian town of Philippi, but into the western world.

What do you remember about any *imprisonment* (confinement or hospitalization) you have had? What did you think about?

Read Acts 16:9-40

1. Summarize the events in Philippi when Paul, Silas, and Timothy come there with the gospel.

2. Whose lives are changed because of their visit?

3. How is the community affected by their visit?

Read the Letter

4. Ask four readers, taking one chapter each, to read aloud the entire letter from a contemporary translation (for example, NIV, NLT, NASB, CEV).

Everyone else should listen as if they were one of the three people mentioned in Acts 16—Lydia, the slave girl, or the jailer. Listen as if you were hearing the letter read in Philippi when it first arrived.

What words and ideas are repeated?

What are the major themes of the letter?

5. If you were Lydia, the slave girl, or the jailer, what impression would the letter make on you?
6. As you listened, what made the strongest impression on you?

Did the letter make you happy? Sad? Explain.

7. What questions did this letter raise for you?
8. What ideas do you want to investigate more?

SUMMARY

1. During his imprisonment, what is Paul thinking about, and for whom is he concerned?

2. How can you follow Paul's example of:
 - finding joy in uncomfortable circumstances

 - caring for other Christians

PRAYER

Lord Jesus Christ, thank you for the joy that radiates from Paul's letter to the Christians at Philippi. We want the same grace and power in our lives that we see in Paul's. When we face danger or difficulty as we serve you, grant us Paul's kind of confidence and steadfastness and joy. Let your name be honored by how we live. Amen.

ACTION FOR THIS WEEK

During the week, pray for Christians being harassed because of their faith in Christ. Pray for Christians in prison. Look for opportunities to find reasons to rejoice in Jesus Christ even in an uncomfortable situation. Share these opportunities with each other at the next study.