

INTRODUCTION TO
PHILIPPIANS

AUTHOR

Paul is the stated author of Philippians, and while Timothy is listed in 1:1 as a coauthor, the main voice is clearly Paul's. Timothy may have been Paul's amanuensis, or secretary. The letter was written to the Christians in the Roman colony of Philippi. Some scholars have suggested that the current epistle combines two authentic letters of Paul, with the first letter concluding at 3:1 ("Finally, my brothers . . ."). However, Paul elsewhere uses "finally" in the middle of an epistle (1 Thess. 4:1; 2 Thess. 3:1; cf. 1 Pet. 3:8).

DATE

Paul wrote this letter while in prison, and the date of the composition of Philippians depends on where Paul was imprisoned. His statements to the Philippians concerning his possibly imminent death (e.g., Phil. 1:20) indicate the letter was most likely written from Rome, perhaps in AD 62. This also fits most naturally with the mention of the praetorium and "Caesar's household" (see notes on 1:13; 4:22).

BACKGROUND

The church at Philippi had a special significance for Paul, as it was the first church he founded in Europe (see Acts 16:6–40). The first convert was Lydia, a seller of purple cloth, and women continued to have a prominent role in the Philippian church (e.g., Phil. 4:2). His brief incarceration in Philippi (Acts 16:23–40) would make Paul's later imprisonment mentioned in this letter all the more poignant for the Philippians, especially for the converted Philippian jailer. Paul visited Philippi a few times after his initial departure, and the church maintained active support for his ministry (Phil. 4:15–16). Imprisonment carried with it a social stigma, and it would have been easy for the Philippians to turn their back on Paul at this point; instead, however, they remained faithful to him. Paul thus writes of his gratitude for the Philippian church and for their loyalty to the gospel.

OUTLINE

- I. Greeting and Prayer (1:1–11)
- II. Paul's Reflections on His Imprisonment (1:12–30)
- III. Encouragement to Humble Service (2:1–30)
- IV. Opponents of the Gospel: Where Does Righteousness Come From? (3:1–21)
- V. Concluding Encouragement and Thanksgiving (4:1–23)



THE SETTING OF PHILIPPIANS c. AD 62

Paul wrote his letter to the Philippians during a time of imprisonment, probably in Rome. Located along the famous Egnatian Way, Philippi was the site of a key military victory by Augustus Caesar, and as a result it was declared a Roman colony, ensuring it immunity from taxation and drawing many veterans to settle there. Philippi was the first city in present-day Europe where Paul established a church.



THE ANCIENT CITY OF PHILIPPI

In the time of Paul, Macedonia (where Philippi was located) was a nation fallen from prominence. Under the rule of Alexander the Great, Macedonia had literally ruled the known world. Alexander's father, Philip II, had first established Philippi as a major settlement in order to protect nearby gold mines. Philip drained nearby marshes, greatly expanding a small existing settlement on the slope of a prominent hill. He added a theater, city walls, and gates and named the resulting urban center after himself. Macedonia was so wealthy that when the Roman senator and general Aemilius Paullus conquered Macedonia in 168 BC, he added 300 million sesterii (a Roman coin) to the coffers of Rome. He divided the country into four districts; Amphipolis was capital of the district that included Philippi.

Following the assassination of Julius Caesar in 44 BC, the conspirators fled Italy and gathered their troops near Philippi for a climactic battle, which they lost against Mark Antony and Octavian (later named Augustus by the Senate). After the victory at the battle of Philippi in 42 BC, Antony settled army veterans in the city. In the early imperial period, Macedonia became a major recruiting ground for the Roman legions, as sons followed fathers into the army. In 30 BC, following his own victory against Antony, Augustus refounded the city as *Colonia Iulia Augusta Philippensium*. Its status as an Augustan colony exempted Philippi from significant forms of taxation and also granted additional privileges of land ownership. The colonists held the full legal status of citizens of Italy. Philippi's legal and judicial systems were Roman, and Latin was the official language of civic rule. The Roman ethos of the colony is evident in Philippi's Latin civic inscriptions and worship of Roman gods. According to one study, of 421 inscriptions recovered from Philippi, only 60 were written in Greek. One of the temples in the Philippian forum was devoted to the imperial cult from the time of Augustus. The Via Egnatia, an important Roman commercial road linking Italy and the east, passed through Philippi (see "Via Egnatia" on p.***).

Major episodes of construction under the later emperors Marcus Aurelius (r. AD 161–180) and Justinian (6th century) have mostly obscured the city of Paul. Extant archaeological remains from Paul's day testify to the presence of a theater, a forum (beneath the later second-century-AD forum), shops, a town wall, and two city gates. The apostle would have entered the city from the east, following the road from Neapolis. A niche in the gate would have contained a divine statue of some type, or perhaps an imperial dedication. In the Greco-Roman world, gates were places where civic identity and loyalty were proclaimed. Although town walls primarily served a defensive function, they could also function as markers of political limits. In the case of Philippi, the town walls probably marked the limit of the legal boundaries of the colony.

The relatively small 165-by-330-foot (50-by-100-m) first-century forum was linked to two small temples, a library, and administrative buildings. These buildings would have been the likeliest places for Paul's confrontation with the city's administrators (Acts 16:19). A commercial market adjacent to the forum was later demolished and replaced by a Christian basilica. One small stone crypt (built over a cistern) near the forum was designated in later church tradition as the prison site of Paul and Silas (Acts 16:23–34). North of the main street, the theater was built into the side of the hill, adjacent to the main religious quarter of the city, with many temples on the hillside. Sanctuaries to the Egyptian gods Isis, Serapis, and Horus date to the second century, but traces of earlier sanctuaries exist, including a heroon, a shrine dedicated to the cult worship of Philip II as founder of the city. Other gods worshiped in Philippi included Artemis, Cybele, and Silvanus (Pan).

No traces of a synagogue have been found in the city. It has been suggested that a third-century-AD tombstone indicates the existence of a synagogue at that time, but its location is unknown. When Paul first visited Philippi, he went outside the city to find the open-air place of Jewish prayer. His first convert was a Hellenistic woman from Thyatira in Asia Minor, not a Jew, although she was with the women who had gathered outside the city to pray. These women were, by implication at least, Jewish; however, it is possible they were actually Gentile women who worshiped the "Most High God" (referred to in Acts 16:17). No men are mentioned at that gathering, which may explain why no evidence of a synagogue exists in the first century, since Jewish law required at least 10 men in order to form a synagogue. Interestingly, though Paul includes a strong statement of his Jewish identity in the letter, he does not include any extended quotations from the OT (although there are some important allusions).

The church founded by Paul met in a private house within the city boundaries. Lydia invited Paul and Silas to reside in her house after her conversion, and they did so (Acts 16:15). Lydia's entire household had been baptized when she converted, so it would have been a safe place to stay. Acts 16:40 records that Paul and Silas met with "the brothers" (i.e., the believers, both men and women) at Lydia's house. As a successful merchant, Lydia would most likely have had a spacious upper-class house able to accommodate the entire membership of the young church (see "House Churches" on p.***).

Many structures at the archaeological site of Philippi date to a period after Paul's death. Several Byzantine churches and a bishop's residence are located within the city. An early Byzantine basilica outside the Neapolis Gate commemorates the conversion of Lydia and may mark the actual site. Other scholars believe the place of prayer was west of the city, on the banks of the Krenides stream, where a modern church stands.

PHILIPPI IN THE TIME OF PAUL c. AD 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.





VIA EGNATIA

The Via Egnatia was a Roman arterial road built in the second century BC, after the Roman conquest of Macedonia, to link the Adriatic Sea to the Aegean. A bilingual milestone found near Thessalonica reveals that Gnaeus Egnatius, the proconsul of Macedonia, ordered its construction. The main construction force was probably the Roman army, since the road provided a vital strategic route through the major cities of Macedonia. By the third century AD, it would reach all the way from Byzantium to Dyrrachium, a distance of 700 miles (1,120 km). From there travelers to Rome would sail across the Adriatic to Brundisium before continuing up the Via Appia to Rome.

The Via Egnatia was a vital route for the early spread of Christianity. By Paul's day it passed through Neapolis (modern Kavala), where Paul and his companions first landed in Macedonia. From Neapolis they followed the Via Egnatia through Philippi to Thessalonica. Paul likewise traveled on the Via Egnatia both ways through Macedonia on his second missionary journey (Acts 20:1-6). Key routes like the Via Egnatia also allowed Philippi to be a viable base for a commercial operation such as Lydia's, the convert of Paul who imported purple dye from the east (probably Phoenicia).

Recent archaeological study of the Via Egnatia has given us a better understanding of a typical major Roman road. The road was approximately 20 feet (6 m) wide, paved with flat stones and equipped with curbs and drains to regulate runoff. The roadway had a

well-drained foundation of smaller stones and gravel placed on bedrock where possible to support the paving stones. Commercial inns could be found approximately every 30-35 miles (50-55 km) along the road, interspersed with official posting stations, where horses could be changed with the appropriate permissions, ensuring a swift passage for official couriers. Small garrisons, placed with easy access to the roadway, protected travelers and couriers. The road was well maintained and continued in importance after the first century.

Photo: Via Egnatia outside Neapolis
© Joshua Clutterham/BiblePlaces.com



THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE
PHILIPPIANS

Greeting

1 Paul and Timothy, servants¹ of Christ Jesus, To all the ^a saints in Christ Jesus who are at Philippi, with the ^b overseers² and ^c deacons:³

^{2d} Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Thanksgiving and Prayer

^{3c} I thank my God ^f in all my remembrance of you, ⁴ always in every prayer of mine for you all making my prayer with joy, ^{5g} because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now. ⁶ And I am sure of this, that he who began ^h a good work in you ⁱ will bring it to completion at ^j the day of Jesus Christ. ⁷ It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you ^k in my heart, for you are all ^l partakers with me of grace,⁴ both ^m in my imprisonment and in ⁿ the defense and confirmation of the gospel. ⁸ For ^o God is my witness, ^p how I yearn for you all with the affection of Christ Jesus. ⁹ And it is my prayer that ^q your love may abound more and more, ^r with knowledge and all discernment, ¹⁰ so that you may approve what is excellent, ^s and so be pure and blameless ^t for the day of Christ, ¹¹ filled ^u with the fruit of righteousness that comes ^v through Jesus Christ, ^w to the glory and praise of God.

¹For the contextual rendering of the Greek word *doulos*, see Preface ²Or *bishops*; Greek *episkopoi* ³Or *servants, or ministers*; Greek *diakonoi* ⁴Or *you all have fellowship with me in grace* ⁵Or *brothers and sisters*. In New Testament usage, depending on the context, the plural Greek word *adelphoi* (translated "brothers") may refer either to *brothers* or to *brothers and sisters*; also verse 14 ⁶Greek *in the whole praetorium* ⁷Some manuscripts add *of God*

Chapter 1 ^{1a2} Cor. 1:1; Col. 1:2 ³See Acts 20:28 ⁴1 Tim. 3:8, 12 ^{5a}Rom. 1:7; 1 Cor. 1:3 ^{5b}See Rom. 1:8 ¹Rom. 1:9; Eph. 1:16; 2 Tim. 1:3 ^{5c}[ch. 2:12; 4:15; Acts 16:12-40] ⁶[1 Thess. 1:3] ¹Ps. 57:2 (Heb.); 138:8; [1 Thess. 5:24] ¹See 1 Cor. 1:8 ^{7a2} Cor. 7:3 ¹[ch. 4:14] ¹Acts 20:23; 26:29; Col. 4:18; 2 Tim. 2:9; Philem. 10, 13; See Eph. 3:1 ¹ver. 16 ⁸See Rom. 1:9; 9:1 ⁹[ch. 4:1; Rom. 1:11; 15:23; 1 Thess. 3:6; 2 Tim. 1:4] ^{9a1} Thess. 3:12; 2 Thess. 1:3 ¹Col. 1:9; 3:10; Philem. 6 ¹⁰Acts 24:16; 1 Thess. 3:13; 5:23 ¹ver. 6 ¹¹[Col. 1:6, 10]; See James 3:18 ¹[John 15:4, 5] ¹See Eph. 1:12, 14 ¹²ver. 25; 1 Tim. 4:15 ¹³[Acts 28:30, 31; 2 Tim. 2:9] ²[Luke 21:13]; See ver. 7 ¹⁴[Acts 4:31] ¹⁵See 2 Cor. 11:13 ¹⁶[1 Cor. 9:17] ¹ver. 7 ¹⁷ch. 2:3; See James 3:14 ¹⁹See 2 Cor. 1:11 ⁹Gal. 3:5 ¹See Acts 16:7 ²⁰Rom. 5:5; [Joel 2:27; 2 Tim. 2:15] ¹See Acts 4:13 ^k[1 Cor. 6:20] ¹Rom. 14:8 ²¹[Gal. 2:20]

1:1 Paul and Timothy. Paul generally follows the conventional letter format of his day. The inclusion of Timothy in the salutation does not require Timothy to be a joint author; he may have acted here as Paul's amanuensis, or secretary. Paul clearly dominates the thought and argument, and there is no indication in the conclusion of the letter that it is a joint product. See "Roman Letter Writing" on p.***. **overseers and deacons.** These officers (Gk. *episkopos* and *diakonos*) served in some capacity in the church at Philippi, although from this letter alone their respective roles are not clear. From other references in the NT, we can propose that the over-

The Advance of the Gospel

¹²I want you to know, brothers,⁵ that what has happened to me has really ^xserved to advance the gospel, ¹³so that it has become known throughout the whole imperial guard⁶ and ^y to all the rest that ^zmy imprisonment is for Christ. ¹⁴And most of the brothers, having become confident in the Lord by my imprisonment, are much more bold ^a to speak the word⁷ without fear.

^{15b} Some indeed preach Christ from envy and rivalry, but others from good will. ¹⁶The latter do it out of love, ^cknowing that I am put here for ^dthe defense of the gospel. ¹⁷The former proclaim Christ ^eout of selfish ambition, not sincerely but thinking to afflict me in my imprisonment. ¹⁸What then? Only that in every way, whether in pretense or in truth, Christ is proclaimed, and in that I rejoice.

To Live Is Christ

Yes, and I will rejoice, ¹⁹for I know that ^fthrough your prayers and ^gthe help of ^hthe Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance, ²⁰as it is my eager expectation and hope ⁱ that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full ^jcourage now as always Christ ^kwill be honored in my body, ^lwhether by life or by death. ²¹For to me ^mto live is Christ, and to die is gain. ²²If I am to live in the

seers governed the congregation and the deacons provided practical service.

1:13 imperial guard. This is the Greek term *praitōrion* (Lat. *praetorium*). Based on the reference in 4:22, this term is usually taken to refer to the Praetorian Guard of the Roman emperor himself. When Paul was a prisoner under the emperor Nero, the guard numbered approximately 10,000 men and was based in a legionary fortress just outside the walls of Rome. One cohort of the guard was always on duty guarding the emperor. Inscriptions show that Philippi was where many praetorians chose to retire, so it is possible that

flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. ²³ I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is ^o to depart and ^p be with Christ, for that is far better. ²⁴ But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. ²⁵ Convinced of this, I know that I will remain and continue with you all, for your ^s progress and ^t joy in the faith, ²⁶ so that in me ^u you may have ample cause to glory in Christ Jesus, because of my coming to you again.

²⁷ Only ^v let your manner of life be ^w worthy¹ of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or am absent, I may hear of you ^x that you are standing firm in one spirit, with ^y one mind ^z striving side by side for the faith of the gospel, ²⁸ and not frightened in anything by your opponents. This is ^a a clear sign to them of their destruction, but ^b of your salvation, and that from God. ²⁹ For ^c it

has been granted to you that for the sake of Christ you should not only believe in him but also ^b suffer for his sake, ³⁰ engaged in the same ^d conflict that ^e you saw I had and now hear that I still have.

Christ's Example of Humility

2 So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from ^f love, any ^g participation in the Spirit, any ^h affection and sympathy, ² ⁱ complete my joy by being ^j of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³ Do nothing from ^k selfish ambition or ^l conceit, but in ^m humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴ Let each of you ⁿ look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵ Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ² ⁶ ^p who, though he was in ^q the form of God, did not count equality with God

¹ Greek *Only behave as citizens worthy* ² Or *which was also in Christ Jesus*

²³[2 Cor. 5:8] ²⁴ Tim. 4:6 ²⁵ See John 12:26 ²⁵[ch. 2:24] ²⁶[Acts 20:25] ²⁷ ver. 12 ¹ Rom. 15:13 ²⁶ See 2 Cor. 1:14 ²⁷ [ch. 3:20] ²⁸ See Eph. 4:1 ²⁹ See 1 Cor. 16:13 ³⁰ [ch. 2:2; 1 Cor. 1:10] ² Jude 3 ²⁸ [2 Thess. 1:5] ²⁹ See Acts 14:22 ²⁹ See Matt. 5:12 ³⁰ [See ver. 28 above] ³⁰ Col. 1:29; 2:1; 1 Tim. 6:12; 2 Tim. 4:7; [Heb. 10:32] ² Acts 16:19-40; 1 Thess. 2:2 **Chapter 2** ¹ [Rom. 15:30; 2 Thess. 2:16] ² Cor. 13:14 ³ Col. 3:12 ² John 3:29; 15:11 ¹ See Rom. 12:16 ³ ch. 1:17 ¹ Gal. 5:26 ^m [Eph. 5:21]; See Rom. 12:10; Eph. 4:2 ⁴ See Rom. 15:2 ⁵ Rom. 15:3; See Matt. 11:29 ⁶ See John 1:1 ⁹ See 2 Cor. 4:4

some of the men guarding Paul may have been personally known to members of the church. See “Imprisonment in the Roman World” below.

1:27 let your manner of life be worthy. The Greek here refers to citizenship (see esv footnote). Paul calls the Philippian church to be good citizens of the gospel. This would have special meaning for the Philippian church, as many in the city were Roman citizens, descendants of the colonists brought

there by Antony and Augustus. Paul challenges them to apply to their gospel calling the same loyalty they showed as Roman citizens.

2:6–11 Many scholars view this section as an early Christian hymn (See “Early Christian Music in Worship” on p.***).

2:6 equality with God. This phrase was used in Hellenistic ruler cults to describe kings with divine attributes. This may have had a particular meaning for Macedonians, as the ruler

IMPRISONMENT IN THE ROMAN WORLD

In the Roman world, imprisonment was rarely a long-term punishment. Most prisoners were awaiting either trial or execution. Debtors could be imprisoned until their friends or family paid off the debt (Matt. 18:30). The length of imprisonment depended on the swiftness of a trial, which could be drawn out for years, especially in political cases. Conditions of imprisonment were closely linked to the status of the prisoner. Non-Roman citizens, even of high status, were often harshly treated. In contrast, house arrest was typically more comfortable for the prisoner, who was usually physically chained to a guard but could still host visitors.

Paul experienced a wide variety of prison conditions. He was chained in a common holding cell in Philippi (Acts 16:23–30), imprisoned in probably better conditions in the praetorium at Caesarea (Acts 23:35), and held in relative comfort while in house arrest in Rome (Acts 28:16). In Rome, Paul was responsible for maintaining himself during his imprisonment, including his meals and clothes (Acts 28:30). Paul's Roman citizenship meant he was eligible for a daily food allowance, but Paul depended on his friends and fellow believers to supply this food. While under house arrest in Rome, Paul was guarded around the clock by soldiers of the elite Praetorian Guard (see note on Phil. 1:13).

Finally, when he was later rearrested and executed (likely a few years after this letter), Paul was probably placed in an underground cell somewhere in Rome. It is possible that he

was then imprisoned in the Mamertine Prison in the Roman Forum. This was where major convicted enemies of the state were strangled or kept before being thrown off the Tarpeian Rock on the Capitoline Hill. However, if Paul was executed by a sword outside the city, as later tradition claimed, he probably would not have been imprisoned at Mamertine.



Photo: Mamertine Prison cell with altar
© Todd Bolen/BiblePlaces.com

^ra thing to be grasped,¹ ⁷but ^semptied himself, by taking the form of a ^tservant,² ^ubeing born in the likeness of men.⁸ And being found in human form, he humbled himself by ^vbecoming obedient to the point of death, ^weven death on a cross.⁹ Therefore ^yGod has ^zhighly exalted him and bestowed on him ^athe name that is above every name,¹⁰ so that at the name of Jesus ^bevery knee should bow, ^cin heaven and on earth and under the earth,¹¹ and ^devery tongue confess that Jesus Christ is ^eLord, to the glory of God the Father.

Lights in the World

¹² Therefore, my beloved, ^fas you have always ^gobeyed, so now, not only as in my presence but much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling,¹³ for ^hit is God who works in you, both to will and to work for ⁱhis good pleasure.

¹⁴ Do all things ^jwithout grumbling or ^kdisputing,¹⁵ that you may be blameless and innocent, ^lchildren of God ^mwithout blemish ⁿin the midst of ^oa crooked and twisted generation, among whom you shine ^pas lights in the world,¹⁶ holding fast to ^qthe word of life, so that in ^rthe day of Christ ^sI may be proud that ^tI did not run in vain or labor in vain.¹⁷ Even if I am to be ^upoured out as a drink offering upon ^vthe sacrificial offering of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all.¹⁸ Likewise you also should be glad and rejoice with me.

Timothy and Epaphroditus

¹⁹ I hope in the Lord Jesus ^wto send Timothy to you soon, so that I too may be cheered by news of you.²⁰ For I have no one ^xlike him, who will be

genuinely concerned for your welfare.²¹ For they all ^yseek their own interests, not those of Jesus Christ.²² But you know Timothy's²³ ^zproven worth, how ^aas a son²⁴ with a father ^bhe has served with me in the gospel.²⁵ I hope therefore to send him just as soon as I see how it will go with me,²⁶ and ^cI trust in the Lord that shortly I myself will come also.

²⁵ I have thought it necessary to send to you ^dEpaphroditus my brother and fellow worker and ^efellow soldier, and your messenger and ^fminister to my need,²⁶ for he has been longing for you all and has been distressed because you heard that he was ill.²⁷ Indeed he was ill, near to death. But God had mercy on him, and not only on him but on me also, lest I should have sorrow upon sorrow.²⁸ I am the more eager to send him, therefore, that you may rejoice at seeing him again, and that I may be less anxious.²⁹ So ^greceive him in the Lord with all joy, and ^hhonor such men,³⁰ for he nearly died³¹ ⁱfor the work of Christ, risking his life^j to complete what was lacking in your service to me.

Righteousness Through Faith in Christ

3 Finally, my brothers,⁶ ^krejoice in the Lord.⁷ To write the same things to you is no trouble to me and is safe for you.

² Look out for ^mthe dogs, look out for ⁿthe evil-doers, look out for those who mutilate the flesh.³ For ^owe are the circumcision, ^pwho worship ^qby the Spirit of God⁷ and ^rglory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh—⁴ though I myself have reason for confidence in the flesh also. If anyone else thinks he has reason for confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵ ^tcircumcised on the eighth day,^u ^vof the people of Israel, ^wof the tribe of

¹Or a thing to be held on to for advantage ²Or slave (for the contextual rendering of the Greek word *doulos*, see Preface) ³Greek *his* ⁴Greek *child* ⁵Or he drew near to the point of death; compare verse 8 ⁶Or brothers and sisters; also verses 13, 17 ⁷Some manuscripts *God in spirit*

⁶ ^fJohn 5:18; 10:33; [John 14:28] ⁷2 Cor. 8:9; 13:4; See Mark 9:12 ⁸See Isa. 42:1; Matt. 20:28 ⁹Rom. 8:3; Gal. 4:4; See John 1:14 ⁹Heb. 5:8; [Matt. 26:39; John 10:18; Rom. 5:19] ¹⁰Heb. 12:2 ⁹John 10:17; [Isa. 52:13; 53:12; Heb. 2:9] ¹¹See Matt. 28:18 ²Acts 2:33 ³Eph. 1:21; Heb. 1:4; [Acts 5:41] ¹⁰Isa. 45:23; Rom. 14:11 ^c[Rev. 5:3, 13]; See Eph. 1:10 ¹¹[Rom. 10:9; 1 Cor. 12:3] ⁵[Rom. 14:9]; See John 13:13 ¹²[ch. 1:5; 4:15] ⁹Heb. 5:9; [2 Cor. 10:5; 1 Pet. 1:2] ¹³¹1 Cor. 12:6; [Heb. 13:21]; See 1 Cor. 15:10 ¹[1 Tim. 2:4] ¹⁴1 Pet. 4:9 ⁸1 Tim. 2:8 ¹⁵[Matt. 5:45; Eph. 5:1] ¹⁶Jude 24 ¹1 Pet. 2:12 ⁹See Deut. 32:5 ¹⁰Matt. 5:14, 16; [Titus 2:10] ¹⁶[Acts 5:20] ¹See 1 Cor. 1:8 ²See 2 Cor. 1:14 ³Gal. 2:2; 1 Thess. 3:5; [Gal. 4:1] ¹⁷[1 John 3:16]; See 2 Cor. 12:15 ^v[Rom. 15:16] ¹⁹[1 Cor. 4:17; 1 Thess. 3:2] ²⁰¹1 Cor. 16:10] ²¹[2 Tim. 3:2]; See 1 Cor. 10:24 ²²2 Cor. 2:9 ¹1 Cor. 4:17; 1 Tim. 1:2; 2 Tim. 1:2 ²[2 Tim. 3:10] ²⁴^c[ch. 1:25; Philem. 22] ²⁵^dch. 4:18 ⁹Philem. 2 ^f[ch. 4:18] ²⁹Rom. 16:2 ¹1 Cor. 16:18; 1 Thess. 5:12, 13; 1 Tim. 5:17 ³⁰[Acts 20:24] ¹[ch. 4:10]; See 1 Cor. 16:17 **Chapter 3** ¹ch. 4:4; 1 Thess. 5:16 ²[2 Pet. 1:12] ²Ps. 22:16, 20; Isa. 56:10, 11; Rev. 22:15; [Gal. 5:15] ¹[2 Cor. 11:13] ³See Rom. 2:29 ⁹[John 4:23] ⁹[Gal. 5:25; Jude 20] ¹Rom. 15:17; [Gal. 6:14] ⁴2 Cor. 11:18 ⁵See Gen. 17:12 ⁴2 Cor. 11:22 ⁹Rom. 11:1

cults of the Hellenistic world had their origins in the worship of Alexander the Great.

2:11 Jesus Christ is Lord. In the first-century world of Paul, deified kings and emperors claimed the title *kyrios*, “Lord.” The summary of this hymn is a direct challenge to the cult of Rome and the worship of the emperor as part of that cult. See “The Roman Imperial Cult” on p.***.

2:17 drink offering. A drink offering was wine poured out as a sacrifice to God. Such offerings have a rich OT background (e.g., Num. 4:7). In pagan rituals, wine could be poured on an altar or on the ground as a gift to a god or as an offering for the dead.

2:25 fellow soldier. This must have been an appealing image

for a church that was very aware of the duties and abilities of Roman soldiers. To the Philippians it was probably a high compliment.

3:2 Look out for the dogs. “Dogs” was not only a general term of derision in the ancient world but also one that Jews particularly applied to Gentiles. With conscious irony, Paul is reversing the label and applying it to the Jewish Christians who required Gentiles to be circumcised before being welcomed as full members of the church. In the Roman world, dogs were rarely pets but instead were usually working animals, employed as aids for hunting and guarding property. In essence Paul is saying, “Watch out for the watchers.”

3:5 circumcised on the eighth day. Paul reminds his listen-

Benjamin, ^a a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the law, ^w a Pharisee; ^{6x} as to zeal, ^y a persecutor of the church; ^z as to righteousness under the law, ¹ blameless. ⁷ But ^a whatever gain I had, ^b I counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ Indeed, I count everything as loss because of ^c the surpassing worth of ^d knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I ^e have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having ^f a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but ^g that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith— ^{10h} that I may know him and ⁱ the power of his resurrection, and ^j may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ that by any means possible I may ^k attain the resurrection from the dead.

Straining Toward the Goal

¹² Not that I have already ^l obtained this or ^m am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.

¹ Greek *in the law*

⁵ 2 Cor. 11:22 ^w Acts 23:6; 26:5 ^{6x} Acts 22:3, 4; Gal. 1:13, 14 ^y See Acts 8:3 ^z [ver. 9] ⁷ [Luke 14:33] ^b [Heb. 11:26] ^{8f} [2 Cor. 5:15] ^d Isa. 53:11; Jer. 9:23, 24; John 17:3; 2 Pet. 1:3 ^e Luke 9:25 (Gk.) ⁹ Rom. 10:5; [ver. 6] ⁹ See Rom. 9:30; 1 Cor. 1:30 ¹⁰ [Eph. 4:13] [Rom. 1:4; 6:5] ¹¹ 1 Pet. 4:13; See 2 Cor. 1:5 ^{11x} Acts 26:7 ¹² [1 Tim. 6:12, 19] ^m Heb. 11:40; 12:23; [Heb. 5:9] ¹³ [Ps. 45:10; Luke 9:62; Heb. 6:1] ¹⁴ ¹ Cor. 9:24 ¹⁵ [Heb. 3:1; 1 Pet. 5:10]; See Rom. 8:28 ¹⁵ ¹ Cor. 2:6; See Matt. 5:48 ¹⁶ [Gal. 5:10] ¹⁷ [John 7:17] ¹⁶ Gal. 6:16 ¹⁷ [ch. 4:9]; See 1 Cor. 4:16 ¹⁸ 1 Pet. 5:3 ¹⁸ See 2 Cor. 11:13 ¹⁹ [Acts 20:31] ¹⁹ 2 Cor. 11:15; [2 Thess. 1:9; 2 Pet. 2:1, 3] ²⁰ See Rom. 16:18 ²¹ [Hos. 4:7; 2 Cor. 11:12; Gal. 6:13; Jude 13] ²¹ Rom. 8:5; Col. 3:2 ²⁰ See Eph. 2:19 ²¹ Acts 1:11 ^e See 1 Cor. 1:7 ²¹ [1 Cor. 15:43-53] ⁹ [ver. 10; Col. 3:4]; See Rom. 8:29 ^h See Eph. 1:19 ¹ Cor. 15:28

¹³ Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: ⁿ forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for ^o the prize of the upward ^p call of God in Christ Jesus. ¹⁵ Let those of us who are ^q mature think this way, and if in anything ^r you think otherwise, ^s God will reveal that also to you. ¹⁶ Only ^t let us hold true to what we have attained.

¹⁷ Brothers, ^u join in imitating me, and keep your eyes on those who walk ^v according to the example you have in us. ¹⁸ For ^w many, of whom I have often told you and now tell you ^x even with tears, walk as enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹ ^y Their end is destruction, ^z their god is their belly, and ^a they glory in their shame, with ^b minds set on earthly things. ²⁰ But ^c our citizenship is in heaven, and ^d from it we ^e await a Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, ²¹ who will transform ^f our lowly body ^g to be like his glorious body, ^h by the power that enables him even ⁱ to subject all things to himself.

ers that although he is a Roman citizen, he is also a Jew from birth. See note on Luke 2:21, “Jewish Circumcision and Timothy” on p.***, and “Circumcision in the Roman World” on p.***. **of the people of Israel.** Paul identifies himself as an Israelite, highlighting his ethnic identity rather than his citizenship (Roman) or hometown (Tarsus). See “Paul’s Identity” below. **tribe of Benjamin.** This was one of the 12 tribes of Israel. In the first century AD, Jews identified themselves as being from either the tribe of Judah (as Jesus was) or the tribe of Benjamin. These tribes had constituted the historic kingdom of Judah, destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BC; the other 10 tribes were “lost” when Assyria conquered the kingdom of Israel in 722 BC. **Hebrew of Hebrews.** This phrase

may indicate that Paul was raised in an Aramaic-speaking household, even though he was born in the Greek-speaking city of Tarsus. It may also indicate that Paul was 100 percent Jewish by descent (i.e., none of his ancestors took a non-Jewish spouse). This could also be a direct translation of a Hebrew language construct known as a genitive superlative, similar to the phrase “king of kings”; if so, this is simply a way of underlining Paul’s Jewish identity. **Pharisee.** See “Pharisees and Scribes” on p.***.

3:14 goal . . . prize. The term “goal” (Gk. *skopos*) could refer to a finish line in a footrace or a target in an archery or javelin competition. An athlete’s prize was a wreath and sometimes cash (see “The Isthmian Games” on p.***);

PAUL’S IDENTITY

At various times in his ministry, Paul highlighted different facets of his identity: Jewish, Christian, Hellenistic, and Roman. Paul used a typical Hellenistic, urban-oriented self-identification in Acts 21:39 when he introduced himself to a Roman tribune by saying, “I am a Jew, from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no obscure city” (see also note on 2 Cor. 11:26). In Philippians 3, Paul makes a robust defense of his Jewish identity as one who spent his youth in Jerusalem learning the Scriptures from teachers who were Pharisees; moreover, he was born a Jew and thus was not a pagan proselyte to Judaism.

The Philippian church knew Paul was a Roman citizen, since he claimed that identity publicly after being imprisoned in Philippi (Acts 16:37–38). Intriguingly, in his own letters Paul never speaks of his Roman citizenship. Apparently he felt no

need to use this element of his identity in his letters, perhaps because his citizenship was already known by his audience, or, more likely, because he used it only when it was to his advantage (i.e., when he confronts governmental authorities). Paul was by birth a Roman citizen (Acts 22:28), which meant his father or another family member in a previous generation had been made a citizen before Paul was born. Citizenship could be a reward for a valuable service rendered to the Roman state. It is possible that Paul’s family had provided tents to one of the many Roman armies active around Tarsus during the Roman civil wars in the mid-first century BC; such service would have been sufficient cause for being awarded citizenship. Roman citizenship came with certain privileges such as the right to vote, exemption from certain taxes, and legal protections (see “Paul’s Roman Citizenship” on p.***).

4 Therefore, my brothers,¹ whom I love and ^jlong for, ^kmy joy and ^lcrown, ^mstand firm thus in the Lord, my beloved.

Exhortation, Encouragement, and Prayer

²I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to ⁿagree in the Lord. ³Yes, I ask you also, true companion,² help these women, who have labored³ side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, ^owhose names are in the book of life.

⁴^pRejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice. ⁵Let your reasonableness⁴ be known to everyone. ^qThe Lord is at hand; ⁶do not be anxious about anything, ⁵but in everything by prayer and supplication ^rwith thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷And ^uthe peace of God, ^vwhich surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

⁸Finally, brothers, whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things. ⁹What you have learned⁵ and ^wreceived and heard and seen ^xin me—practice these things, and ^ythe God of peace will be with you.

God's Provision

¹⁰I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length ^zyou have revived your concern for me.

¹ Or *brothers and sisters*; also verses 8, 21 ² Or *loyal Syzygus*; Greek *true yokefellow* ³ Or *strived* (see 1:27) ⁴ Or *gentleness* ⁵ Or *these things*—⁹ *which things you have also learned* ⁶ Or *have fellowship in* ⁷ Or *I seek the profit that accrues to your account*

Chapter 4 ¹ See ch. 1:8 ^k ch. 1:4; 2:16; See 2 Cor. 1:14 ^l Prov. 16:31; 17:6 ^m ch. 1:27 ⁿ ch. 2:2 ³ See Luke 10:20 ⁴ ch. 3:1 ⁵ See James 5:8 ⁶ See Matt. 6:25 ⁵ [Prov. 16:3] ¹ See Rom. 1:8 ⁷ [ver. 9; Isa. 26:3; Col. 3:15]; See John 14:27 ^v [Eph. 3:19] ⁹ ^w ¹ Thess. 4:1 ^x [ch. 3:17] ^y [ver. 7]; See Rom. 15:33 ¹⁰ ² [2 Cor. 11:9; ch. 2:30] ¹¹ ¹ Tim. 6:6, 8; [2 Cor. 9:8; Heb. 13:5] ¹² ¹ Cor. 4:11; 2 Cor. 11:27 ² 2 Cor. 11:9 ¹³ ^d [2 Cor. 12:9]; See Eph. 3:16; 1 Tim. 1:12 ¹⁴ ^e [ch. 1:7; Rev. 1:9] ¹⁵ ⁷ ch. 1:5 ⁹ 2 Cor. 11:8, 9 ¹⁷ ¹ [2 Cor. 9:5] ¹ Rom. 1:13; [Titus 3:14] ¹⁸ ⁷ ch. 2:25 ^k See Gen. 8:21 ¹ Heb. 13:16 ¹⁹ ^m Ps. 23:1; 2 Cor. 9:8 ²⁰ See Rom. 2:4 ²⁰ ⁰ Gal. 1:4; 1 Thess. 1:3; 3:11, 13 ¹⁹ Gal. 1:5; See Rom. 11:36 ²¹ ¹ Gal. 1:2 ²² ² Cor. 13:13 ²³ ⁵ See Rom. 16:20

occasionally athletes were awarded free meals from their hometown for the rest of their lives.

4:1 crown. This Greek term (*stephanos*) could refer to two different types of wreaths: a wreath made of laurel, parsley, or wild olive leaves that an athlete was awarded for victory, or a wreath worn by a guest at a joyful banquet. The Latin-speaking members of the church would think of the Latin term *corona*, which was an award of valor in the Roman army. See also “Crowns” on p.***.

4:7 guard your hearts. The image is of a soldier on guard duty.

4:15 partnership. The ability to provide financial support reflects the financial strength, and likely by implication the high social standing, of some of the members of the Christian community in Philippi. See “Patronage” on p.***.

4:16 Thessalonica. The church in Philippi sent Paul financial assistance while he was working in Thessalonica. See “The Ancient City of Thessalonica” on p.***.

4:22 Caesar's household. This is not only the immediate family of the emperor but also his freedmen, slaves, and guards. There is no definitive evidence that any members of Nero's immediate family were believers, but members of his larger entourage could have been.

You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. ¹¹Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be ^acontent. ¹²I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and ^bhunger, abundance and ^cneed. ¹³I can do all things ^dthrough him who strengthens me.

¹⁴Yet it was kind of you ^eto share⁶ my trouble. ¹⁵And you Philippians yourselves know that ^fin the beginning of the gospel, when I left Macedonia, ^gno church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only. ¹⁶Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again. ¹⁷^hNot that I seek the gift, but I seek ⁱthe fruit that increases to your credit.⁷ ¹⁸I have received full payment, and more. I am well supplied, ^jhaving received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, ^ka fragrant offering, ^la sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God. ¹⁹And my God ^mwill supply every need of yours ⁿaccording to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus. ²⁰To ^oour God and Father be ^pglory forever and ever. Amen.

Final Greetings

²¹Greet every saint in Christ Jesus. ^qThe brothers who are with me greet you. ²²All the saints greet you, especially those of Caesar's household.

²³The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit.



Photo: Roman athlete with crown
© Todd Bolen/BiblePlaces.com