

Walk Through The New Testament

St. Matthew's Parish

Shirley and Church Streets

New Providence,

Bahamas

14th November 2023

Introduction to The Epistle to the Philippians

Introduction to The Epistle

Philippi was located ten miles inland from the Port of Neapolis. Originally it was named after Philip of Macedon, the father of Alexander the Great. In Roman history it was an important city because in 42 B.C. Octavius, Antonius and Lepidus fought and won the famous battle against the rebels Brutus and Cassius. Later it was made a Roman Colony and Emperor Augustus sent many of his Roman Veterans there to live.

Philippi was the first place in Europe that Paul and his companions had preached the Christian gospel (Acts of the Apostles 16:11-40). When Paul left Philippi, Timothy and Luke remained behind and they were probably very instrumental in establishing the work that Paul had started. Paul may have visited this city at least three times and they had gained the reputation of being great supporters of his ministry.

The letter was clearly written while Paul was in Prison in Rome where he sends greetings from the household of Caesar. Paul truly believed that he would be released soon and would be able to return to his friends for another visit. Paul seemed to have done a considerable amount of preaching even while he was in prison in Rome. He had made the most of a very difficult situation. The letter is written by Paul to:

- a. Express his appreciation for their partnership in the gospel

- b. Encourage them in their progress
- c. Report his own state of affairs
- d. Encourage them to unity, humility and consistency in their Christian walk
- e. Inform them of why he was sending Timothy and Epaphroditus to them
- f. Warn them about the Judaisers
- g. Deal with other opponents of the gospel inside the church
- h. Appeal for reconciliation between two women leaders in the church-Euodia and Syntyche
- i. Ensure that they pursue all that is good
- j. Express gratitude for a gift received
- k. And to send greetings.

Paul held the church at Philippi in high esteem and they had a loving and deep interest in his work and ministry.

1. *Philippians 1:1-30 Encouragement from a Leader in Prison*

- a. 1-2 Timothy is in Rome with Paul during the writing of this letter. Both he and Paul had been instrumental in establishing the church at Philippi. Paul does not identify himself as an Apostle in this epistle, probably because his reputation has been well-founded among them. What is clear is that the church at Philippi had already begun to develop the ministry of Bishops and Deacons. Much work had been done among them to get them to this stage in their development.
- b. 3-11 Paul is grateful to God for them and their faithfulness to him and the Lord. They are constantly a part of his prayer-life. What God has begun to work in them will bear fruit. They have been his partners at every stage in his ministry. In the midst of what is happening to him and them, Paul prays that the love of God may abound in their lives and

direct them to discern what is important so that they can remain pure and blameless producing the harvest that God wants.

- c. 12-18 Paul assures his readers that whatever has happened to him (his imprisonment) has turned out for the better because it has aided in the spread of the gospel. The message has even reached the imperial guards; and the news of Paul's imprisonment has actually strengthened the faithful converts. Regardless of why some are preaching Christ, the message is still being proclaimed despite the hidden motives and agenda of some.

- d. 19-26 For Paul, living in Christ was all important. Unlike natural and carnal Christians who believe that death is a loss, Paul sees it as gain for him. Paul had hoped that he would be freed from prison so that he could visit his friends again. Little did he know that he would be executed by the Roman authorities.

- e. 27-30 Despite whatever the outcome may be, Paul insisted that the people at Philippi make sure that they lived a life worthy of their calling. They are to stand firm in the spirit and do not allow the forces around them to intimidate them. Like Paul, they have the privilege of not only believing in Christ, but also the privilege of suffering for Him as well.

2. *Philippians 2:1-30 The Mind of Christ*

- a. 1-4 In order for the Philippians to fulfil what Paul has said in 1:27-30 there are several elements that will enable them to do this great undertaking. Encouragement, the comfort of love, fellowship in the Spirit, and tender mercy ought to mark the lives of the Christians at Philippi. If they exercise these qualities they will remain united and looking after the interest of others. Quarrelling would cease; differences

would be patched up; and estrangements would be healed. Paul's joy would be complete if they are like-minded, having the same love, being on one accord, and being of one mind. Nothing is to be done in selfishness and conceit but everything is to be done in lowliness of mind.

- b. 5-11 This passage is one of the oldest hymns in our scriptures. It speaks about the incarnation of Christ who poured Himself out to become a servant and gave Himself for the salvation of the whole of humanity by His death on a cross. His willingness to humble Himself ought to be the mindset of all who wish to be His followers.

- c. 12-18 Paul now encourages the church at Philippi to work their way through the grace of God with the right attitude. They are to remain blameless and innocent while they walk among a crooked and perverse generation. They must be the light in the darkness of their present world order holding to the truth of the gospel. Even though Paul says that he is being poured out as a libation offering, he invites the community to rejoice because God is using what is happening in his life for the good of others including them.

- d. 19-30 Firstly, Paul wanted to send Timothy to them. Timothy had the same mindset as Paul and was willing to do whatever it took to keep the church at Philippi going. The reason for sending him is to inform them of Paul's state and for Timothy to bring news of their well-being to the one imprisoned in Rome. Secondly, Paul is sending Epaphroditus who had been ill and almost at the point of death. He was eager to do ministry among the people at Philippi. Paul gives clear instructions on what the church is to do: Welcome them in the Lord with all joy; Honour them because of what the grace of God has done in their lives and the risk that they have taken for the gospel's sake. They were to be treated just as Paul would have been treated.