

Episode: Paul's Letters Series No. 14

Narrator: Epaphroditus and Euodia

Primary Scriptures: Philippians 1-4

Story Summary: Paul's letter to the church in Philippi

Location: Roman Empire; Macedonia; Philippi

Time: AD 30 Jesus crucified and resurrected; Pentecost; Holy Spirit arrives
 AD 48 Paul's "famine visit" to Jerusalem; First Missionary Journey starts
 AD 50 Council at Jerusalem; Start of Second Missionary Journey.
 AD 53 Start of Third Missionary Journey
 AD 61 Paul writes *Philippians* while imprisoned

Suggested Memory Scriptures: 1:3-5, 12, 18, 21; 2:3, 5, 12-13; 3:7-8, 13-14, 20; 4:4-7

Philippians is probably the last letter Paul wrote during his first imprisonment in Rome. He wrote the *Philippians* to thank them for the offering they sent to support him while in prison, and to assure them that Epaphroditus recovered from his serious illness. It was probably written soon after *Ephesians* and *Colossians*, so it has some similarities to those letters. The letter is attributed to Paul and Timothy.

This letter was written to both the members and leaders of the church in Philippi. This church was previously founded about a dozen years before when Paul, Timothy, Luke, and Silas baptized Lydia and her household on the Second Missionary Journey (Acts 16:11-15). Paul references this joyous event in *Philippians* 1:5. The first eleven verses of the letter show Paul and Timothy had a close relationship with this church.

When Paul writes about being in prison and living a life worthy of the Gospel, his words are encouraging. They do not seem to be a defense of his apostleship as in some of his other letters.

Paul's words in *Philippians* 2 are words of encouragement to become more mature and unified. The *Philippians'* increasing maturity is of utmost importance because they are still being harassed by the Jewish Christians, who teach the importance of following the Laws of Moses, signified by circumcision. Paul assures them those people are wrong. His words in *Philippians* 3:7-13 are some of his most powerful personal testimony.

Philippians 3:20-21 shows that the *Philippians*, like their neighbors in Thessalonica, are influenced by their understanding that Jesus will return and they will get to participate in the resurrection.

As in many of his other letters, Paul pleads for the church to be unified. As a part of this, Paul encourages them to have the right attitudes and thought processes. His words from *Philippians* 4:4-8 are some of the most encouraging words in any of his letters.

Discussion Questions:

1. Why did Paul and Timothy have a close relationship with the church at Philippi?
 2. In what ways would the gospel be spread by Paul's misfortunes?
 3. Philippians 2:12 is a controversial verse in some Christian circles. What do you think it means to work out your salvation with fear and trembling?
 4. Philippians 2:27 says Epaphroditus almost died from being sick. Why didn't Paul miraculously heal him?
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1. Paul and Timothy founded the church at Philippi on the Second Missionary Journey. They stayed at Lydia's house and probably formed a close relationship with her and the Philippian jailer. Paul probably stayed in Philippi at the conclusion of the Third Missionary Journey, and may have on other occasions.

Application Questions:

1. Paul prays this for the Philippians: that their love may increasingly abound in knowledge and insight, that they be able to discern what is best and be pure and blameless, and be filled with the fruit of righteousness. Choose someone and pray these things for them every day for the next week.
2. After reading Philippians 1:29, do you think you have ever suffered for Christ?
3. What would you change about your behavior within your church if you followed Philippians 2:1-4?
4. Philippians 3:6 uses the word "zeal". Do a word search for "zeal" and "zealous" and see what you can do to have more zeal for the Lord.
5. Philippians 3:13-14 are very valuable words to help you overcome your past, like Paul did. What do you need to forget so you can live for the future instead of the past? Are your past memories a jail for you?
6. What does it mean to live as citizens of heaven as Paul recommends in Philippians 3:20?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. Read Philippians 1:27. What would it look like for you to conduct yourself in a manner worthy of Christ? Does that mean you have to be perfect?
2. Philippians 3:7-9 are some of the most far-reaching of Paul's words. These verses explain how Paul changed his life. What would it mean for you to quit valuing some of the things you do, and start valuing more important things? Can you truly change your behavior without changing what you value?
3. In Philippians 3:17, Paul talks about living according to a pattern. Do you see the Bible as providing lists of dos and don'ts, or providing patterns to live by?