

Background and Greetings of Philippians

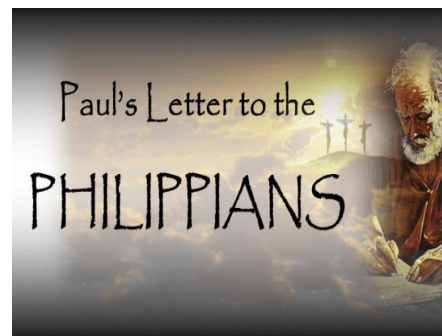
Philippians 1 :1-2

Online Sermon:

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It was around the year AD 52 during Paul's first visit to Europe¹ that his journey to Philippi began.² Though he and his travelling companions Timothy and Silas wanted to go north to Bithynia after having visited Asia Minor, the Spirit forbid them to do so (Acts 16:7) and forced them to go east to Troas. It is here that Paul had a vision of a Macedonia man "standing and begging him, come over to Macedonia and help us" (Acts 16:9). Paul and his companions "crossed to Neopolis and then journeyed about ten miles along the Egnatian Way to Philippi."³ As was Paul's custom he entered the town and sought out a

Jewish synagogue but found none!⁴ He continued his search for believers and found "a few women gathering at prayer-place outside of town"⁵ by the River Gangites for worship.⁶ From these women, a dealer of purple cloth and her family,⁷ a Roman



jailer and his family, and likely a slave girl, the church of Philippi was born.⁸ "Thirty years after the Ascension of Christ and about ten years after having first preaching the Gospel at Philippi,"⁹ Paul

wrote to the church with great warmth and expressions of love what was undoubtedly one of his favourite churches.¹⁰ While Paul being the author of the New Testament book of Philippians is rarely contested due to early Christian greats like Irenaeus, Clement of Alexandria, Tertullian, Clement of Rome, Ignatius, Hermas and Justin

¹ H. D. M. Spence-Jones, ed., [Philippians](#), The Pulpit Commentary (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), ii.

² Daniel M. Gurtner, "[Introduction to Philippians](#)," in *The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary: Acts–Philemon*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Craig A. Bubeck, First Edition. (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2004), 569.

³ Clinton E. Arnold, [Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Romans to Philemon](#), vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 344–345.

⁴ R. Kent Hughes, [Philippians: The Fellowship of the Gospel](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007), 17.

⁵ J. A. Motyer, [The Message of Philippians](#), The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1984), 16.

⁶ Daniel M. Gurtner, "[Introduction to Philippians](#)," in *The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary: Acts–Philemon*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Craig A. Bubeck, First Edition. (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2004), 569–570.

⁷ Tony Merida and Francis Chan, [Exalting Jesus in Philippians](#), ed. David Platt, Daniel L. Akin, and Tony Merida, Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2016), Php 1:1–2.

⁸ G. Walter Hansen, [The Letter to the Philippians](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 5.

⁹ H. D. M. Spence-Jones, ed., [Philippians](#), The Pulpit Commentary (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), i.

¹⁰ R. Kent Hughes, [Philippians: The Fellowship of the Gospel](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007), 18.

Martyr claiming Pauline authorship,¹¹ it is unclear from which of the up to seven prisons (2 Corinthians 11:23) Paul wrote this letter.¹² While Ephesus, Caesarea, and Corinth have been proposed by scholars¹³ it was likely facing death in a prison in Rome¹⁴ that Paul wrote to the saints at Philippi this personal, loving and warm letter of gratitude¹⁵ for those He called his “joy and crown.”¹⁶ While his words are joyful they are also “undercut with the sober realization”¹⁷ that the church gravely needed instruction on how to handle suffering and persecution from being a light amongst the pagan Roman culture, how to handle opponents whom Paul called “dogs,” “evil doers,” and “mutilators of the flesh” (3:2),¹⁸ and what to do about disunity from key leaders in the church (4:2). Above all this short but beautiful letter of Paul’s stresses his desire that the saints at Philippi fearlessly advance the Gospel message¹⁹ with joy that only comes from being in Christ Jesus our Lord! Let’s look a

¹¹ Daniel M. Gurtner, [“Introduction to Philippians,”](#) in *The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary: Acts–Philemon*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Craig A. Bubeck, First Edition. (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2004), 569.

¹² Daniel M. Gurtner, [“Introduction to Philippians,”](#) in *The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary: Acts–Philemon*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Craig A. Bubeck, First Edition. (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2004), 570.

¹³ Daniel M. Gurtner, [“Introduction to Philippians,”](#) in *The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary: Acts–Philemon*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Craig A. Bubeck, First Edition. (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2004), 570.

¹⁴ A.T. Robertson, [Word Pictures in the New Testament](#) (Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1933), Ro 16:27.

¹⁵ J. A. Motyer, [The Message of Philippians](#), The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1984), 18.

closer look at the town of Philippi so that we can better understand the geographical, political, historical, and religious background of the city in which this letter is addressed.

Historic Background – Philippi

Philippi got its name in 356 BC when Phillip II, king of Macedon, father of Alexander the Great, fortified the city.²⁰ More recently it was the location of the famous battle where Octavian and Mark Anthony defeated the rebel forces of Brutus and Cassius who assassinated Julius Caesar.²¹ While the “early inhabitants of Philippi were Greeks from the island of Thasos, Macedonians as well as some Thracians, people from Asia

¹⁶ Tony Merida and Francis Chan, [Exalting Jesus in Philippians](#), ed. David Platt, Daniel L. Akin, and Tony Merida, Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2016), Php 1:1–2.

¹⁷ J. A. Motyer, [The Message of Philippians](#), The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1984), 11.

¹⁸ Daniel M. Gurtner, [“Introduction to Philippians,”](#) in *The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary: Acts–Philemon*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Craig A. Bubeck, First Edition. (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2004), 570.

¹⁹ Tony Merida and Francis Chan, [Exalting Jesus in Philippians](#), ed. David Platt, Daniel L. Akin, and Tony Merida, Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2016), Php 1:1–2.

²⁰ G. Walter Hansen, [The Letter to the Philippians](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 1.

²¹ R. Kent Hughes, [Philippians: The Fellowship of the Gospel](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007), 17.

Minor, Egypt, and Israel”²² predominantly this small city of about 10,000 people²³ was known for being the home of “discharged Roman army veterans.”²⁴ Philippi was not only a Roman colony with all the privileges and rights that came with



being designated “Ius Italicum” in which “the land, payment of taxes and the local administration of the law was as if one was on Italian soil,²⁵ but it also was known as a “miniature of Rome”²⁶

due to its “building structures and monuments being reminiscent of Rome,”²⁷ language being Latin, and education, customs, and religions mimicking the imperial city.²⁸ Overall many of its citizens prospered financially due to its

exceptionally fertile soil, gold and silver mines and trade routes that had close ties to Rome.²⁹ As “typical with many Roman colonies, however, there were several levels of social and economic levels” between citizens and non-citizens, and between those free and slaves.³⁰ Like Rome, life in Philippi centered around emperor worship at its impressive altars and temples dedicated to him so much so that “refusal to participate in the imperial cult was viewed as subversive” and highly illegal.³¹ Also, one was expected to worship other Greek gods such as Jupiter, Juno, Minerva, Mars, Dionysius who assured happiness after death, Diana who granted fertility, and many deities.³² Persecution of Philippian Christians was justified on the grounds that according to its resident’s belief in but one God was “advocating customs unlawful for Romans to accept or practice” (Acts 16:21).³³

²² Osvaldo Padilla, “Philippians,” in *The Baker Illustrated Bible Background Commentary*, ed. J. Scott Duvall and J. Daniel Hays (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2020), 1177.

²³ R. Kent Hughes, *Philippians: The Fellowship of the Gospel*, Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007), 17.

²⁴ G. Walter Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 2.

²⁵ J. A. Motyer, *The Message of Philippians*, The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1984), 15.

²⁶ H. D. M. Spence-Jones, ed., *Philippians*, The Pulpit Commentary (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), ii.

²⁷ Clinton E. Arnold, *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Romans to Philemon*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 344.

²⁸ H. D. M. Spence-Jones, ed., *Philippians*, The Pulpit Commentary (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), xi.

²⁹ H. D. M. Spence-Jones, ed., *Philippians*, The Pulpit Commentary (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), ii.

³⁰ Paul Barnett, *Philippians & Philemon: Joy in the Lord*, ed. Paul Barnett, Reading the Bible Today Series (Sydney, South NSW: Aquila Press, 2016), 9.

³¹ G. Walter Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 3.

³² Daniel M. Gurtner, “Philippians,” in *The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary: Acts–Philemon*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Craig A. Bubeck, First Edition. (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2004), 574.

³³ G. Walter Hansen, *The Letter to the Philippians*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 3.

Despite fierce opposition the house churches grew, and it is to them that Paul takes pen to paper to address their many issues.

Reflection. Persecution of Christians was due to their belief in but one God! Is not our faith in the Gospel message, specifically Christ being the way, truth, and life, not becoming at best “watered down” by our culture and at worst the world’s justification to ostracize believers publicly by seeing them as bigots and narrow minded? How imperative it is for us today to read Paul’s letter of encouragement and remain steadfast in the faith in Christ who is Lord over all!

Reasons for Writing

There are five main issues that Paul addresses in his letter to Philippi. The first issue related to the need to update the church of his current circumstances. While Paul had learned how to be content in all circumstances, he wrote to say thanks for the generous gifts that “amply supplied” for his needs.³⁴ Paul also wanted the Philippians to know that while Epaphroditus had

turned gravely ill and almost died, he had fully recovered and was being sent back to the church where he “should receive full honor for his service” (2:25-30).³⁵ Though his deliverance from prison was uncertain Paul hoped to return soon to the church in person (1:18-24).³⁶ The second issue that Paul addresses is a plea amidst this “warped and crooked generation” (2:14) to stand firm and not be frightened by those who oppose them (1:27-28). “Current research proposes at least eighteen different identities for the opponents. Some of the name tags pinned on the opponents are Jewish Christians, non-Christian Jews, Gentile Christians, non-Christian Gentiles, Jewish Gnostics, Hellenistic Jewish missionaries, Jewish Judaizers, Gentile Judaizers, and Roman authorities.”³⁷ Paul says to watch out for these dogs, these evildoers, mutilators of the flesh (3:2). With tears in his eyes Paul calls them “enemies of the cross” but assures the Philippians “their destiny is destruction” (3:18-19).³⁸ Paul “calls for a course of action and Christ-like attitudes that will unify the church and warns against attitudes and enemies who will divide the church.”³⁹ This brings us to the third issue Paul addresses and sadly it was a conflict between Euodia and Synthyche, two significant women leaders of the

³⁴ Daniel M. Gurtner, [“Introduction to Philippians,”](#) in *The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary: Acts–Philemon*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Craig A. Bubeck, First Edition. (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2004), 571.

³⁵ Daniel M. Gurtner, [“Introduction to Philippians,”](#) in *The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary: Acts–Philemon*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Craig A. Bubeck, First Edition. (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2004), 571.

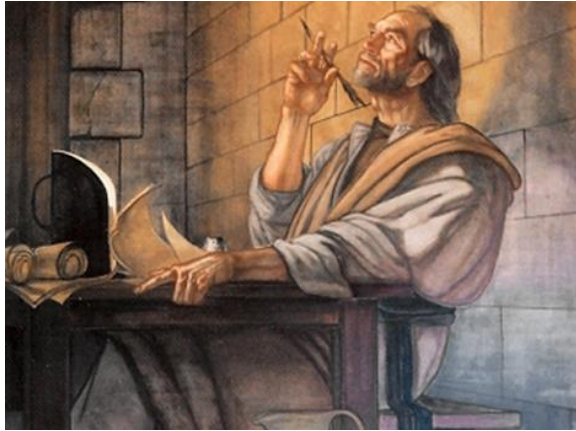
³⁶ Daniel M. Gurtner, [“Introduction to Philippians,”](#) in *The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary: Acts–Philemon*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Craig A. Bubeck, First Edition. (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2004), 571.

³⁷ G. Walter Hansen, [The Letter to the Philippians](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 28.

³⁸ G. Walter Hansen, [The Letter to the Philippians](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 28.

³⁹ G. Walter Hansen, [The Letter to the Philippians](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 13.

church who were in sharp disagreement with one another (4:2).⁴⁰ It was not just these two ladies but the frequent



“denunciations of envy, rivalry, selfish ambition, vain conceit, grumbling, and arguing”⁴¹ that indicates that the church members in general were experiencing

disunity due to having set their minds on earthly rather than heavenly things (3:19-20). Paul implores both the ladies and the church to be “like minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind” (1:27; 2:1–5, 14; 3:17, 20; 4:2).⁴² They are to be unified as they eagerly await the Savior who by the power that enables Him to bring everything under His control, will transform their lowly bodies so that they will be like His glorious body” (4:21)!

Reflection. How many churches today are touched by spiritual revival only to be “devitalized by splits, parties, and secessions? Can there be doubt that disunity is a primary weapon against the effectiveness of the church?”⁴³ Is not the only way for people who often are of different race, economic and social backgrounds to experience unity amidst diversity is through submission to Christ who is the vine and alone assigns spiritual gifts and divine and interdependent roles inside the church?

The fourth issue Paul wants to address is the necessity of rejoicing in suffering. Rejoicing in the Lord is not only the best remedy against the spirit dissension⁴⁴ but also is the key to persevering with joy in the throws of affliction and opposition.⁴⁵ “Suffering is a major theme through Paul’s entire discourse: he describes his experience in chains facing execution (1:12–26); he explains that Christians are called to suffer for Christ (1:29); he quotes the hymn depicting Christ’s death on a cross (2:8); he points to himself as one being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from the faith of the Philippians (2:17); he relates how Epaphroditus

⁴⁰ G. Walter Hansen, [The Letter to the Philippians](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 5.

⁴¹ G. Walter Hansen, [The Letter to the Philippians](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 26.

⁴² G. Walter Hansen, [The Letter to the Philippians](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 25.

⁴³ J. A. Motyer, [The Message of Philippians](#), The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1984), 20.

⁴⁴ H. D. M. Spence-Jones, ed., [Philippians](#), The Pulpit Commentary (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), x–xi.

⁴⁵ Tony Merida and Francis Chan, [Exalting Jesus in Philippians](#), ed. David Platt, Daniel L. Akin, and Tony Merida, Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2016), Php 1:1–2.

suffered in the course of his service on behalf of the Philippians (2:27–30); he records his loss of all things to gain Christ (3:8); he expresses his desire to share in the sufferings of Christ (3:10); and he says that he knows what it is to be in need (4:12).⁴⁶ Paul tells the church that Christ is their joy for in Him they will find “confidence and security, for He is the Lord of all circumstances, and when proved is found sufficient.”⁴⁷ Paul acknowledges the church of Philippi are going through the same struggles as he did (1:30; cf. 2:17–18; 3:17) and tells them the key to surviving and thriving amidst suffering is to have their “joy tied to the progress of the Gospel, not to physical comfort or social acceptance (1:18).”⁴⁸ And the last and the main issue Paul addresses is an overarching desire to advance the Gospel message. Above all Paul implores the church of Philippi as “citizens of heaven” (3:20)⁴⁹ to have fellowship and walk worthy of the Gospel⁵⁰ because they are in Christ Jesus their Lord! Though they are feeling the sting of oppression and persecution they are to fearlessly share the Gospel message

⁴⁶ G. Walter Hansen, [The Letter to the Philippians](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 27.

⁴⁷ J. A. Motyer, [The Message of Philippians](#), The Bible Speaks Today (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1984), 22–23.

⁴⁸ Clinton E. Arnold, [Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Romans to Philemon](#), vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 346.

⁴⁹ R. Kent Hughes, [Philippians: The Fellowship of the Gospel](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007), 20.

⁵⁰ R. Kent Hughes, [Philippians: The Fellowship of the Gospel](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007), 20.

“with joy, working together in hardship”⁵¹ with the full realization that though they currently be “partners in affliction”⁵² by “forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead” they will one day win the prize for which God has called them heavenward in Christ Jesus” (3:13-14)!

Greetings

In keeping with the format of ancient letters of his time Paul begins his letter by declaring the sender, to whom he is writing, and concludes with a greeting.⁵³ Paul includes Timothy’s name in the opening of the letter not likely as a co-author as he had been in other letters of Paul’s but likely due to Timothy acting as his secretary in writing the letter,⁵⁴ Timothy

⁵¹ Tony Merida and Francis Chan, [Exalting Jesus in Philippians](#), ed. David Platt, Daniel L. Akin, and Tony Merida, Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2016), Php 1:1–2.

⁵² H. D. M. Spence-Jones, ed., [Philippians](#), The Pulpit Commentary (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), ix–x.

⁵³ Daniel M. Gurtner, “[Philippians](#),” in [The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary: Acts–Philemon](#), ed. Craig A. Evans and Craig A. Bubeck, First Edition. (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2004), 573.

⁵⁴ G. Walter Hansen, [The Letter to the Philippians](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 37.

being his most trusted co-worker (2:20)⁵⁵ and their partnership of proclaiming the Gospel message.⁵⁶ Paul does not use his title “apostle” as he had in other letters likely due to wanting the letter to be “general, unofficial, personal, affectionate”⁵⁷ and to accentuate both his and Timothy’s qualifications to serve was



due to being bondservants⁵⁸ of the person of Christ Jesus whom was the central theme of his letter.⁵⁹ The letter is addressed to “all of God’s holy people,” the saints in Christ Jesus at Philippi.⁶⁰ Those who have faith in Christ Jesus

are not “common ordinary people” but born again, set apart from the ways of this world that “defileth” to be holy as God is holy!⁶¹ Paul used the term “Saints” for all “Christians” regardless of their level of maturity in the faith, political, or social status in

society.⁶² While his letter was written to all the saints, Paul specifically mentions his writing is intended for the overseers and deacons of the various churches at Philippi. The overseer in Paul’s day was the spiritual father and shepherd of the church responsible for preaching and being good stewards⁶³ while the deacons primarily waited on tables and the daily distribution of alms to the widows and the poor (Acts 6:1-2).

Paul finished the opening of his letter by stating, “grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ” (1:2). Paul wanted the Philippians to know that grace was displayed in the lives of not only the senders but the receivers his letter!

No one is saved by “performing religious rituals” or “being a Jew from the line of Abraham!” No, it was by belief in the atoning sacrifice of Christ who being in the very nature of God

⁵⁵ Clinton E. Arnold, [Zondervan Illustrated Bible Backgrounds Commentary: Romans to Philemon](#), vol. 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002), 348.

⁵⁶ R. Kent Hughes, [Philippians: The Fellowship of the Gospel](#), Preaching the Word (Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2007), 19.

⁵⁷ Marvin Richardson Vincent, [Word Studies in the New Testament](#), vol. 3 (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1887), 413.

⁵⁸ Daniel M. Gurtner, “[Philippians](#),” in [The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary: Acts–Philemon](#), ed. Craig A. Evans and Craig A. Bubeck, First Edition. (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2004), 573.

⁵⁹ Paul Barnett, [Philippians & Philemon: Joy in the Lord](#), ed. Paul Barnett, Reading the Bible Today Series (Sydney, South NSW: Aquila Press, 2016), 14.

⁶⁰ G. Walter Hansen, [The Letter to the Philippians](#), The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, England: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2009), 39.

⁶¹ H. D. M. Spence-Jones, ed., [Philippians](#), The Pulpit Commentary (London; New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1909), 2.

⁶² Paul Barnett, [Philippians & Philemon: Joy in the Lord](#), ed. Paul Barnett, Reading the Bible Today Series (Sydney, South NSW: Aquila Press, 2016), 15.

⁶³ Daniel M. Gurtner, “[Philippians](#),” in [The Bible Knowledge Background Commentary: Acts–Philemon](#), ed. Craig A. Evans and Craig A. Bubeck, First Edition. (Colorado Springs, CO: David C Cook, 2004), 574.

made Himself a servant and humbled Himself by dying on the cross (2:5-8) for the sins of the many, that bought their way to become saved! Grace is the favour of God which brings salvation to the unmerited, and reconciliation and peace that surpasses all understanding to those who have been bought at the price of Christ's very life (1 Corinthians 6:20)!

Looking Forward

Paul's letter to the Philippians is just 104 verses⁶⁴ but it is packed with love and wisdom that is meant for all generations.



When we look back at the warped and crooked generation of the city of Philippi with its eighteen different opponents and their never-ending supply of foreign gods one can't help but compare them to this day and age and draw some rather stark similarities. How is our culture's rejection of absolute truth and their belittling anyone who believes in but one

God any different that of Roman times? Though the church just started out with a handful of devout women it grew rapidly but

so did disunity within the body of Christ. Do we not have struggles for power and disunity because our members are not like-minded, having their eyes set on earthly rather than heavenly things? Do we not have our share of dogs and evil doers, who have placed way too much confidence in the flesh rather than joyful submission to their creator, within the sacred walls of our churches? And while in North America we are unlikely to physically suffer due to our beliefs in but one God are we not hard pressed on every side to conform to the world's belief that self determines truth? Which of our churches can honestly say that false beliefs have not at minimum watered down and worst yet completely changed their doctrines so much so that many members have become defenders of the broad path of sin rather than the narrow path of righteousness? Living in an age of strife, diseases, conflict, and persecution who of us does not desperately need to hear and apply Paul's Spirit filled words of correction and encouragement so that one can joyfully and with assurance in our inner being state "rejoice in the Lord always, again I say rejoice" (4:4)? While Paul's letter was written to Philippi, I invite you as we go through this sermon series to open your eyes so that you might see, your mind that you might understand, and your heart so that you might be transformed by the words of joy and steadfastness in the faith that Paul has given to **ALL** the saints in Christ Jesus our Lord!

⁶⁴ Tony Merida and Francis Chan, *Exalting Jesus in Philippians*, ed. David Platt, Daniel L. Akin, and Tony Merida, Christ-Centered Exposition Commentary (Nashville, TN: Holman Reference, 2016), Php 1:1-2.