

## INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY OF

# Philippians

**Written** by a servant named Paul, to saints in Philippi (1:1) about A.D. 62, this little letter shines with the joy of the Lord Jesus Christ!

**Sixth** of Paul's nine church letters (between Ephesians and Colossians), this is the warmest, written to perhaps his favorite congregation.

**Prison** epistle: The Philippian church was born in a prison experience (Acts 16:12-40), and this letter was written from another jail, in Rome (1:12-16).

**Centerpiece** of the letter balances human responsibility with God's sovereignty. Paul exhorts his beloved children to "work out their salvation with fear and trembling" because "it is God who works in them," giving them both the desire and the power to do His will (2:12, 13).

**Paul's gospel** creates fellowship, receives confirmation and defense, is furthered through difficulty, focuses on Christ and faith, requires labor, and had a beginning in that region (1:5, 7, 12, 17, 27; 2:22; 4:3, 15).

**High on Christ:** Paul mentions Jesus Christ seven times in the introduction (1:1-11) and eleven more times before chapter 1 is complete. The Jesus hymn (2:5-11) is a devotional classic, and Christ is the hero of Paul's autobiography (3:3-14). Ending the letter, Paul promises God's supply of riches in glory, greets the saints, and blesses them with grace — all through the Lord Jesus Christ (4:19-23).

**Joy/rejoice** (16 times): Why does Paul rejoice and tell others to?

- for the privilege of prayer (1:4)
- because Christ is preached (1:18)
- for faith itself and for faithful men (1:25, 26)
- at the prospect of unity (2:2)
- at the prospect of Christ finding them faithful (2:16)
- if the sacrifice of his life confirms their faith (2:17, 18)

- when they see Epaphroditus again (2:28)
  - for the Lord himself and their place in Him (3:1; 4:4)
  - for the Philippians and their liberality (4:1, 10)
- "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice" (4:4).

With many reasons to rejoice, two problems existed in Philippi:

- mild conflict inside the church (2:1-4, 14; 4:2)
- mild persecution from the outside (1:27-30)

### Classic chapters, key verses

- **One** (12-26). How to enjoy a jail: witness to the jailers; cheer for others preaching Christ; trust that if you're executed, you're ahead with the Lord. "For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain" (1:21).
- **Two** (1-11). How to honor Jesus: bow before Him; confess He is Lord; follow His example of unity, love, and service for others. "Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus" (2:5).
- **Three** (3-14). How to balance life's

score: trade all self-boasting for the righteousness that comes by faith in Christ. "What things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ" (3:7).

- **Four** (4-13). How to handle a hardship: rejoice; be gentle; don't worry; pray; think right; do right; be content! "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (4:13).

### Paul's co-workers

- Timothy, who would soon visit Philippi on Paul's behalf (2:19-24)
- Epaphroditus, who carried the Philippians' gifts to Paul; he was deathly ill and would carry this letter back to them (2:25-30).

Nowhere does the heart of Paul shine through as it does here:

- his confidence (1:6)
- his prayer (1:9-11)
- his competitors (1:14-18)
- his enemies, the Judaizers (3:2, 18, 19)
- his status, achievement (3:7, 8)
- his material things (4:10-19)
- his love for the church (1:7, 8; 4:1)
- his suffering (1:28-30; 2:17, 18)
- his focus, or mind-set (3:10-16; 4:8)
- his hope and expectation (1:20; 3:8-11, 20, 21)
- his life and death (1:19-26)

Paul's counsel to the church:

- Live worthy of the gospel (1:27).
- Unite; work together (1:27; 2:1-4; 2:14).
- Imitate and honor Christ (2:5-11).
- Let the light shine (2:15).
- Hold fast the Word (2:16).
- Honor God's servants (2:19-30, esp. v. 29).
- Follow Paul's example (3:17; 4:9).
- Pray and give thanks (4:6, 7).

**Philippians in a sentence:** Though facing death in Caesar's jail, Paul writes brightly of his confidence and joy in Christ and his love for the Philippians as he thanks them for their recent support.