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Article 50: Philippians at a Glance

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PHILIPPIANS AT A GLANCE

This book was written by the imprisoned Paul in Rome to thank the Philippian church for its generosity and to present Jesus Christ as life's purpose (1:6), life's pattern (2:5-6), life's prize (3:14), and life's power (4:13).

BOTTOM LINE INTRODUCTION

CAN IT BE? IS IT POSSIBLE TO OFFER UP PRAISE IN A PRISON AND TO WRITE OF JOY FROM A JAILHOUSE?

It is indeed, as demonstrated by the wonderful book of Philippians. The words *joy* and *rejoicing* are found no less than 18 times in Philippians more than any other biblical book for its size. The secret and source of this joy is Christ, which name in various forms appears some 70 times in this epistle.

FACTS REGARDING THE AUTHOR OF THIS BOOK

1. Who? **Paul**. He was also known as Saul of Tarsus (Acts 9:11). This relentless enemy of Christians (Acts 8:3; 22:5, 19; 26:11; Gal. 1:13) would, following his conversion (Acts 9:3-9), become the greatest missionary, church planter, soul winner, and theologian in church history, authoring nearly half of the New Testament books!
2. What? The books of Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon.
3. When and where? Written 61 A.D. from Rome.
4. Why and to whom? Showing how to maintain Christian joy at all times. Addressed to the church at Philippi.

KEY EVENTS

1. Christ is the believer's purpose in life
2. Christ is the believer's pattern in life
3. Christ is the believer's prize in life
4. Christ is the believer's power in life

KEY INDIVIDUALS

1. **Paul**, author of Philippians and at least 12 other New Testament books, church planter, evangelist, missionary, and perhaps the greatest of all the apostles
2. **Timothy**, Paul's close companion during the apostle's first imprisonment in Rome, who would later receive two letters (1 and 2 Timothy) from the apostle
3. **Epaphroditus**, faithful Philippian church member sent to aid the imprisoned Paul in Rome, and, while there, healed by God of a serious illness
4. **Euodia and Syntyche**, two women at odds in the Philippian church who were urged by Paul to be reconciled

KEY PLACES

1. **Philippi:** one of the key cities in Macedonia. Paul founded the church there during his second missionary trip and wrote the Book of Philippians to them while a political prisoner in Rome.
2. **Rome:** capital city of the mighty Roman Empire, from which the imprisoned Paul wrote four of his New Testament books, one being the Book of Philippians.

UNIQUE FEATURES

1. This epistle is addressed to the first church that Paul founded in Europe.
2. It seems to have been his favorite church.
3. It may have had more Gentiles in its membership than any other church founded by Paul.
4. It was probably the last written of Paul's four prison epistles.
5. Like Romans, Philippians has more than one closing, as if Paul was reluctant to end his letter (3:1; 4:8, 20).
6. Philippians is the most personal of Paul's letters to churches, with more than 100 first-person pronouns in its four short chapters. It serves as an open window into the apostle's very heart.
7. Paul received more financial support from this church than from any other (Acts 18:5; 2 Cor. 8:1-15; 11:7-10; Phil. 4:15, 16).
8. He refers to his readers as brethren on six occasions, and beloved on two occasions.
9. The epistle answers the question regarding God's attitude of those who preach Christ with insincere notions (1:18).
10. It gives us the first of two predictions that someday all creatures, both saved and unsaved will acknowledge that Jesus is Lord of all (2:11; Rev. 5:13).
11. It also provides the first of two passages which assures us our new bodies will be fashioned like Christ's glorified body (3:21; 1 Jn. 3:2).
12. It contains no direct quotations from the Old Testament.
13. It is the only letter of Paul in which he mentions church officers in the salutation (1:1).
14. The church at Philippi was founded as a result of a supernatural vision experienced by Paul while at Troas during his second missionary trip (see Acts 16:8-10).
15. During his brief stay there he and Silas saw God work marvelously in the lives of at least three individuals.
 - An Asian businesswoman named Lydia whom God saved from Judaism (Acts 16:13-15)
 - A Greek soothsayer whom God saved from demonism (Acts 16:16-18)
 - A Roman jailer whom God saved from emperorism (the worship of Caesar, Acts 16:27-32)
16. Those three converts represented three nationalities, Jew, Greek, Roman.
17. Thus this church, conceived in a vision, would reach its apex in a prison. Strange and wonderful indeed are the ways of God.
18. For its size, Philippians speaks more about Christian unity than any other biblical book. (See 2:1-4; 3:15-17; 4:1-3.)

19. It also describes the second (of two) kinds of peace in the Bible.
 - The peace *with* God, experienced by all believers (Rom. 5:1)
 - The peace *of* God, experienced by Spirit-filled believers (Phil. 4:7)
20. Women played a key role in this church. These were: Lydia, former demonic girl, Euodias, and Syntyche (Acts 16:13-18; Phil. 4:2).
21. Philippians contains the greatest theological passages on the person of Christ in all the Bible (2:5-11)
22. This amazing portion of scripture may represent the earliest Christian hymn, proclaiming in musical tones:
 - The eternal deity of Jesus
 - His incarnation
 - His humiliation
 - His obedience to the Father
 - His resurrection (implied)
 - His exaltation
23. The passage ends with a promise that someday all creation will bow in submission and acknowledge that Jesus is indeed supreme lord of all!
24. In a nutshell, the history of this church and the reason for the Philippian epistle is as follows:
 - The city of Philippi was founded by Philip of Macedon (father of Alexander the Great) in 357 B.C., and named after him. It was some 700 miles from Rome and enjoyed full Roman citizenship privileges.
 - In A.D. 57, at the end of his third missionary trip (some five years after his first visit), Paul seems to have paid two brief visits to Philippi (see 2 Cor. 1:16; Acts 19:21; 20:1-3).
 - The year A.D. 60 finds the apostle a prisoner in Rome. Acts 28:30-31 indicates that he was confined to his own hired house, being chained to various Roman soldiers every six hours. Although he could not preach in public, he was allowed to write (Eph. 6:20; Phil. 1:7, 14, 16; Col. 4:18; Philem. 1, 10, 13).
 - It was therefore at this time, some ten years after his original visit to Philippi, that Paul wrote the epistle of Philippians to his favorite church.
 - This church, upon learning of his imprisonment in Rome, had sent a love offering by way of Epaphroditus. They had already sent him two other love gifts years back for his missionary endeavors in Thessalonica (Phil. 4:15-16).
 - While in Rome, Epaphroditus had become very ill and nearly died. But God spared his life. Paul thus writes Philippians both to thank them for their gift and also to report the good news of Epaphroditus' recovery.

COMPARISON WITH OTHER BIBLE BOOKS

1. **Second Timothy:**

- Philippians was Paul's last epistle during his first Roman imprisonment.
- Second Timothy was Paul's last pastoral epistle during his final Roman imprisonment.

TITLES FOR AND TYPES OF JESUS

1. Jesus Christ (1:1a)
2. Christ Jesus (1:1b)
3. The Lord Jesus Christ (1:2)
4. Christ (2:1)
5. The servant (2:7)
6. The one equal with God (2:6)
7. The Savior (3:20)