

The Book of Philippians

Overview of the Book

The Book of Philippians, written by Paul in 62 AD (when he was about 61 years old), contains 4 chapters and 104 verses written to the Church at Philippi in East Macedonia. Next time we meet, we will talk more about how that church was established on Paul's 2nd missionary journey (49-52 AD).

The Book of Philippians was written acknowledging receipt of a gift of money from the church while Paul was under house arrest in Rome. It was delivered from the church to Paul by Epaphroditus, who had traveled 600-800 miles from Philippi. Paul wanted to thank them for the gift, which he called a "fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God" in **Philippians 4:18**.

Three of the main themes that we will find as we study Philippians include:

1. **Proclaiming the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ** by teaching doctrine and edifying and encouraging believers.

2. **Pursuing Christlikeness.**

The name "Jesus Christ" appears over 40 times in this epistle. He is the center of it and the One who is the very source of the next theme, which is "joy."

3. **Living with joy** plays prominently as a theme.

"Joy," "rejoice," or "gladness" are mentioned 19 times in the Book of Philippians.

One of the points that Paul drives home in this book is the fact that life does not have to be easy to be joyful - - in fact, he points out that ease of living and joy of heart have little to do with one other. Consider Paul's circumstances - - look at what he says in **2 Corinthians 11:23-27** (he wrote 2 Corinthians about 10 years before Philippians):

"I've worked much harder, been jailed more often, beaten up more times than I can count, and at death's door time after time. I've been flogged five times with the Jews' thirty-nine lashes, beaten by Roman rods three times, pummeled with rocks once. I've been shipwrecked three times and immersed in the open sea for a night and a day. In hard traveling year in and year out, I've had to ford rivers, fend off robbers, struggle with friends, struggle with foes. I've been at risk in the city, at risk in the country, endangered by desert sun and sea storm, and betrayed by those I thought were my brothers, I've known drudgery and hard labor, many a long and lonely night without sleep, many a missed meal, blasted by the cold, naked to the weather."

If you read through Philippians and attempt to determine the reasoning behind the chapter divisions developed by Stephen Langton (Archbishop of Canterbury) in 1227 AD, you will find that they are as follows:

- A. Chapter 1 – Philosophy of Christian Living
- B. Chapter 2 – Pattern for Christian Living
- C. Chapter 3 – Prize for Christian Living
- D. Chapter 4 – Power for Christian Living

The structure of Paul's letter is similar in style to a letter we might write today, with a greeting, body, and closing. The Holy Spirit provided Him with both format and content for the letter that flow very smoothly and systematically (God is not a God of confusion - 1 Corinthians 14:33).