

AN INTRODUCTION TO PHILIPPIANS

(Acts 16:9-40; Philippians 1-4)

Series: "Philippians: The Joyful Letter" (Part 1)

..."Any Christian who is feeling down or discouraged about anything should read and study Paul's great letter to the Philippians." This is true due to Paul's circumstances when he wrote it, yet no book of the Bible is so filled with joy as Philippians. What was Paul's secret? We must discover it, for often we are prone to discouragement. ...Yet, Philippians is not just for people who are feeling down, or even joyful. It is a rich book with a great wealth of themes within its 104 verses. Most of the major doctrines of the Christian faith are covered, and the main theme is our Lord Jesus Christ. Joy and Jesus are forever connected. Our joy in life is found because of Him. ...A study of the origin of the Philippian Church in the Book of Acts reveals it to be a most unlikely church, except for the fact that Jesus is building His church by calling people (us) to salvation through the power of the Gospel.

TWO REASONS WHY THE PHILIPPIAN CHURCH WAS A MOST UNLIKELY CHURCH...APART FROM GOD'S PROVIDENCE.

...This is true of every work of God, even Grace Church. Jesus is building His church, His bride. It is miraculous!

I. It Was In The Wrong Place. (Acts 16:9-12) (Far From Jerusalem)

- A. The Book of Acts, written by Dr. Luke, continues to tell the work of Jesus through the Holy Spirit in building His church. Acts provides a select 35-year history unfolding the story of how Christianity spread from Jerusalem to Rome. Jesus had given the marching orders. (1:8)
 1. Peter, the Apostle to the Jews is the main character in Acts 1-12. Jerusalem!!!
 2. Paul, the Apostle to the Gentiles is chiefly in focus in Acts 13-28. Rome!!!
- B. In our text, Paul is on his 2nd missionary journey, revisiting his church plants in modern day Turkey, located in Asia. He is now with Silas, having separated from Barnabas due to a strong disagreement because of John Mark. Mark had quit the team on the first missionary journey.
 1. Closed doors. Paul had tried to push ahead but God would not permit...he had his plans, but God was directing his every step. (Not north, south, nor...) Confusing time? (6-7)
 2. Open door. God gave him a call through a vision to go to Europe. (9-10) Go East!!!
..."The Macedonian Vision." God was moving, for Jesus was building His church.
- C. God directed Paul to Europe, to the city of Philippi, to plant this unlikely church. (11-12)
 1. Philippi was a major city, located on the main highway from Asia to Europe. It was filled with all sort of activity, from industry, education, and the arts.
 2. Philippi had the special designation of being a Roman Colony, in the midst of "Greece."
...Many Roman soldiers retired here, given large tracts of land for serving Caesar.
...They were not under Macedonia law, but Roman law. Not subject to taxation.

II. It Had The Wrong People. (Acts 16:13-34) (What An Unusual Mixture!!!)

...Paul's custom was to go to the synagogue and present Jesus to the Jews. But here no synagogue!

...He found a prayer meeting and Bible study of women down by "the riverside." God began the church...

- A. The Business Woman: Lydia. She was a foreigner, wealthy, and a God-fearer.
 1. God was preparing her heart. You might say she was a "seeker" at this point.
 2. Paul presents Jesus as Lord and Savior, and she becomes a believer and received believer's baptism as a testimony of her new found faith. (14) (Her family too!)
 3. She offers her home to be used for the church's beginning. (15)

- B. The Slave Girl. She is impoverished, enslaved, and exploited.
 - 1. She follows Paul around the city screaming her head off. "Crazy." (17)
 - 2. Now God goes after her, and opens her heart and changes her life. New birth!!
- C. The Blue-Collar Joe. The Jailer. He is cruel, a "salt of the earth" type of guy. (19-34)
 - 1. He was to keep the prisoners safe, but he tortures them.
 - 2. Paul and Silas are singing praises to God. He is listening to them...God is working.
 - 3. God miraculously delivers Paul by sending an earthquake. God controls His world...
 - 4. Jailer is saved. He too believed upon the Lord Jesus and is delivered from his sin. ...Acts 16:31. This wonderful verse presents the wonderful Gospel!

Book theme: Joy is found in Christ Alone! Chapter one: "Christ is our life." Chapter two: "Christ is our mind." Chapter three: "Christ is our goal." Chapter four: "Christ is our strength."

SO WHAT? WHAT DIFFERENCE SHOULD THIS MAKE IN YOUR LIFE?

- 1. Joy in life, in your life, is found only in Jesus. He gives His joy to you when you come to know Him through salvation and then strive to walk with Him daily. Joy is a most wonderful thing, a fruit of the Spirit in our lives. It is so amazing, almost intoxicating. It is the deepest heart happiness that wells up within and flows out everywhere, no matter the circumstances we find ourselves in. Once tasted, you will never settle for a cheap substitute.
- 2. Perhaps you consider yourself an unlikely person to be called by God, saved, and brought into God's family. It really is amazing grace for each one of us. All of us are really unlikely candidates for heaven, "but God who is rich in mercy, saves us." Praise His wonderful name.
- 3. Grace Church is composed of all of us. Our sweet church is a family of all sorts of "different" people who would probably never know each other apart from God's calling in our life. Praise God for each one here. You belong here. "How beautiful the body of Christ!!!" We would be greatly diminished without you!!!
- 4. Today come to realize that before holy God you are a sinner and lost awaiting judgment. God has provided in His Son the only way of escape from Hell. Today He offers you the free-gift of salvation by receiving Christ as your Savior and Lord. Today in your heart bow before Him, confess your sin, repent, and receive Jesus as Savior.