

Key to PHILIPPIANS

1. BACKGROUND:

Writer: Paul the Apostle. The place of writing is Rome (prison), and the time, about A.D. 63.

This letter is written to a church in Philippi, an important city and a Roman colony (military center). The church had been founded by Paul some ten years earlier (Acts 16).

Occasion: Learning of Paul's imprisonment, the church took up an offering for him and sent it to Rome by the hand of a young man named Epaphroditus. Philippians is the letter or "thank you note" which Paul wrote in appreciation to the church.

2. THEME:

This letter is the most affectionate of all Paul's writings. It is free from censure and full of tenderness and expressions of love. The general subject seems to be that of rejoicing in spite of manifold testings. Key words are: "rejoice," "content," "joy," "peace." The key verse might be 4:4. The thought of GOD's overruling providence pervades the Epistle. Paul expresses it well in 1:21 **"to live is Christ, and to die is gain."**

3. MAIN DIVISIONS:

CHRIST - the Life of Life (1); the Pattern of Life (2); the Goal of Life (3); the All-Sufficiency of Life (4).

Another: Joy of Faith (1); Joy of Love (2); Joy of Communion (3); Joy of Hope (4).

4. SPECIAL CHARACTERISTICS:

There is no reproof or correction for the church at Philippi. Evidently they were walking in the light of the truth of GOD for Paul expresses no anxiety or concern for them. The term "joy" is the predominant note of the Epistle, being used 17 times. This quality is one of the fruits of the SPIRIT (Galatians 5:22, 23).

Paul promises to send his greatly beloved Timothy to the church (2:19-23) but also suggests that he may come himself shortly (2:24). The "mailman" of the letter was Epaphroditus who almost lost his life through illness. Paul praises his faithfulness highly. While not strictly a "doctrinal" letter, some important teaching is woven into the structure, as for instance, foundation truth of giving and receiving (4:10-19), the example of CHRIST for our life of humility and exaltation (2:5-10).

5. OUTLINE:

Introduction (1)
Gratitude
Memory (1)

Experience (1)
Expectation (1)
Exhortation
Unity (2)
Humility (2)
Cheerfulness (2)
Ministering Messengers (2)
Warning
Legalism (3)
False Liberty (3)
Rejoicing (4)
Conclusion (4)

6. OUTSTANDING TEACHINGS:

Paul's great motto of life is evidently that of 1:21. It was no longer Paul who lived, or even Saul of Tarsus, but CHRIST who was all and in all.

Part of the "all things" of Romans 8:28 for Paul was imprisonment (1:12, 13). Paul was in reality "**prisoner of the Lord**" in Rome.

The pattern of our life is evidently the pattern of the life of our LORD as given in 2:5-11. First the humiliation, then the exaltation.

The value of earthly achievements is treated in 3:4-14. In comparison with what we have in CHRIST, they are all loss.

A most gracious promise is 4:19, which in its wider application is able to encompass the entire Christian experience.

7. KEY:

Just remember that Paul was one of the LORD's own even though in prison. Then read the chapters ten times and you'll not need to get hold of them - they will already have taken hold of you.

~ end of Philippians ~

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