

Philippians

Philippi in History	Philippi was a Roman colony that was seen in the ancient world as a “mini” Rome with one big difference: Philippi had existed long before Rome came into power as a Greek city (think Alexander the Great and Macedonia). In Philippi, the biggest religious expression was the <u>imperial cult</u> . They believed that Caesar was the Lord and Savior. It was Caesar, in their minds, who was able to bring peace and salvation into the world.
Paul in Philippi	Luke records Paul’s visit to Philippi in Acts 16. It’s where: (1) Paul and his companions encountered Lydia, a wealthy dealer of purple cloth (for the imperial cult) and led her to Christ; (2) They are pestered by a slave girl who makes her owners rich by fortune telling. When they rebuke her, it sets off a chain reaction; (3) Paul and Silas are dragged before the magistrates and thrown into prison and are (4) set free by a violent earthquake. The Philippian jailer was also converted from this experience.
Another Prison Epistle	Paul wrote Philippians near the end of his Roman imprisonment (not the Philippian imprisonment) in AD 61/62. Unlike Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon that were delivered by Tychicus, Philippians was delivered by Epaphroditus. He got sick in Rome and couldn’t deliver it as fast as Paul wanted or the Philippians expected. What’s important to remember is this: (1) Paul was about to die; (2) and Epaphroditus was not healthy. Both pieces of information are important for understanding the theme of the book.
The Theme of Philippians	The Joy of the Lord (an important theme considering the circumstances of Paul and Epaphroditus)
What Joy in Philippians is <u>Not</u>	Joy isn’t an emotion that moves us to jump up and down in the midst of difficult – even deadly – life circumstances. That would be inconsistent with the feelings those circumstances bring in life.
What Joy <u>Is</u> in Philippians	Joy is a state of being and a state of existence that transcends circumstances. It says: “All may not be well around me. But all is well with my soul.” It’s not being happy about difficult circumstances. It’s being satisfied in Christ in the midst of them.
Key Verse	“I can do all things through Christ who gives me strength” (Phil. 4:13)

Joy in Paul’s Life (ch 1)	
Joyful for the Philippians	³ I thank my God every time I remember you. ⁴ In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy ⁵ because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, ⁶ being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus. (1:3-6)
Joyful about his Circumstances	¹² Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. ¹³ As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. ¹⁴ And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear. (1:12-14)
Joyful about the Future	Yes, and I will continue to rejoice, ¹⁹ for I know that through your prayers and God’s provision of the Spirit of Jesus Christ what has happened to me will turn out for my deliverance. ²⁰ I eagerly expect and hope that I will in no way be ashamed, but will have sufficient courage so that now as always Christ will be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death. ²¹ For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain. ²² If I am to go on living in the body, this will mean fruitful labor for me. Yet what shall I choose? I do not know! ²³ I am torn between the two: I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is better by far; ²⁴ but it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body (1:18-24)
What We Can Learn	There are two ways to look at circumstances: (a) the lens of “woe” or (b) the lens of “joy.” For Paul, as long as God’s grace is operable, joy is the only Christian response.

How Joy is Manifested in Our Life (ch 2)	
By a Standard	⁵ In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: ⁶ Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; ⁷ rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. ⁸ And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross! ⁹ Therefore God exalted him to the highest place and gave him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰ that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹ and every tongue acknowledge that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. (2:5-11)

By Applying that Standard to Our Attitudes and Behavior	¹² Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, ¹³ for it is God who works in you to will and to act in order to fulfill his good purpose. ¹⁴ Do everything without grumbling or arguing, ¹⁵ so that you may become blameless and pure, “children of God without fault in a warped and crooked generation.” Then you will shine among them like stars in the sky ¹⁶ as you hold firmly to the word of life. And then I will be able to boast on the day of Christ that I did not run or labor in vain. ¹⁷ But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. ¹⁸ So you too should be glad and rejoice with me. (2:12-18)
What We Can Apply from This	When we look to Jesus as our example, then Jesus’ example will be manifested in our lives. In other words, if Jesus had joy and we look to him, we will also.

How to Guard Your Joy (ch 3)	
Don’t Let Others Steal It	Further, my brothers and sisters, rejoice in the Lord! It is no trouble for me to write the same things to you again, and it is a safeguard for you. ² Watch out for those dogs, those evildoers, those mutilators of the flesh. ³ For it is we who are the circumcision, we who serve God by his Spirit, who boast in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh— ⁴ though I myself have reasons for such confidence. (3:1-4)
Don’t Let Confidence in the Flesh Steal It	If someone else thinks they have reasons to put confidence in the flesh, I have more: ⁵ circumcised on the eighth day, of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; in regard to the law, a Pharisee; ⁶ as for zeal, persecuting the church; as for righteousness based on the law, faultless. ⁷ But whatever were gains to me I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ What is more, I consider everything a loss because of the surpassing worth of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them garbage, that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in [a] Christ—the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. ¹⁰ I want to know Christ—yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ and so, somehow, attaining to the resurrection from the dead. (3:4-11)
By Looking to Examples of Those Who Have Gone Before Us	¹⁷ Join together in following my example, brothers and sisters, and just as you have us as a model, keep your eyes on those who live as we do. ¹⁸ For, as I have often told you before and now tell you again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. ¹⁹ Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is set on earthly things. ²⁰ But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ (3:17-20)

How to Apply Joy (ch 4)	
Be Anxious for Nothing	⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! ⁵ Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. ⁶ Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus. (4:4-6)
Focus on What is Pure	⁸ Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things. ⁹ Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me—put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you. (4:8-9)
Contentment in All Circumstances	¹¹ I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. ¹² I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. ¹³ I can do all this through him who gives me strength. (4:11-13)

“There is enough in God to furnish us with matter of joy in the worst circumstance on earth. Rejoice in the Lord always. If good men have not a continual feast, it is their own fault” (Matthew Henry)