



Finer Grounds Bible Study

Philippians Lesson 2: The Church at Philippi

Last week we spent time focusing on the author of this book. When reading through Philippians, we need to remember that it is a letter that also has a specific recipient. Before we dive in and try to determine what application we can find in Philippians for ourselves, we need to first understand what the letter meant to the audience it was written to. That being said, this week we will take a deeper look into the church at Philippi and Paul's relationship with them.

Read Acts 16:1-12. How did Paul decide to travel to Philippi and who was with him?

What do we notice about Philippi based on Acts 16:12?

Clearly the Holy Spirit understood that there were soft hearts ready to hear the gospel message throughout Macedonia. Because of Philippi's prime location in the mountain pass which was the main road that connected Europe and Asia, along with its rich mineral deposits, Caesar Augustus decided to make it a Roman colony. It became a miniature imperial city and, even

though squarely in Greece, the inhabitants could actually claim Roman citizenship (Spence-Jones, The Pulpit Commentary: Philippians ii).

Where does Paul usually begin preaching when he enters a city (cf Acts 13:5, 14, 14:1)?

Read Acts 16:13, where and on what day did Paul and Timothy go first to preach?

What do we notice about the group gathered there?

When entering a new city with the gospel message, the synagogue was an easy place to start for Paul. There were already devoted followers of God gathered together every Sabbath to study and meditate on God's word. In order to form a synagogue, there had to be ten Jewish men in the city. It seems as if Philippi was lacking this requirement; in fact, the only people we see



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gathered at the river to pray were women. This means that the long-term believers who were converted from Judaism to Christianity were going to be mostly women. This may seem like an inconsequential detail, but it really will play an important role in understanding the struggle going on in Philippi and the reason Paul decides to write this letter.

Because of the lack of men at this gathering, we can also infer one of three situations. First, there is the possibility that these women were single, though because of the reference to Lydia’s household I don’t think this is likely of all of them. Secondly, they may have been married to Romans. Another option is that they were married to unfaithful Jewish men that weren’t interested in worshipping God. In any case, these women were forced to step up and take ownership of their faith.

Read Acts 16:14-15. Who is the first convert in Philippi? Describe her conversion account.

What was her occupation? How might this have helped Paul and Silas make inroads in this new city?

Lydia was all in! Not only was she baptized into Christ, but she also converted her entire household. As a seller of purple

fabric (a color only the extremely wealthy could afford), she would have most likely had connections with many influential people in town. A relationship with Lydia would have most likely meant a significant boost to the reach of the gospel message in Philippi.

Read Acts 16:16-24 and describe the miracle that took place.

Why were people upset about what Paul had done?

What accusation did the men of the city make against Paul and Silas?

What was their punishment?

Paul and Silas had robbed these men of a massive source of income and the people of the city do not take that lightly. They fly into a rage and make up accusations against Paul and Silas, who were beaten and thrown into prison. This encounter would have made an impression on everyone in town, not only affecting how they saw Paul and Silas, but how they saw the other believers.



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Read Acts 16:25-34. What were Paul and Silas doing when the earthquake hit and how does this reflect their attitude toward the sufferings they were encountering?

What happened after the earthquake?

What effect did the actions of Paul and Silas have on the guard?

Describe the guard's conversion account.

This account is an amazing preview of exactly the attitude Paul discusses in his letter to the Philippians. Clearly Paul knew that he could be as effective for Christ sitting in a prison cell as he could traveling the countryside, and in this he would rejoice! Even after a harsh beating and being shackled in a cell, He and Silas sit and sing praises to God. This type of attitude will be the central focus of our study so start meditating this week on whether you have some work to do in the attitude and mindset department.

Read Acts 16:35-40. When they were released, what did Paul say to them that worried them?

Why did the chief magistrates beg for them to leave the city?

Where did Paul and Silas go once they were released?

Before leaving town, Paul and Silas wanted to make sure they got to see their Christian brothers and sisters one more time. The word used for “encouraged” is PARAKALEO and means to urge or exhort. They were only able to be with the Christians in Philippi a short time and while we don’t know exactly what they said, there were definitely things Paul wanted to be sure they knew before they left.

Much of the rest we know about the church in Philippi comes from the letter to the Philippians itself. They were a loving congregation who truly wanted to be involved in Paul’s work both personally and financially.



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Take some time and read through the entire letter, listing all of the things we learn about this congregation. Be sure to include the verse reference.

This was a unique congregation who really had a heart for service and Paul loved them dearly. Next week we will look into the specific issue that caused Paul to write this letter. Be sure to keep reading through this short letter every day as we go through our study. By the end of our thirteen weeks together, you really will have written this message on your heart.