

Toward A Radical Unity

TRU-06 “The Church AT Philippi”

PAUL’S LETTER TO THE PHILIPPIANS

07/26/2026

PHIL 1:1-2 Paul and Timothy, servants of CHRIST JESUS, To all the saints in CHRIST JESUS who are at PHILIPPI, with the overseers and deacons: ² Grace to you and peace from GOD OUR FATHER and the LORD JESUS CHRIST.

PHILIPPIANS is one of PAUL’S PRISON LETTERS. This was a CHURCH which seems to have been dear to Paul’s heart... and in a city which presented intense challenges for the Believers.

THE CITY OF PHILIPPI:

ACTS 16:11-12 So, setting sail from TROAS, we made a direct voyage to SAMOTHRAKE, and the following day to NEAPOLIS, ¹² and from there to PHILIPPI, which is a leading city of the district of MACEDONIA and a ROMAN COLONY. We remained in this city some days.

The establishment of the CHURCH AT PHILIPPI, marks the entrance of the GOSPEL OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST into Europe. The account is described in ACTS 16:12-40 with the most detail revealed for any of the NT Churches.

LUKE describes the city as a ROMAN COLONY and the leading city of that district of Macedonia. (ACTS 16:12).

The history of the site goes back at least to PHILIP II OF MACEDON about the year 360 BC. He gave the town its name (PHILIP’S CITY) and fortified it. In 167 BC it became part of the ROMAN EMPIRE. Its real importance was not achieved until after 31 BC when OCTAVIAN [AUGUSTUS] defeated ANTONY and CLEOPATRA at the battle of nearby ACTIUM. The full title of the city then became “COLONY OF JULIUS AUGUSTUS OF PHILIPPI.” The dignity of PHILIPPI as a ROMAN COLONY is specially mentioned in ACTS 16:12 and is important for the background of the EPISTLE.

The benefits of this title, included the use of ROMAN LAW in local affairs and exemption from tribute and taxation. This privilege was the same as if they were on Italian soil. Thus, they were proudly called “CITIZENS OF ROME” not just “PHILIPPIANS.”

ACTS 16 bears witness to the presence of a Jewish community before the coming of the Christian Missionaries (ACTS 16:13). A number of Jewish women who had become proselytes met for prayer at the river. This indicates that there was no established SYNAGOGUE in the City in spite of the presence of a Jewish community. Paul addressed his message to these women, and the Lord opened their hearts. It is interesting to take note of the appeal of the Jewish faith to women.

This fact of “Judaism’s” strong attraction to women is seen in other mentions in THE BOOK OF ACTS:

ACTS 17:4 [THESSALONICA] “And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, [proclaiming JESUS as the CHRIST] as did a great many of the devout Greeks and not a few of the leading women.”
vs12 [BEREA] “Many of them therefore believed, with not a few Greek women of high standing as well as men.” [The order of the words used here suggests that the women are particularly prominent among these new Christians]

ROM 16:3-16 In his personal greetings to the Believers in ROME, Paul mentions by name “9” women – “2” of these are called Apostles

PAUL’S IMPRISONMENT:

This is one of 4 “PRISON EPISTLES” [EPHESIANS, COLOSSIANS, and PHILEMON being the others] sent by Paul. He is under a “house arrest” while awaiting a final trial before NERO. AD60~62.

- This imprisonment was serious because the issue of life or death was uncertain. It may result in Paul’s release, which is his fervent hope ; OR it may result in a sentence of death.
- A hearing before CAESAR usually included at least 2 appearances:
- 1) To present the charges and hear the prisoner’s defense;
 - 2) To announce CAESAR’S judgment: *Freedom / Exile / Death*

- 1:7 *It is right for me to feel this way about you all, because I hold you in my heart, for you are all partakers with me of grace, both in my imprisonment and in the defense and confirmation of the Gospel.*
- 1:19–20 *“For I know that through your prayers and the help of the Spirit of Jesus Christ this will turn out for my deliverance,²⁰ as it is my eager expectation and hope that I will not be at all ashamed, but that with full courage now as always Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death.*
- From the information given in the BOOK OF THE ACTS we know directly of “3” imprisonments. These are:
 - ACTS 16:23–40, at the time of Paul’s first visit to PHILIPPI;
 - ACTS 21:33–26:32, Arrest at JERUSALEM, and imprisonment in CAESAREA with appearances before FELIX, FESTUS, and AGRIPPA
ACTS 27:1-28:16 Followed by the journey to ITALY [*as a prisoner under chains*], the shipwreck on MALTA, and his arrival at Rome;
 - ACTS 28:16-28:31, as a prisoner under *House Arrest* for two years’ duration in ROME, with at least “2” appearances before the EMPEROR (28:30).
- A “4th” imprisonment is referred to in 2 TIM 1:8: 16-17; 2:8-9.
- Also, numerous other imprisonments may be included by reference from PAUL’s testimony in 2 COR 6:5 and 11:23-27.
- References to the “*Praetorian Guard*” and “*those of CAESAR’S Household*” establish his presence in ROME, and a genuine familiarity with those in the PALACE... by which he had been able to bring a number of them to salvation.
- 1:13: *“I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the Gospel,¹³ so that [the Gospel] has become known throughout the whole Imperial Guard [*in the whole Praetorium*] and to all the rest that my imprisonment is for Christ.”*
- 4:22 *“All the saints greet you, especially those of CAESAR’S household.”*